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## EC61-1154 Care of Carpets and Rugs

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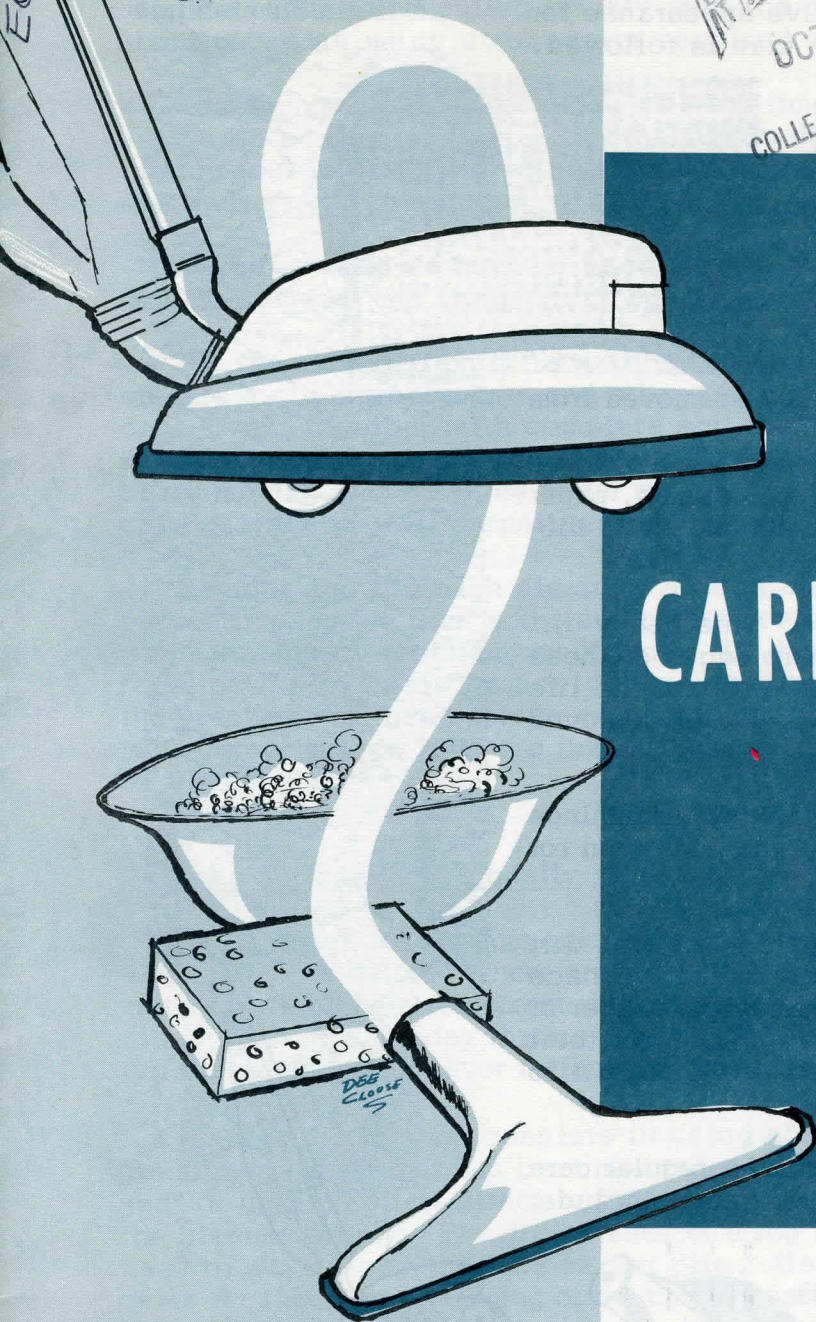
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# Care of CARPETS and RUGS

Extension Service

University of Nebraska College of Agriculture and Home Economics  
and U. S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

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# Care of CARPETS and RUGS.....

