

Rug Care Tips You Can Safely Use.

Here are some rug care tips and guidelines to help you keep your rugs looking great, staying cleaner, and lasting longer.

DUSTING and CLEANING

Vacuuming your rugs is the BEST thing that you can do to keep your rugs in great shape in between cleanings. Think of all the dust that daily settles on to your hard floors ... that same dust settles on your rugs and needs to be removed also, otherwise it works its way into the fibers and causes damage you cannot correct. However, you do not want to overly “brush” these fibers, so the best tool to use is a canister vacuum cleaner, or the upholstery attachment on your upright HEPA-filter vacuum cleaner, and just run it over the top of the rug fibers. *Vacuum WITH, not against, the nap of the rug’s “fuzzy” side.* (The rug’s fibers are similar to your pet’s fur – you know when you are petting *with* the nap, and when you are not. Going “with” it causes less friction.)

If a lot of dirt seems to be collecting on the rug – like on your entryway rugs – then turn these rugs fuzzy side down and run an upright beater bar vacuum along the back side (stay away from the fringe tassels or you’ll suck them up!). This “shakes” the dirt out of the base of the rug’s foundation, and then you can flip the rug over and vacuum away all of the dust, dirt, allergens, mold spores, bacteria, and other “unmentionables” that have been brought into your home by lots of shoes, feet and paws.

Entry rugs with high traffic should be “dusted” twice a week (or more) with your canister or upholstery attachment. Rugs with moderate traffic should be dusted weekly. Even rugs in areas with no traffic will still have dust settling on them daily, so attend to them bi-weekly. A consistent dusting routine will help keep your rugs cleaner and healthier longer. It will also (especially when using a HEPA-filter vacuum) help keep your indoor air cleaner.

DUST & WASH GUIDELINES

Entry Rugs (High Traffic): Vacuum 2+ times per week / Wet wash every 1-2 years*

Moderate Use Rugs (Medium Traffic): Vacuum weekly / Wet wash every 2-3 years*

Low Use Rugs (Low or no Traffic): Vacuum bi-weekly / Wet wash every 3-4 years*

(* = if you are diligent with your vacuum routine you can be on the higher end of the timelines.)

Rugs in rooms with Children and/or Pet Activity

Vacuum (# of kids + pets) times per week / Wet wash every year

Rugs collect allergens, bacteria, and chemicals in their fibers, so if you have kids or pets low to the ground, it’s healthier for them if you keep these areas as irritant-free as possible. (This is also the guideline for rooms frequented by people with strong dust mite allergies. Having your rugs, carpeting, and bed linens treated with an all-natural Anti-Allergen Treatment is also recommended.)

(Don’t forget to include cleaning your wall-to-wall carpeting, upholstery, draperies, and hard floors in your “dusting and cleaning” routine.)

SPOTS and SPILLS

There will come a time when you will spill something on your rug, and the question will come to mind – “***what should I do?***” Rug fibers, especially wool, are very resilient to spills ... but they are also very reactive to harsh chemicals ... so you want to keep your spill system quick, simple, and safe.

Rug First-Aid Kit = Club Soda + Cotton Towels Rug First-Aid Kit Instructions = BLOT, RINSE, BLOT

- 1) LIQUID spill: immediately BLOT with cotton towel (do not scrub the fibers or you'll distort and potentially damage them).
NON-liquid spill: immediately scrap up material with spoon, and BLOT with cotton towel.
- 2) Look at the towel for two things:
 - *Is the spill absorbing into the towel?*
 - *Are any of the rug's dyes absorbing into the towel?*
- 3) If the rug's dyes are absorbing into the towel, blot a bit more and then **STOP**. No more work can be done to this area without causing this area's dyes to bleed together. This type of damage can devalue your rug, so you want to stop before you make it worse.
- 4) If the rug's dyes are not absorbing into the towel (only the spill is seen), then place a folded towel underneath the affected area. Take a bowl of CLUB SODA and then use a sponge to get the location of the spill wet again – not soaking wet, just enough so the fibers are damp.
- 5) Take a new towel and blot the top of the rug to continue pulling out the spill from the fibers (the club soda helps to keep the spill “suspended” so you can grab it with the cotton towel when you BLOT).
- 6) When no more spill material is visible in the towel, create a “sandwich” with a folded towel under the spill and one on top, and either stand on this area or put a heavy book on it for about 10 minutes.
- 7) Remove the towels and elevate the damp area so that it can dry completely. Most rugs have a cotton foundation which is very absorbent, so you have to be absolutely certain this “skeleton” of your rug is 100% dry so mildew will not grow. Use a hair dryer (on cool or warm setting) on the front AND back of the rug to help quicken the process, or keep it propped up to “air dry” for at least 24 hours for a small spill, and longer for larger ones (or if your rug is thick).

