

How To Select New Carpet

By Curt Hagedorn

Though hardwood and laminate floors have become trendy in recent years, carpeting is holding its own in many applications. Consumers are sometimes even covering up those beautiful hardwood floors with carpet, for a number of reasons. Carpet combines warmth and durability with softness, texture and color that make it the perfect choice for places like bedrooms and family and play rooms where a lot of the action happens on the floor. Carpet is also finding a place into today's new, larger bathrooms and closet/dressing areas. Broadly defined, carpet includes both wall to wall carpeting and area rugs and in both these....areas carpet makers are providing new innovations and choices for home decorators.

Carpet can be made from a variety of fibers from naturals like wool or silk, wool and nylon or polyester blends, and synthetics like olefin. Each has advantages and disadvantages, with pure wool being the gold standard for warmth, softness, durability and flame retardant qualities. Wool does stain more easily though manufacturers and natural fiber activists point out that it reacts well to cleaning and stain removal. Wool also answers certain questions about a long list of chemicals beginning with formaldehyde used in the manufacture of synthetic carpeting. If you are looking at large areas rugs such as Oriental carpets for your home, wool or wool blends are also what to look for, particularly in antiques but also in high quality imported new carpets. Wool wall to wall carpeting can have its stain repellent qualities upgraded with Scotchguard or other fabric protector applied at the factory as well. For smaller rugs, many people are choosing natural wool, cotton, silk and other fibers – fluffy flokati rugs have had a long run of popularity as well.

Synthetic fibers, depending upon their various qualities, are highly durable, have excellent stain resistant qualities and also come in a huge variety of colors styles and textures. Trends today in wall to wall carpeting lean towards berber and other carpeting with subtle textures and weaves which add interest to today's monochromatic color schemes. But today's synthetics also offer an almost endless selection of color for the color adventurous, as well as pile choices from short cut velvet to loop, sculpture pile and more. Synthetics now also offer improved softness and pill resistant qualities. But remember, while wall to wall carpeting isn't forever. If you're choosing extreme colors or textures you may have to change out the carpeting or provide an allowance when you sell your home. However, everything from oriental carpets to wild modern designs are available in synthetic carpets and areas rugs, some so inexpensively that you can make a dramatic statement with a synthetic carpet almost seasonally, switching your floor décor in the

same manner you'd put on a set of spring slipcovers and lighten your window coverings for a brighter, more airy look.

Carpeting is also relatively easy to install yourself, with words to the wise in terms of picking a high quality and durable padding and of course, measure twice cut one. In the case of carpeting you might even want to extent that to three or four times. For smaller rooms ensure that you're cutting carpet correctly by cutting a paper template to the exact dimensions of the room. Cut the carpet slightly larger than those specifications. Remember, it's you can always trim, but it's pretty difficult to add. Tips to look for in quality carpeting, no matter what the fiber? What is called "face weight," the ounces per square inch of fiber in the carpeting is often used as a measure of quality, in general the higher the face weight, the better the carpet. Density, the number of "tufts" or loops per square inch of carpet is usually seen as the best measure of quality and durability. Again, the denser the carpet, the better it is. Also look at how tightly the yarns are twisted. Tighter twisting is often a sign of better quality, or at least loose twisting is a sign of poor quality and durability. Though a sample of loose-twisted pile may look fluffy and feel more luxurious at the carpet store, think about how that old Seventies style shag rug looked at home after a few weeks of wear, or even a few days.

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