

Smartly Clean

Consumer Guide to Selecting the Right Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning Company.



By: Phil Shames

Look around your home. Do you see something ugly on your carpet?.....Something ugly on your sofa?Something ugly on your beautiful rug? Then you know it's time to have those once beautiful areas cleaned. Should you clean it yourself, or should you bring in a professional to take care of it for you? IF you decide on hiring a carpet and upholstery cleaning company you are faced with a multitude of choices out there. So how do you choose the right service provider.? How do you find that company which will do a great job for you, charge you a fair price, and one that guarantees that you will be happy with the results. This guide will help you with that decision.

Did you know that the carpet and upholstery cleaning industry is not regulated? Anyone can buy or rent a machine, put up an ad or send out a flyer, and call themselves a professional carpet and upholstery cleaner.

Everyone has heard the stories about items going missing from their home, about overuse or improper use of toxic chemicals, and has seen news stories about *Bait-and-Switch* companies who use a low priced coupon offer to get their foot in the door, then hard-sell unsuspecting consumers into a bill they are compelled to pay. When you receive a flyer or see an ad for a carpet and upholstery cleaning company, you really can't tell who the great cleaners are, or know which companies you would never

want to invited into your home. It's hard to know you can trust with your expensive rugs or fine upholstered furnishings. The "great" cleaners work hard to distinguish themselves from the fly-by-night operators who use unsafe cleaning practices, hard-sell tactics, and sometimes employ less- than-honest staff. We hope his guide will make your decision easier when you need to choose a new carpet and upholstery cleaning company.

Cleaning for health, not just appearance.



Your upholstered furniture, carpet, and rugs act as your home's largest air filters. The fibers trap dust, dirt, pollens and other contaminants and hold onto them. But like any filter, it needs to be cleaned because when it fills up, it cannot hold any more ... and every time you step, or sit on that dirty filter you will release those contaminants into your air.

Cleaning your carpet, rugs and upholstered furnishings is key to maintaining healthy indoor air. The EPA's guidelines for cleaning vary from every four months to every eighteen depending on the number of people and pets in the home, as well as other concerns including allergic sensitivities, how dusty the air is in your neighborhood is, and whether anyone in your home smokes. A true carpet and upholstery cleaning professional can evaluate your needs and recommend the best process and cleaning frequency for your specific needs.

Should You Clean it Yourself?



Each week when you head to the supermarket you pass by the display of rental carpet cleaning machines. You know your carpet needs cleaning. Maybe it's time to rent a cleaning machine and take care of it yourself. Here are some of the things to consider:

Cost – Add up the cost of the machine rental, the carpet cleaning solution, the pre-spray solution, the spot treatment, and the cost of gas to go to and from the supermarket and you may find that the savings are not as good as you thought they were.

Machine Quality and Maintenance – Do the machines get cleaned out well each night, or so they leave the cleaning of the machines to those who rent them? Are the machines powerful enough or will they leave your carpet over-wet?

Stain and Spot Treatment – Are you willing to learn about which products you should use to remove specific stains? Using the wrong product on some stains may permanently set those stains.

Time - Do you have the time to spend your weekend cleaning your carpets or would you rather spend your time doing what you enjoy?

If you have decided that you would prefer to clean your carpets on your own, there is no need to read further. If you are still considering hiring a professional to help, please read on.....



How do you find the best carpet and upholstery cleaning professional for your family?

The following information on the following pages will help you choose the right professional carpet and upholstery cleaning company. It covers the 7 costly errors consumers make when they select a carpet and upholstery cleaning service, and also the 3 steps you can take to help you select the best company for you. We hope you find the information valuable. If you have any questions please email us at info@ecosuds.ca or call us at 905-667-5624 or 1-866-340-9939.





COSTLY ERROR #1:

Choosing a carpet and upholstery cleaner based on the type of machines they use.

Your carpet and upholstery cleaning company needs to invest in high quality equipment, but keep in mind that a well trained technician can do a great job with whichever system they were properly trained to use. A poorly trained technician can do an awful job with even the very best equipment. The company you chose should have technicians who are skilled at operating their equipment and know how to select the right cleaning products for each specific type of soiling. They also need an excellent understanding of the various types of carpet and upholstery fabrics. Using the wrong product or technology could have disastrous results. Many companies own decent equipment, but very few companies teach their employees how to use them properly or how to safely treat your expensive carpet.

COSTLY ERROR #2:

Choosing a carpet cleaner based on low price.