Puppy Puddles. Kitty Catastrophes.

Add to Rug First-Aid Kit: Vinegar and Nature's Miracle® enzyme treatment (sold in pet stores)

Of all the possible spills to happen to your rugs, pet urine and pet vomit are the worst. Because they go on hot and acidic, they actually re-dye the fibers, and “set” them at the same time – so if you are not quick these will become permanent stains that will devalue your rug. You need to follow the spill steps in the previous section (blot, rinse, blot). *If the rug has dyes that show up in the towel in the first blotting step*, then substitute a 50/50 Vinegar and water mixture for the Club Soda AND get the area only slightly damp – NOT wet. For pet feces, you must pick up as much as you can before you begin the Club Soda process.

As far as the **odors** associated with all of these pet “emergencies,” **misting** Nature’s Miracle® on the areas helps to remove some of the odor-causing bacteria. Resist the urge to saturate the rug with Nature’s Miracle®, because pouring any product on a rug is **never** a good idea. With pet urine, if it is a substantial amount then it has (because it’s hot and acidic) penetrated the wool or silk fibers and has been absorbed into the rug’s cotton foundation. In this case, the only way you will be able to remove the odor will be to have the rug get a bath and be soaked completely in an enzyme solution. You need to find a rug specialist to do this.

A different set of problems arises with “old” pet urine stains. When a pet urine stain is “fresh” it is a strong **acid** stain. After it has dried completely, and has sat in the fibers for several days, it becomes a strong **alkaline** stain. The problem with high alkalinity and wool is that it yellows the wool, and it also counteracts the mordant process that holds the dyes on to the wool fibers. It essentially makes the dyes “dissolve.” Even a rug with colorfast dyes will bleed and fade in areas that have old pet urine stains. So, the key in handling all pet stains is getting to the area as soon as you can (and use the spill steps so that you can minimize the damage).

Protector Chemicals (like ScotchGuard®) will not protect your rugs from pet stains, and actually, some have a high alkaline pH that can cause yellowing and dye migration with certain rugs. The school of thought in the “rug world” is that adding any chemical agent into a rug’s fibers is not a good choice for the rug or for the kids or pets that may lay or play on these rugs.

RUG PADS

The right type of pad underneath your rug provides many benefits from keeping it from slipping on the floor or buckling, to acting as a “shock absorber” for foot traffic to lessen the wear on the rug’s fibers. These are the best pads for your rugs (**and** for your floors too).

PAD RECOMMENDATIONS

RUBBER ANCHOR (“Gripper”) PAD (rugs on smooth, hard floors): Linoleum, Tile, Pergo, and *some Hardwood*.* [Thickness of pad = 3/32 inch.]

DURAHOLD PAD (rugs on uneven and some smooth hard floors): Mexican and Ceramic Tile, Concrete, Brick, Marble, and *all Hardwood*.* This also works rather well over installed sisal and seagrass flooring. Has a 10 year performance warranty by manufacturer. [Thickness of pad = 1/4 inch.]

(* → The National Hardwood Association recommends Durahold Pad as the best pad to allow wood floors to “breathe” and keep a more consistent color tone in all areas.)

NO-MUV PAD (larger rugs on soft floors): All carpeting. Has a 10 year performance warranty by manufacturer. [Thickness of pad is 3/8 inch.] Rugs are meant to be placed on **HARD** surfaces, so pads are important to prevent damage to rugs from heavy furniture poking through them.

STICKY PAD (small rugs on soft floors with **NO** furniture): All carpeting. These pads are sold in most home improvement stores. It is sticky on both sides and “holds” the rug flat on the carpeting. It does not protect from wear, but it does keep you from tripping on the rug. It also provides a barrier in case you worry your rug will discolor the carpeting underneath.

RUG STORAGE

The biggest dangers for rugs placed in storage are BUGS, FLOODS, and THUGS. Insect damage, flood or mildew damage, and theft are the most common problems we hear from clients who have placed rugs in a local storage unit or placed in a far corner of a closet or garage. Many times rugs with high appraised or sentimental value are placed in storage to save them for family members, or to save them from a remodel mess, or to protect them from the summer sunlight. You want to make sure you are not actually causing damage by incorporating the wrong storage procedures.