By Magdalene Pfister  
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Carpets and rugs will keep their attractive appearance for many years and last longer if a regular care plan is followed. A good maintenance program will include:

- regular removal of dirt and litter,
- occasional surface brightening,
- professional cleaning when needed,
- quick attention to spots and stains.

## Plan for Regular Care

There are several types of soil which must be removed from soft floor coverings. These are:

1. Surface litter -- hair, lint, fabric scraps, crumbs, paper and other deposits that cling to surface and often are quite difficult to remove.

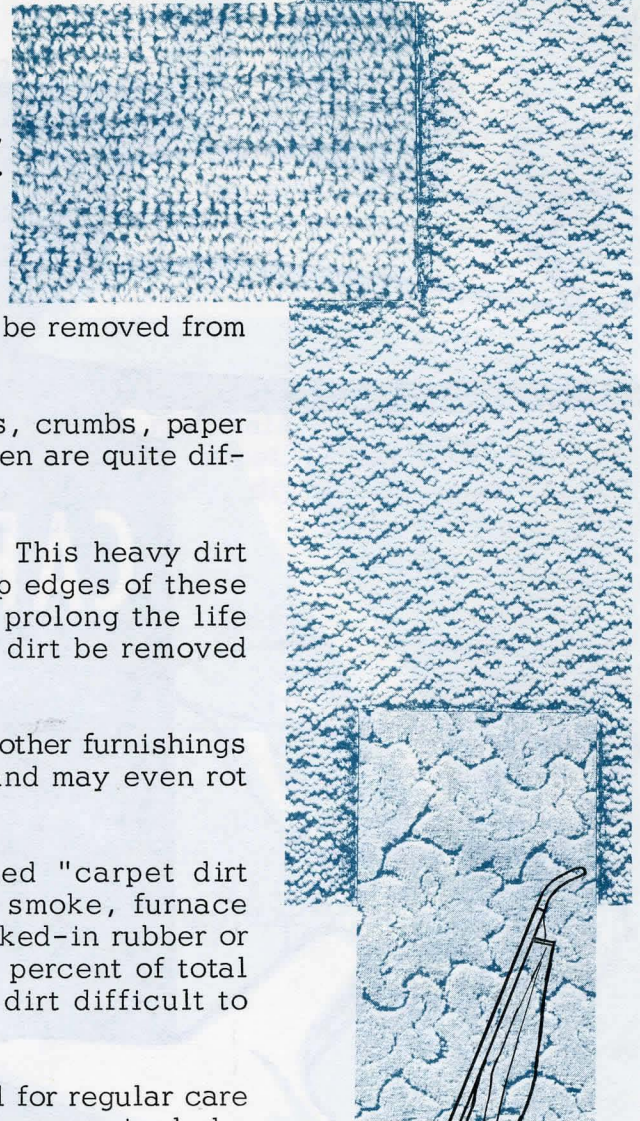
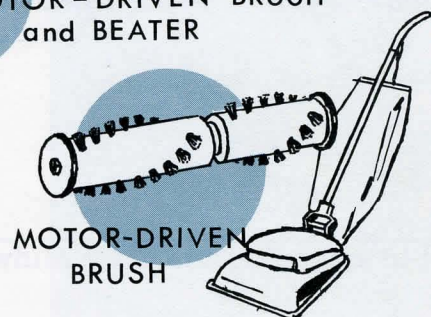
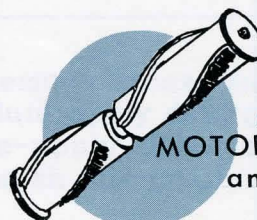
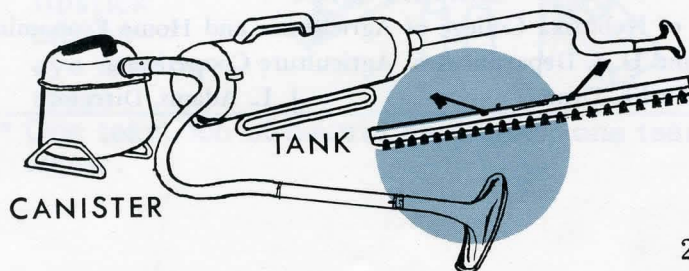
2. Gritty dirt - from sand, mud or snow. This heavy dirt sinks into the pile and out of sight. The sharp edges of these larger particles will cut the carpet pile. To prolong the life of any carpet or rug, it is important that this dirt be removed regularly.