We have all heard the phrase “you get what you pay for”. This is especially true when choosing a carpet and upholstery cleaning company. Here are some problems that you may face when choosing a service company based on a low price:

- A low advertised price will often get you to call, but once the cleaner gets into your home, they will often use “bait-and-switch” tactics..... Using high pressure techniques to talk you into a much more expensive job.
- A company providing a low, low price can’t afford quality employees and will not likely invest in the training needed to do a good job. This lack of training often results in your carpets or furniture looking and smelling worse after drying than it did before you had it cleaned.
- Low priced companies often cut corners and rush your job. Your technician needs to take the time needed to do the job right. Machines that are run over your carpet too quickly will leave your carpet or furniture dirty and over-wet.
- Cheap pricing often leads to companies using the cheapest, least effective, and most toxic cleaning chemicals.
- Companies offering rock bottom pricing can rarely afford to properly maintain their equipment. Improperly maintained equipment will not clean well.

COSTLY ERROR #3

Not asking about the safety of the chemicals they will be using in your home.

Many companies try to save money by using low priced, toxic chemicals to clean your carpets and furniture. Many of these products contain butyls and other dangerous ingredients that could adversely affect your health. Some of these chemicals could trigger allergies and breathing problems in those with health sensitivities. Make sure your service provider uses Green Seal or EcoLogo certified products.

COSTLY ERROR #4:

Choosing a carpet and upholstery cleaning company which doesn’t offer a strong guarantee.

If you aren’t pleased with work your carpet and upholstery cleaning company performs for you, you should not have to pay for it. You should NEVER have to pay for your job before it’s done (unless you are not going to be home when the service provider is going to be there). A company that stands behind their work will offer to re-clean any areas you are not happy with at no-charge (and that includes no “travel” charge unless previously agreed to), even after they have left. If you are still not happy, they should refund your money without question. Not all carpet cleaners offer guarantees. Or, if they do, the guarantee may be “limited.” Ask the company you are considering if they offer a money-back guarantee and the specifics on how that guaranty works.



COSTLY ERROR #5:

Choosing a carpet and upholstery cleaning company without getting feedback from other clients.

Any carpet cleaner can say they are wonderful, but sometimes the truth is different. Be sure you ask for references or read testimonials from current and past customers. Do your research on the internet to find out more about the reputation of the companies you are considering.

Is your carpet and upholstery cleaning company actively involved in your community? Are they a member of the local Chamber of Commerce or service club? Fly-by-night companies prefer to keep a low profile. The truly great service providers are involved and well known in their communities.

COSTLY ERROR #6

Choosing a carpet and upholstery cleaning company who isn't professionally Von Schrader or IIRCCertified.

Many consumers have had their carpets or upholstery cleaned and were very unhappy with the results. If you want to be sure you're hiring a competent professional, make sure he is professionally certified. The technician must earn that certification through study, experience and successful completion of formal, written examinations. Technicians who are Von Schrader Certified have effectively earned a college degree in carpet and upholstery cleaning.

COSTLY ERROR #7:

Choosing a carpet and upholstery cleaning company who over-wets your carpet or Furniture

Carpet and Furniture that is over-wet can lead to a number of problems:

- Over-wetting your carpet will often lead to "wick-back".... That annoying situation where spots that are gone when the company has left, come back two to three days later.
- Too much moisture in your under-pad or upholstery cushions could allow mould or mildew to develop. This is often the cause of allergic reactions after cleaning.
- Carpet and furniture that take too long to dry will often develop a musty and unpleasant odour.
- Wet carpet and upholstery is a prime breeding ground for bacteria to grow.



3 Simple steps to beautiful, fresh and clean carpets and upholstery

If you're thinking about having your carpets and upholstery cleaned, we encourage you to follow these four steps:

Step #1: As Nike says: “Just do it”.

The longer they remain dirty, the sooner they'll show signs of wear and need to be replaced. Industry testing shows that you can have as much as a pound of dirt in a square foot of carpet before it begins to look dirty. That dirt not only looks and smells bad, but is abrasive; wearing down the fibers, causing unsightly shadowy “traffic” patterns, and substantially shortens your carpet's life. Most carpet warranties require at least an annual cleaning by a professional to be honored (check your own warranty to see your requirements). Another benefit of regular cleaning is that it removes contaminants that could cause health problems. The longer you wait to clean, the longer you will be breathing in all the pollen, fungus, pet odors, dust mites, and chemicals that hide in your carpet.

Step #2: List your important criteria.

Why are you getting your carpets or upholstery cleaned? Has it become unsightly? Have you started to notice unpleasant odours in your home? Are you concerned that you may have to prematurely replace your carpets or furniture? Create a quick list of what is important to you and base the decision you make on the criteria that is most important to you. Is the health of your indoor environment highest on your list? You would want a company that is using the proper equipment and method to address your concerns.



Do you want just want the dirt removed and have plenty of time to clean it , something you could do with a rented shampooer, or are you concerned about removing other contaminants (like bacteria, pollen, dust mites, mold spores) and removing difficult stains? Do you want to work with an honest, reputable company, or are you willing to risk working with the company that offers you the lowest price, knowing that that company might not be in business tomorrow, may put your family's finances at risk (by not being properly insured or covered by W.S.I.B), or may pressure you into unwanted and expensive options?