SAFE STORAGE TIPS

- **DO** clean and moth-repel rugs before wrapping for storage.
You must clean your rugs of food and liquid material because though moths are normally the storage “bad guys” – ANY insect will eat sugars and other food materials, and they will eat the wool fibers that are holding this meal for them too. An insect repellent will make your rug unappetizing to moths.
- **DO** roll your rugs starting at the bottom end to the top end, fuzzy side **inside**.
*To find the bottom end of your rug, you want to “pet” your rug to determine when you are going WITH the nap, and AGAINST the nap. When you run your hand WITH the nap, it will take you to the tassels of the bottom of the rug (where the weaver began weaving your rug). Roll from this end. Folding rugs causes cracking over time, so do **not** fold rugs being put in storage.*
- **DO** roll your SILK rugs with the fuzzy side **outside**.
Wool and cotton rugs have more “give” to them than silk rugs, so when placing silk rugs into storage, roll them with their fuzzy silk side outside.
- **DO** wrap your rugs in TYVEK or brown acid-free PAPER.
*Wool has a moisture content even when it is dry, so changes in heat will cause it to “sweat.” Because of this you can **NEVER** wrap wool rugs in plastic or you will create a mildew problem. Tyvek Paper is best (tear and water resistant).*
- **DO** elevate your rug packages off of the ground.
Many storage facilities are built in lowlands that have a tendency to flood during bad weather, so whether in your home or their location you always want to keep rugs at least six inches off the ground in case flooding occurs.
- **DO** make certain nothing heavy is stacked on top of your rugs.
Heavy items can cause damage to the rug’s foundation.
- **DO** acquire insurance to protect your rugs when placed in a storage facility.
You also want a photograph and appraisal on file in case you need them.

Other Helpful Rug Care Tips

→ **ROTATE** your rugs.

Rotate rugs to even out any possible sun fading, and to also not allow one specific area to get all the foot traffic wear. Rotate small rugs every 3-6 months; larger rugs every time it goes for a bath put it back down the opposite direction.

→ **INSPECT** your rugs.

Quarterly you want to inspect your rugs closely for any insect activity. Moths and carpet beetles generally begin feasting in areas that have little light and little air flow – this means they prefer the BACK of the rug, or places under furniture. The larva looks like “sticky lint”, so flip over the corners of the rug to see if you have any activity. American Indian weavings hanging on the wall are particularly vulnerable, so take them down bi-annually to shake and dust them, and look for bugs.

You also want to check the ends and sides of your rugs to make sure that they are not in need of repair. When fringe tassels become worn and torn, the wool (or silk) knots of the rug begin to pull away from the rug, and if this is caught early it is a much cheaper repair than reweaving a section of the rug down the road. Look at the BACK of the rug to clearly see if all the knots are tightly and securely in place.

→ **PROTECT** your rugs.

Many newer rugs, especially Chinese rugs, are chemically washed to give them a nice “sheen.” This chemical process makes these rugs sensitive to sunlight and they will fade in a period of just a few short years. If this concerns you, consider treating your windows with a UV-filter coating, or use thicker window coverings to block out the rays during peak hours.

→ **NEVER** use Carpet Spot Removers or Baking Soda on your rugs.

Folex® and Resolve® are meant for SYNTHETIC carpet, and not wool or silk rugs. These chemicals (and even Woolite®) are too strong to use on rugs and they will either cause a chemical discoloration or it will bleach out the rug dyes completely. Baking Soda also causes damage by yellowing the fibers. This damage is permanent, and will devalue your rug, so please stick to CLUB SODA.

→ **NEVER** put potted live plants, or plastic protectors, on top of your rugs.

Even careful plant caretakers spill a bit when watering plants. This water seeps into the cotton foundation, which leads to mildew growth and dry rot. Plastic protectors also inhibit airflow and can cause mildew growth and dry rot. When dry rot sets in, eventually the rug falls apart in that area of rot. It ruins the rug.

→ **NEVER** have your valuable oriental rugs surface-cleaned in your home by your carpet cleaner.

Wall-to-wall carpet cleaning chemicals and equipment are meant for wall-to-wall carpet, not oriental and specialty rugs. This equipment cannot thoroughly rinse your rugs clean (especially when there is a nice floor underneath that cannot get wet), so you are left with a rug that has a great deal of chemicals (and dirt) still left in the fibers. This chemical residue can lead to many problems from quicker resoiling (because the residue is “sticky”), yellowing of wool, dye migration and bleeding, and fading. It can also be an irritant to children (or pets) with chemical sensitivities.