3. Ordinary dust which settles on rugs and other furnishings dulls the appearance, causes color change, and may even rot the fabric.

4. A sticky substance sometimes called "carpet dirt grease." This comes from cooking, tobacco smoke, furnace and industrial exhausts, and particles of tracked-in rubber or asphalt. This oily element may make up five percent of total carpet dirt and act as a binder, making all dirt difficult to remove.

An efficient vacuum cleaner is the best tool for regular care of carpets and rugs. Types of vacuum cleaners include:

Upright with motor-driven brush and beater; upright with motor-driven brush; canister with motor-driven brush attachment; canister and tank without motor-driven brush. In a home where rugs and carpets are the major floor cleaning task, the upright is the best choice.





Different techniques are required for using upright and canister cleaners. With the upright, no pushing or pressing is required -- only guidance. The user needs only to move the cleaner slowly back and forth over a given area, two or three strokes for a light cleaning, four to seven for a thorough cleaning. The rug tool of a canister cleaner must be pushed and pulled briskly over the carpet, with a slight amount of pressure. About twice as many strokes are required when using the tank and canister types.

Research indicates that twice as much time and over three times as much energy are used with a canister type with brush as in doing the same job with an upright. When the rug tool is equipped with wheels or rollers or a motor-driven brush, the amount of energy required is reduced.

Carpet sweepers may be used for quick pickup of lint, crumbs and litter. They remove some of the light dust, but do not get the embedded soil.

For the average family, a daily quick light vacuuming is recommended, particularly on carpets in entranceways and other areas of frequent use or heavy traffic. This daily once-over, together with complete and thorough cleaning once or twice weekly, will keep rugs and carpets at their best. These weekly or bi-weekly cleanings should include moving and cleaning under all but the very heavy pieces of furniture and, in the case of wall-to-wall carpeting, the use of a crevice tool around the edges.

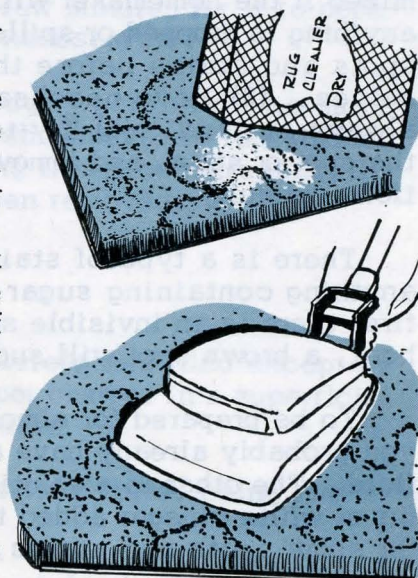
Regular and thorough cleaning of rugs and carpets is the most effective method of preventing damage from moths and carpet beetles. Most new rugs and carpets have been given an insect repellent treatment. In dark and humid areas of the home, insect-repellent sprays may be advisable. Instructions must be followed carefully, since incorrect use of these sprays may create new problems, such as encouraging dirt accumulation or mildew. Where insect damage is a real problem, professional help may be required.

### Brighten Surface Occasionally

Even though the vacuum cleaner is used regularly, in time the surface becomes soiled and colors are dulled. There are two types of home cleaning, the dry method and the wet method, which help to correct this condition. However, neither of these replace professional cleaning. Today there are many products, applications and machines to help with rug cleaning. Whichever method is used, the rug should be vacuumed thoroughly first.

