

Carpet Troubleshooting

Problem

Description and / or solution

Traffic Lane Gray

Traffic lane gray is the term used to describe carpet that looks darker where there is the most traffic. If your carpet looks gray or dingy even after a good cleaning, this could be your problem. The individual carpet fibers that make up each tuft are designed to reflect light. As the carpet is worn, the fiber reflects less light and appears darker from a distance. This problem is caused by wear. Dirt acts as an abrasive actually scratching your carpet as you walk on it. This problem is not correctable but it can be prevented by having your carpet cleaned often and rearranging furniture from time to time change the flow of traffic through your rooms.

Bleach Spots

Stains that range from white to light yellow, pink or beige may be a bleach stain. Once fibers are bleached, the stain is permanent and require redyeing to treat them. The bleaching action may have the undesirable side effect of weakening the carpet fibers.

Urine/Pet Stains

If neglected pet stains can cause dye loss, fabric deterioration and odor. Urine may also support bacteria growth. Carpet should be treated first with an enzyme product and then cleaned and deodorized.

Shading / Pile Reversal

At times, certain areas in a carpet may exhibit some distortion: they may appear darker than the carpet from one angle and lighter from another. This may occur when some pile fibers in the carpet do not lay along the general direction of the pile, causing the light to be reflected at a different angle. This shading or "pile reversal" is commonly observed in high traffic area, after use or cleaning. This is a gradual process, but may become more noticeable just after cleaning, causing some people to presume that it was caused by cleaning. Unfortunately this is not treatable, though can be slowed down by ensuring that the pile is vacuumed along the direction of the pile.

Cellulosic Browning

Brownish discoloration (usually observed at the tips of the pile fibers) that appears after cleaning or due to prolonged exposure to moisture. This is caused by chemical changes in the cellulosic fibers, caused by moisture and slow drying. This can be treated in most cases where it occurs after cleaning, with a brown-out treatment.

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Wicking

Wicking occurs when you clean an area of carpet and are unsuccessful in removing all the soil, or whatever substance created the spot. The carpet typically looks fine right after you clean it, but the remaining moisture and soil lurks deep in the carpet and reappears slowly as the carpet dries.

Basically, the moisture you leave behind sits at the base of the fiber, and as the carpet goes through the drying process, the dirt or spot works its way up the shaft of the fiber and deposits itself on the tips of the carpet yarns — and you have a re-occurring spot. It wicked up just like kerosene might work its way up a lantern wick.

One thing a professional carpet cleaner can do to help prevent wicking is to follow proper technique when using the carpet floor tool, or wand. Running a textile final rinse agent in the cleaning solution when you are concerned about possible wicking can give you more success in preventing wicking. Many manufacturers and distributors offer quality rinse agents. These work to strip the carpet of old detergents and other chemicals used in prior cleaning jobs, and can even aid in drying. Many of these rinse agents will also "conglomerate" fine soils and particles that normally disperse, and make their removal much easier during the final step of cleaning

No matter what steps you take to prevent wicking, getting the carpet as clean and dry as possible will give you more success. Spending the time to remove all the soils as you can, and keeping the moisture used to a minimum, will bring good results. Leaving a white towel weighted down on a spot you feel might wick back up is another step to help combat wicking.