Step #3: Ask questions.

The way you learn about a company is to ask specific questions and listen carefully to the answers. Here are six tough questions to ask a carpet and upholstery cleaning company before they begin to clean your carpet:

1. What method of carpet cleaning do you recommend?
2. What type of equipment do you use to clean carpet?
3. What will your equipment remove from my carpet?
4. How often should I get my carpets cleaned?
5. What training have you had in cleaning carpets?
6. Are you professionally certified?
7. Do you have at least \$2,000,000 in liability insurance?
8. Are your employees covered by W.S.I.B.?

What to Expect from a Good Cleaning Company



Knowing what questions to ask is essential in avoiding problems. The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification is a nonprofit certification body that sets and promotes high standards and technical proficiency within the cleaning industry.

Here's what they say you should expect:

- **No hidden costs.** Expect itemized costs for services and firm prices before technicians begin each portion of the work sold. Consumers should never feel pressured to accept anything more than the services they request.
- **Customer satisfaction.** Cleaning firms should offer workmanship guarantees in writing.
- **Vacuuming.** The cleaner should start by vacuuming high traffic and open areas where soils accumulate.
- **Moving furniture.** Unless clearly specified, moving of most small and lightweight furniture to clean carpet underneath should be considered part of the normal cleaning job.
- **Spot-cleaning.** Special attention to spots is included in normal job performance. However, time-consuming specialized spotting may incur an additional charge. Customers should be advised of additional charges before extensive spotting procedures are undertaken.
- **Preconditioning.** Special treatment with “preconditioning” agents in heavily soiled entry, traffic and general areas should be included in the cost of the cleaning.
- **Minimal drying time.** It is the cleaner's responsibility to ensure that the carpet is dried and returned to normal use within a reasonable time frame. The amount of time required for drying will vary with different methods, the degree of soiling and the aggressiveness of cleaning necessary. But under no circumstances should drying require more than 24 hours with proper ventilation. Our Von Schrader method typically dries in 3-6 hours or less. The customer can help speed drying time by keeping the humidity in the home low and providing continuous air flow and/or ventilation to expedite drying.

Extending the Life of Your Carpet and Saving \$

One way you can save money is by having your carpets cleaned annually. When you have your carpets cleaned more often, they not only last longer, but stay looking new longer. “Traffic” patterns typically develop in areas where soil has accumulated. That abrasive soil is ground into the carpet fibre,

permanently causing a shadowy pattern that cannot be removed. Annual cleaning will greatly reduce the likelihood of this happening to your carpet.

Often, when you have your carpet cleaned annually, only a “freshen-up” service is needed, saving you money on cleaning as well.



FACTORS THAT MAY INCREASE YOUR PRICE



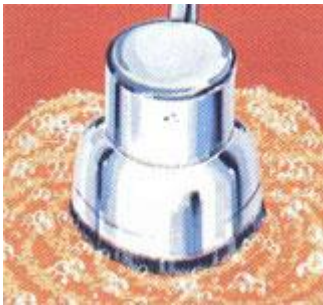
- The type of carpet. Some are harder to clean than others.
- Pet stains require specialized decontamination treatments. They may also require more than one visit to successfully treat the staining and odours.
- Difficult stains such as red food dye and candle wax may need substantially more time and expensive specialty stain treatments to achieve a successful result.
- The amount of soiling. Carpet that hasn't been cleaned for 10 years will take longer to clean than carpet that was cleaned within the past six months.
- The amount and size of furniture that must be moved. If you require larger and heavier pieces to be moved, additional team members may be needed on your job. In many cases, if you move your furniture, you'll save money



Different Methods – Which is Safest?

When shopping around for a carpet and upholstery cleaning company, you'll find out that there are several different cleaning methods offered. Obviously, each company will be biased toward their own method. Each method does have advantages and disadvantages. Read about the different methods below and decide which you would prefer used in your home.

1. Rotary Method



Here a shampoo is scrubbed onto the surface of the carpet using one large to three small brushes. This does a fair job of cleaning the carpet surface, but the deep-down dirt is either untouched or carried deeper into the pile by the shampoo. And this method makes no provision for removal of the shampoo and dirt. The carpet must be vacuumed later in a separate operation.

2. Rotary/Bonnet Method



This type of system uses a machine that is similar to what is used to clean commercial tile. A fabric bonnet is attached to a rotating “pancake” like mount that scrubs your carpet in a circular motion. This procedure will brighten the surface but can't remove the dirt deep in the pile. Results: embedded dirt works up quickly to the surface to re-soil the carpet.

