

What to look for when buying Carpets and Rugs

3 0109 00633 0404



NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

Do some careful planning before you buy a new carpet. The maze of fibers, colors, patterns and textures is truly exciting. But such variety can be bewildering and confusing when you are wanting to buy a carpet that will look well and give good performance.

PLAN WISELY BEFORE BUYING

For a satisfactory purchase select a carpet that best meets your needs. A carpet that is right for your neighbor may not suit you at all. Questions you may want to explore before shopping for a carpet are:

- Does cost of the carpet fit into your family budget?
- What size do you want — room-size, wall-to-wall?
- Color and design — How do you want it to look?
- How much traffic will the carpet get?
- How long do you expect to use it?
- Is there a possibility of food stains?
- Where can you have the carpet cleaned?

5
544.3
.N9
A8
no. 335

By
Irene Crouch
Extension Agent, Home Management



NDAC *Extension Service, Fargo*
NORTH DAKOTA AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

5
544.3
.N9
A8
no. 335

SIZE — The size of a rug or carpet helps to determine the total cost. It also helps to determine your decorative scheme and coordinates furnishings. Variety of size and shape makes it possible to accent an area of the room, define an activity area or cover a whole room. Rugs are adaptable. They may be used in rooms of different sizes, turned to equalize wear and taken up easily for moving or cleaning. Room-size rugs come in standard widths of 9, 12 or 15 feet and may be cut any length desired. A room-size rug should come within 12 inches of the wall of a large room and within 8 inches of a small room.

Wall-to-wall carpeting has some real advantages, as well as some very real problems. It gives a room a luxurious appearance, makes it look larger, and helps give it unity. A floor completely covered by carpet has greater insulating property and it adds warmth and safety for the children. Keep in mind that wall-to-wall carpeting has to be cleaned on location rather than sent out for plant cleaning. On-the-floor cleaning is never 100 per cent successful. The expense of carpeting is generally higher than for a rug of comparable quality due to greater floor area covered. It cannot be turned to compensate for tracking and fading. The term "broadloom" indicates that the rug or carpet was woven on a loom wider than 36 inches. Standard carpeting widths are 9, 12, 15 and 18 feet.

COLOR AND DESIGN — From a decorative standpoint, a floor covering should be in harmony with the general style of the room. It complements the room's personality and adds warmth. Generally, medium colors and slightly patterned and textured surfaces do not show dirt and footprints readily. Definite patterns or textures may be used to add interest if walls and upholstered furniture are plain or slightly patterned. Patterned floor coverings should not have to compete with bold patterns on walls, at windows, or on large pieces of furniture.

TRAFFIC AND CLEANING — In a room that gets hard use, you will not be satisfied with a rug or carpet that mats, shows soil easily and is difficult to clean. Where there is little traffic such a carpet would not be a problem. If there is a possibility of food stains, choose a carpet from which food stains are easily removed. Since not all cleaning plants are equipped to clean all kinds of fibers, you should know the service available locally and the cost of cleaning.

Influencing your choice of fiber and construction will be the length of time you want the carpet to wear and look well. If you expect to move in 2 or 3 years, or plan to change your decorating scheme every few years, you may not be concerned whether or not it is of sturdy construction or durable fibers.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CARPET

A good carpet is dependent on the type and grade of fiber used and on the depth and density of the pile. The pile is closely packed on a firm backing. Characteristics that you want in a carpet are resilience, easy cleanability and resistance to soiling, crushing and fading.

WHAT FIBER IS BEST FOR YOU – Of all the fibers that make up today's rugs and carpets no one performs miracles. Each has its virtues, each has its shortcomings. Though research has given us several man-made fibers that have been specially adapted for carpets in length, thickness and color, wool is still used more than any other carpet fiber. As of March 3, 1960 the Federal Trade Commission ruled that all carpets must have labels proclaiming the fibers they contain. If the carpet is a blend, percentages of fibers must be given. Labeling of backing, padding and cushions used with floor coverings is exempted since the Fiber Products Identification law covers only face, pile or outer surface of carpets and rugs.

- Wool has good resistance to soil and abrasive wear. It is easily cleaned in plant or on location. It has excellent resilience. Permanent moth-proofing has lessened the problem of moths and carpet beetles. While wool is a good carpet fiber, there are all grades of wool and a cheap grade makes a poor carpet.
- Cotton gives serviceable, washable, colorful rugs at reasonable prices. Its resistance to abrasive wear is excellent. Cotton soils easily. It mats and crushes as it is walked on, but the pile is easily raised by use of carpet sweeper or vacuum cleaner. Crushing can be reduced by purchasing a carpet of tightly twisted yarns that are of a densely packed, low pile. The best cotton carpets are vat-dyed and preshrunk.
- Acrylic carpeting feels more like wool than any other synthetic carpeting. The fibers are soft, warm and light in weight. The acrylics are resistant to most soil, insects, mildew and abrasive wear. All are high in strength and resilience. All are sensitive to high heat. It is recommended that they should not be cleaned with hot water or dried in hot air. Acrylics are not resistant to oily stains. They tend to accumulate static electricity. The acrylics used in carpeting are better known to you as "Acrilan" and "Creslan". Acrilan will burn and flame but not readily in a densely woven pile construction.