1. The dry method consists in using absorbent powder or granular material that has been moistened with solvent or detergent or both. Follow directions on the package and distribute the cleaner evenly. The dry brushes of a rug shampooer can be used to work these into the carpet pile. Usually the method calls for thorough vacuuming of the carpet, sprinkling the powder liberally over the area to be cleaned, brushing it into the carpet, then another thorough vacuuming. Although this method will not clean the carpet as thoroughly as the wet method, it does have the advantage of less distortion of texture, better removal of greasy soil, no color bleeding and less drying time, thus making the room available sooner for re-use.

2. The wet method. Shampoo solutions are suitable for all types of carpets and are especially desirable for removing soil due to sugar and starches. **Caution:** Do not use soap, ammonia, washing soda, or any other alkaline cleaner because these may damage fibers or cause colors to run.







A solution of neutral detergent such as used for dishwashing or fine fabrics is made, using two heaping tablespoons to a gallon of water. This shampoo may be applied with a hand brush, with an applicator, or with an electric floor polisher equipped with a shampoo dolly. The solution should be applied sparingly so that only the face, not the backing, of the carpet is dampened. Rinse the surface of the carpet to remove as much of the detergent as possible.



Dry a carpet as quickly as possible to avoid damage to the backing or a brownish discoloration known as "wicking." Forced air from a fan or vacuum cleaner speeds drying. If furniture must be moved back while the rug is still damp, put thick plastic, aluminum foil, or waxed paper under it.

### Provide Professional Cleaning

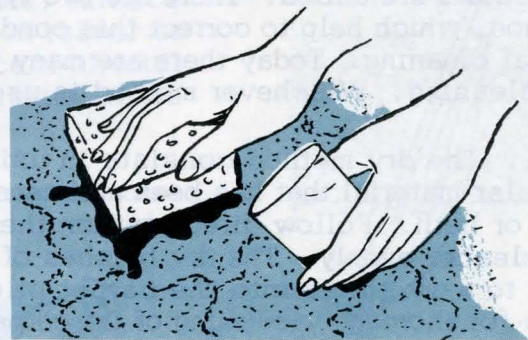
Once a year or as needed, it is advisable to have all types of carpet cleaned by a reliable carpet and rug cleaning establishment. Such a professional firm has the knowledge, experience and equipment to do a thorough job of removing all soil, even that which is deeply embedded. Complete rinsing and drying are also assured. Thus the original beauty of the rug is restored and longer wear is assured.

The carpet dealer may recommend a reputable rug cleaning company, or names of local cleaning plants may be obtained from the National Institute of Rug Cleaning, Bethesda 14, Maryland.

A rug that is easily taken up is best sent to the rug cleaning plant, where there are adequate facilities for putting it in good condition. Cleaning on the floor at home by a professional cleaner may be more convenient and economical for wall-to-wall carpet. Such work should be done before the carpet is badly soiled. Other types of work done by professional rug cleaners are spot removal, re-dyeing, repairs and rebinding of rugs.

### Remove Spots at Once

The dangers of spots and stains can be minimized if the homemaker will: (1) Act quickly when anything is dropped or spilled on a carpet. Remove spots and stains before they dry or "set" themselves. (2) Have necessary cleaning equipment always at hand. (3) Try to identify what caused the spot or stain, and remove it by following directions carefully.



There is a type of stain known as the "delayed action" stain. It can result when anything containing sugar, such as fruit juice, soft drinks or coffee, is spilled. At first there is an invisible sugar stain. Months later, after being exposed to sunlight or heat, a brown spot will suddenly appear because of a process known as carmelization.

To be prepared for almost any carpet spot you need only two simple materials which you probably already have among your household supplies. One is a good dry cleaning fluid. The other is a solution of one teaspoonful of neutral detergent and one teaspoonful of white vinegar added to one quart of warm water. Other materials may be required for some spots and stains, but these are safe only in the hands of skilled cleaners.

Basically, all stains are either water or oil borne. The detergent-vinegar-water solution is helpful in removing water borne stains while solvent is used for stains which



are oil borne. Such stains will require a procedure using a combination of these materials. See chart on last page.