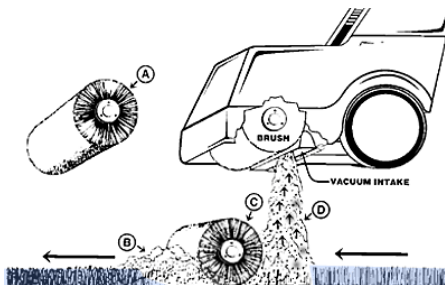
3. Steam Method



In the first place, no steam is used - probably a good thing since live steam would be disastrous to your good carpet. Very high heat can actually melt the glue that bonds the carpet fibres to its backing. Actually, the "steam" is only hot water that is sprayed into the carpet. In most cases, little more than half of the dirt bearing water is extracted from the carpet. The remainder is left and can result in smelly and soggy carpet. Improperly extracted, this extra water in your carpet can result in browning, mildew, shrinkage, or damaged backing, padding and floors. Drying time can run up to 24-hours - a long time for any carpet area to be unusable.

Hot water extraction detergents can leave a gummy, sticky, or waxy residue. This residue clings to the carpet fibers and quickly attracts soil. Rapid resoiling leads to a dull, dirty carpet appearance.

4. The Von Schrader Low Moisture Air Cell Extraction Method



The Von Schrader Low-Moisture Air Cell Extraction System which is an exclusive, patented process. The LMX System is one of the most technologically advanced systems ever built for fast cleaning, quick drying and DEEP down cleaning of carpet.

This technology is a unique hybrid system drawing from the best features of the above systems while eliminating the problems the other technologies fail to address.

Von Schrader Carpet Cleaning System

The Von Schrader air cell extraction technology deposits a low moisture foam (less than 10% water) onto your carpet. This foam emulsifies the dirt and is driven through your carpet fibres with an 87,000 bristle cylindrical brush. This brush loosens and pulls up the dirty foam along with the hair, pet fur, dander, dust, dust mites, dead skin cells, and debris that other systems miss, then a powerful vacuum built right into the system sucks all that dirt up and into the machine. Von Schrader's specially formulated cleaning products leave a minimal amount of crisp, brittle residue that does not attract soil to the carpet fiber. This prevents resoiling and preserves carpet beauty. The loose, non-clinging flakes are easily vacuumed away. Your carpet will also dry much faster, since so little water is used.

Von Schrader Upholstery Cleaning System

Decades ago, Von Schrader realized that cleaning fine upholstery fabric by attaching a hand tool to a carpet cleaning machine and using carpet cleaning chemicals to clean that fabric was a recipe for disaster. They invented the world's finest upholstery cleaning technology, the Von Schrader Esprit Low Moisture Air Cell Extraction System.

This system, specifically designed to safely and effectively clean upholstery fabrics, applies a low moisture foam to your fabric through counter rotating soft brushes. This foam is less than 8% water, so there is no worry of over-wetting your fabric or foam. Over wetting the fabric can weaken it, cause it to shrink, or cause it to distort. Over wetting of the foam could lead to mould or mildew developing. . The unique counter-rotating brushes are designed to restore the "hand" or feel of your fabric while they deeply, but safely agitate loose the dirt, soiling, and debris. This dirt is then extracted with just the right amount of vacuum suction to remove the dirt without distorting the fabric.



Why “green” is important and is your choice of company really “green”?



More families are concerned with the toxins in their homes, the health effects of the products they bring into their homes, and the legacy they are leaving for their children by the day-to-day choices they make. These consumers are choosing products and services that are marketed as “green”. If you feel making a “green” choice is important to you and to the long term health of your family, here are a few questions to consider when selecting your carpet and upholstery cleaning company

- Do they use non-toxic, biodegradable, and hypo-allergenic cleaning solutions?
- Are their cleaning solutions “Green Seal” or “Eco-Logo” certified?
- Does your company of choice use substantial amounts of water when cleaning your carpets?
- How safe is the waste water to dispose of if using toxic chemicals and is it disposed of properly?
- Does the process your carpet and upholstery cleaning company uses require that doors to your home remain partially open for their hose, allowing heat or air conditioning to escape?
- Many companies use truck mounted systems that burn fuel and spew exhaust as long as they are running. Is this a concern to you?
- Do the systems your carpet and upholstery cleaning company uses require large vans or can they use more compact and fuel efficient vehicles to carry them?



Conclusion

At first thought, selecting a carpet and upholstery cleaning company seems like a simple process. Pull an ad out of your mail box or look up a company on the internet. Call them for a price, and book them to come and clean your carpets or furniture. Most consumers don't put any thought into the process until they look around their home and realize that they can't put off the decision any longer.

You now have the answers to the questions you need to make an informed decision. If you research the service providers you are considering, call and ask them the questions you are now armed with, and check out their testimonials or referrals, you can feel confident that you will invite a company into your home that will safely and thoroughly restore the beauty to your carpets and upholstered furniture.



This consumer guide is written by Phil Shames and provided by



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