- Modacrylics (modified acrylic) are newer yet than acrylics and differ from them in some characteristics. "Dynel" and "Verel" — trade names for those Modacrylics that are available — do not support combustion.
- Standard Rayon is poor to fair in resistance to abrasive wear and to soil. Its resilience is usually fair to poor, but resilience can be improved with a densely packed pile construction. It is not resistant to grease stains. It can be cleaned in plant or on location with special precautions.
- Super L. Rayon is a specially processed smooth rayon. It is more resistant to soil and abrasive wear and has better resilience than standard rayon.
- Solution-Dyed Rayon is similar to standard rayon in its properties. Pigment is added to the fiber while it is in solution and becomes an integral part of the fiber, so carpets made of solution-dyed rayon have the best color fastness of the rayons.
- Acetate has fair to good resistance to most soil, insects and mildew. Because of its low resistance to abrasion it is often blended with nylon. Celaire, the trade name for an acetate fiber now used for carpets, contains at least 20 per cent nylon. Celaire has a permanent heat-set twist, making the fibers more resilient than regular acetate.
- Nylon is resistant to abrasive wear, insects, mildew and most soil. It has good to excellent resilience and can be cleaned in plant or on location. Nylon tends to accumulate static electricity and is not resistant to oily stains. The dull or delustered yarns soil much less than bright yarns. Nylon's wearing qualities account for its frequent appearance in blends. At least 20 per cent nylon is necessary in any blend to get the benefit of added durability. Nylon staple will pill, while textured filament nylon resists pilling and fuzzing, and has increased resiliency.
- Textured Filament Yarns and Staple Yarns — In man-made products staple yarns have been made by first cutting the continuous filament into short lengths and then spinning or twisting them together to form yarns. To aid in spinning, the short man-made fibers are given a crimp. When the finished product is used the free ends of short fibers work to the surface and collect in tiny balls or pills. Since there are no free ends in textured filament yarns, there can be no pilling, especially in loop pile carpets. The continuous

filament is textured in various ways by crimping, curling or looping. Instead of the term "textured" some yarn manufacturers use the terms "lofted" or "bulked". The special advantages of textured filament yarns are elimination of pilling, greater bulk, light weight, high moisture absorbency, increased resilience and permanent texture. Nylon was the first filament yarn to be textured by current methods and continues to account for the largest volume. Acetate, Dacron polyester fiber, Viscose rayon, Arnel and Fiberglas are being textured by various methods. In carpets we are interested only in nylon, acetate and rayon. Trade names for textured filament nylon are Caprolan, Tycora, Type 501, Agilon, Cumuloft and Nyloft. Of the acetates, Chromspun and Celaperm are textured filaments with color added at the solution stage. Skylot is a textured filament rayon.

How Do Costs Vary — Rayons and acetates are in the lower price bracket, beginning at about \$5.95 per square yard. Light weight cotton carpets begin at a low price but better cotton carpets may cost \$10 or more per square yard. Some nylon, wool, the acrylics, and some blends fall into \$10 to \$12 range. The better grades of wool, nylon and some acrylics are priced between \$12 and \$20. Extra high quality and well designed carpets in wool can run even higher.

What About Depth and Density of Pile — A good carpet has a closely packed pile on a firm backing. Density is more important for long wear than depth of pile. Check pile density by bending a corner of the carpet back upon itself. For areas that receive much traffic, choose a medium height, dense pile. When a carpet is made of fibers with little crush resistance, cotton, rayon and acetate, the short dense loop pile with high twist yarns will show crush marks least.

What Type of Construction — Carpets and rugs may be woven, tufted or knitted. But construction is no longer considered the determining factor of quality that it was in the past. Woven carpets are made on a loom and wool is the principal fiber used. Good quality carpets are made in the following weaves: Wilton, Axminster, Velvet and Chenille. Tufted carpets are made by inserting tufts of yarn into a woven backing that is then coated with latex to help secure the tufts. The more tufts per inch, the better the carpet. The nature of the process does not allow the flexibility of design and color permitted by the Wilton and Axminster weaving processes. Tufts may be looped or cut. In knitted

carpet the backing and surface are interwoven simultaneously on a loom or a knitting machine.

The backing of a carpet is the underside that secures the pile yarns in position and provides a firm foundation. It is usually cotton, jute or kraft cord. To determine whether the backing is firm, or perhaps sleazy and lacking in bulk, grasp and knead the backing of the carpet between the fingers.

Some poorly made tufted carpets tend to buckle and wrinkle in humid climates. To minimize this problem, good quality tufted carpets have a scrim backing over the regular fabric or jute backing. It gives more body so the rug won't curl at the edges and won't ripple as it is being vacuumed.

BUY A CARPET PAD

A carpet pad is good insurance for it greatly increases the life of carpet. It absorbs the pounding of traffic and some of the weight of heavy furniture. It adds resilience to the carpet and fills in uneven places on the floor that might cause the carpet to wear in spots. It prevents slipping and keeps the carpet smooth. A pad increases sound-absorbing qualities and insulates against heat and cold.

Rug pads are made of hair, felt, jute, sponge rubber and urethane foam. Standard sizes are available for standard size rugs, or you can buy it by the roll. All-hair pads are made of felted animal hair. If made of combined hair and jute, the higher the percentage of hair the greater resiliency and the more serviceable the pad. A pad made of hair should have edges finished to prevent fraying. All-hair pads and hair pads covered with rubber give good service. Sponge rubber pads may be either smooth or textured. The textured pads are more bouyant, but the smooth ones absorb more wear. Fair to good service may be expected from rubber and from 38 to 42 ounce hair-jute combinations. Be careful in moving furniture over sponge rubber to prevent damage to the pad.

SHOPPING FOR YOUR CARPET

When you have learned what to consider in choosing your rugs and carpets, go to a reliable dealer, one who is well informed on the quality of carpet he sells. Read and interpret the labels. Save the label of the carpet you purchase. Note the name of the carpet manufacturer. A good company is proud of its products. Help your dealer to help you by taking a diagram of your room measurements with you. Take samples of colors and other furnishings in a room when you go to select a rug. Explain how much traffic the room you plan to carpet will get. The sales person can be of much more help to you if he understands your needs.