If you do not know what kind of stain is on the carpet, follow this procedure:

1. Remove excess materials. In the case of liquids, absorb with a clean white cloth or other absorbent material. If semi-solid, scrape with a knife or spatula, or use a sponge.

2. Apply the detergent-vinegar-water solution. Use a clean cloth and wipe gently from the edge of the soiled area toward the center. At intervals blot with a dry, clean cloth to absorb excess solution. Dry the carpet.

3. Apply a dry-cleaning fluid, again wiping gently and working from the edges of a spot or stain toward the center.

4. Dry the carpet and brush the pile gently to restore the original texture. You may need to repeat the procedure. Avoid getting the carpet too wet, and be sure to dry the carpet as quickly as possible.

The following types of spots require special comment:

#### Nail Polish



The so-called "nail polish remover" is also a satisfactory spot remover for nail polish spilled on a carpet. However, both nail polish and polish remover will seriously damage any carpet containing acetate fibers and such cases require professional service. It is also true that some dyestuffs are not completely "fast" to polish remover, so test it first by applying it sparingly in some inconspicuous area of the carpet. If no damage appears, then proceed as follows:

1. If the stain is still wet, absorb as much polish as possible on a dry cloth, taking care not to spread it.

2. If the stain is dry and hard, apply polish remover to the area with an eye dropper and allow a few minutes for it to penetrate and soften the mass. Repeat if necessary.

3. Using a spoon with a dull edge, scrape off as much polish as possible. Then apply polish remover to the stained area and mop up the excess, repeating this procedure until the last traces of the nail polish have been removed.

#### Cigarette Burns



Cigarette damage cannot be completely remedied except by re-weaving. However, an area of carpet charred in a superficial manner can be improved by this procedure:

1. Carefully clip off blackened ends of tufts, using small, sharp scissors.

2. Follow this with an application of the detergent-vinegar-water solution as described in the general procedure for spot removal.



## Acid Substances

Weak acids, such as are found in fruit juices, will not damage a carpet and these stains should be treated as described under the section on "Stains" in the spot removal chart.

Strong acids are not in common use, but if these should be spilled on a carpet, prompt action is necessary. Flush the affected area with water. Sponge up the excess and repeat several times until the acid has been diluted and washed away. Finally, sponge the area with a dilute alkaline solution prepared by adding one tablespoonful of baking soda to a quart of warm water and rinse again.

By this time the carpet will be very wet, so be sure to dry it as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

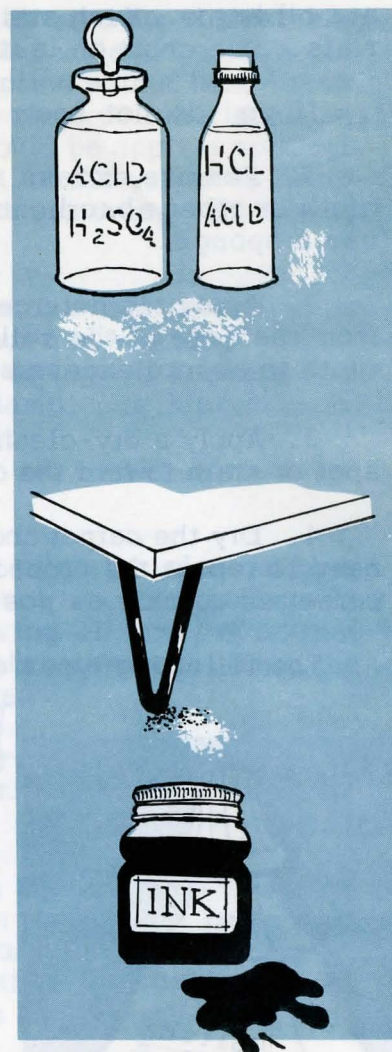
## Rust

Rust stains almost always require professional service because the cleaning agents required are dangerous when not properly used. In some cases, especially if the stain is fresh, the general cleaning procedure using the detergent-vinegar-water solution, may be successful.

