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# A Guide to Selecting Carpets

Cooperative Extension Service

Michigan State University

CHOOSING A CARPET is no easy task. It has been made complex by the endless variety of colors, textures, patterns, fibers, fiber combinations, and new construction methods. Though these may make selection difficult, they also help the consumer find a product to suit her needs at a price she can afford.

## BEFORE YOU SHOP . . . . . consider these questions

Where will you use the carpet? In a heavily trafficked area opening directly to the outside, a dining area with good chance of food spillage, or a bedroom where little wear will be expected?

Who will use it? Children? Adults? How many?

How long will it be used? As a temporary covering? Or wall-to-wall expected to last several years?

What kind of care will you give it? Will it be vacuumed regularly? Can the carpet be cleaned in place or sent to a professional cleaner? Can it be washed in a commercial washer? Can it be turned to equalize wear?

What can you afford? How much is needed? What quality can you afford? What will padding and installation cost?

## AT THE STORE . . . . .

Work with a reliable, well informed salesman. Tell him your needs and examine his carpet samples for these points:

Density of pile - Yarns densely packed into the carpet face support each other and can't bend and rub against the backing when under pressure. In heavily trafficked areas a low-loop, tightly twisted, densely packed pile will be durable and remain more attractive than a carpet with less dense, though higher, pile.

Fiber - Fiber content alone is no indication of quality. Carpets of excellent and poor quality are made from all fibers. Fibers have specific characteristics and particular advantages of their own, however, and some knowledge of them will help you understand what to expect from a carpet of a certain fiber. (See chart on page 2.)

Backing - The primary backing of a tufted carpet is the underside of the carpet that secures the tufts in position and provides foundation for the carpet. Most carpet backing is jute, but recently polypropylene, a water resistant fiber, is being used.

A secondary backing added to most carpets provides more stability and improves the feel or "hand" of the product. Jute, polypropylene, vinyl, rubber and foam are used. Synthetic secondary backings provide water resistance on carpets used out-of-doors and in kitchens and bathrooms.

Style - The appearance of a carpet is determined by the yarn and construction. Yarns may be cut (velvet) or uncut (loop pile). A combination of cut and uncut yarns creates a surface pattern. Velvet carpets are very soft and luxurious, but do show traffic patterns more than a loop pile carpet.

Sculptured carpets with a variation of pile height (hi-low) help disguise traffic patterns and are suitable for heavily trafficked areas. Shags also tend to hide traffic and are very durable when densely constructed.

## TO HELP YOU SHOP MORE WISELY . . . . .

Appearance and wearability depend on many factors --not upon any one factor alone.

The major criterion for satisfaction in a rug or carpet is how well it retains its original appearance over the length of time it is used.

Good quality carpeting is not inexpensive. When

making a major investment expect to pay at least \$10 per square yard, including cost of padding and installing.

If you don't have time, equipment, or money to give a carpet proper care, purchase another floor covering, or be content with the decrease in wearability and appearance of the carpet.

A carpet pad increases your comfort and the wear life of a carpet. For general home use, 40-48 ounce pad is satisfactory; for stairways and heavily trafficked hallways a 48-50 ounce pad is recommended.

Carpets in kitchens and bathrooms should be densely constructed, of water-resistant fiber and have a rubber backing.

### COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE OF CARPET FIBERS

FIBER	ABRASION RESISTANCE	CRUSH RESISTANCE	SOIL RESISTANCE	CLEANABILITY	PRICE RANGE (per sq. yd.)
<p>ACRYLICS</p> <p>Compares with wool in hand and appearance. Hi resistance to discoloration by sunlight, oil, chemicals. Hi wear life, excellent resilience. Mod-acrylics are similar to acrylics but lack satisfactory resilience.</p>	very good	very good	good	good	\$9-15
<p>NYLON</p> <p>Strongest carpet fiber. Resilience medium to excellent depending upon construction. Some fading in sunlight. New nylons are engineered to reduce static electricity.</p>	excellent	excellent	medium to good	very good	\$7-15
<p>POLYESTER</p> <p>Soft luxurious hand, attractive appearance, little fuzzing or pilling, maintains clear, bright color.</p>	excellent	fair	medium	very good	\$8-15
<p>POLYPROPYLENE (Olefin)</p> <p>Low static build up, good bulk, yet light weight, filament fibers do not pill or fuzz.</p>	good to excellent	fair	good; excellent stain resistance	very good	\$7-10
<p>WOOL</p> <p>Superior resilience, moderate strength, most are moth proofed, good appearance retention.</p>	good	excellent	very good	excellent	\$10-25

YOUR SATISFACTION IN A CARPET WILL  
DEPEND UPON THE QUALITY YOU PAY FOR, AND THE CARE  
YOU GIVE IT

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