## Permanent Ink

Permanent inks are strong, fast dyes and cannot be removed by any spotting procedure. However, prompt action in blotting up ink stains and washing with water may be successful.

When ink has been spilled on a carpet, try to determine if the ink is a washable type. If so, the procedure described in the chart under "Stains" will be helpful.



## OBSERVE THESE ADDITIONAL CARE SUGGESTIONS

①. Choose Your Carpet Wisely. Buy the best that money allows for areas with greatest traffic. Design and color determine to a large extent the care that is required. Neutral colors, tweedy mixtures and twist weaves are better where dust, soot and foot prints are a problem.

②. Protect From Accidents of spilling and dropping by using trays for informal food service, mats at outside door, and plastic under high chair and tubs with plants.


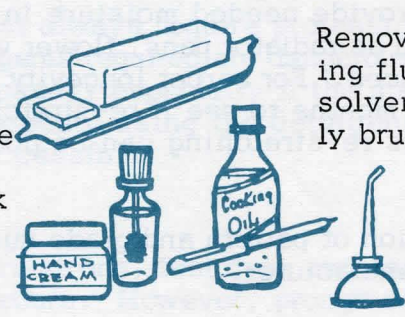

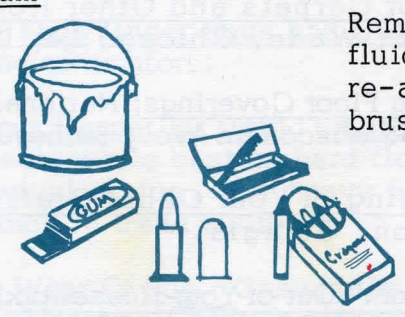
③. Use Good Pads Under Rugs and Carpets to serve as a buffer against wear as well as contributing to comfort.

④. Protect Your Carpet By Using Casters. Plastic wheels are better for nap surfaces. Rubber wheels while best on hard floors can leave marks on carpeting and also impede casters' swivel action. For heavy furniture use a wheel at least two inches in diameter and one inch in tread width.

⑤. Distribute Wear Of Rug. Change the position of rug and location of heavy furniture occasionally. Use small rugs in places likely to show wear, but don't put leftover pieces of carpeting on top of other carpets unless a piece of felt is put between. Buy an extra foot of carpet for the stairway and fold it under against one or two risers at the top. As necessary, shift the excess carpet downward before the edges look worn.



## REMOVAL OF SPECIFIC SPOTS AND STAINS

TYPE OF STAIN	PROCEDURE
<u>Foodstuffs, Starches &amp; Sugars</u>  candy soft drinks alcoholic beverages  <u>Stains</u>  fruit stains urine washable ink excrement	 <p>Blot up liquids or scrape off semi-solids; apply detergent-vinegar-water solution,* dry the carpet -- re-apply the solution, if necessary; dry carpet and brush pile gently.</p>
<u>Oily Materials</u>  butter grease shoe polish & dye furniture polish ball point pen ink cooking oil oil hand cream fats	 <p>Remove excess materials, apply a dry-cleaning fluid; dry the carpet; repeat application of solvent if necessary; dry the carpet and gently brush pile.</p>
<u>Oily Foodstuffs</u> <u>Animal Matter</u>  coffee tea milk gravy chocolate blood vomit salad dressing ice cream sauces egg	 <p>Remove excess material, absorbing liquids and scraping semi-solids; apply detergent-vinegar-water solution;* dry the carpet; apply dry-cleaning solvent; dry the carpet and brush pile gently.</p>
<u>Heavy Grease, Gum</u>  gum paint tar asphalt heavy grease lipstick crayon eye shadow rouge	 <p>Remove excess material; apply a dry-cleaning fluid; apply detergent-vinegar-water solution;* re-apply dry-cleaning fluid; dry carpet and brush pile gently.</p>

\* One teaspoon of neutral detergent, one teaspoon of white vinegar, one quart of warm water.