

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Carpet Care 101

The season of holiday entertaining is over. But did the increased foot traffic and occasional spill wreak havoc on your carpets? If your floor is looking a little worse for wear, it may be time for a deep cleaning. But should you try to tackle the job on your own or bring in the professionals?

The Carpet and Rug Institute suggests that carpet be professionally cleaned every 12 to 18 months, before it begins to show soiling. Regular vacuuming can keep your carpet looking like new, but deep extraction cleaning is necessary to remove ground-in dirt and stubborn stains.

If your carpet needs cleaning, first check with the manufacturer to see what it advises — some cleaning methods could void your carpet's warranty. Also be aware that carpet made of natural fibers (e.g. wool, silk, cotton/rayon or plant fibers) can be damaged by certain cleaning methods and may require extra care.

If you choose to go the do-it-yourself route, be sure to vacuum thoroughly before cleaning. Choose cleaning agents that are made specifically for stain-resistant carpet, never use a generic household detergent or cleaner. Follow directions closely and pay special attention to instructions regarding dilution and application. After cleaning, open windows or bring in a fan to speed up the drying process.

If you'd prefer to leave this job to professional carpet cleaners, look for recommendations from your local carpet

retailer or the Better Business Bureau. Most cleaning fees will be based on square footage, and there is usually no extra charge for furniture removal, pre-conditioning and routine stain removal. As always, be sure to obtain a written agreement before any work has begun.



Protect Your Home While You're Away



A burglary occurs every 15 seconds in America, according to the FBI's *Crime in the United States Report*. A majority of these crimes take place in the summer months when many homeowners are on vacation. Follow these steps to protect your home while you're away, so you can rest easy and enjoy your vacation.

Find a friend or relative to house-sit. This is the best option. Having someone in your home is the best way to deter potential thieves. Just be sure that it is someone you trust, and who is familiar and comfortable with your home.

Lock all doors and windows. If a house sitter is not a possibility, the first and most important step to securing your home is to lock every door and window in the house. Don't forget about small attic or basement windows. Also secure the garage door and any garage windows.

Use timers on your lights. Automatic timers simulate occupancy by turning lights and other appliances (i.e. televisions or radios) on and off at random intervals during the day and evening. These are available at most hardware stores and cost approximately \$20.

Don't close all your drapes. It sounds like bad advice, but drapes that are closed shut during daylight hours are a sure sign to potential burglars that you're not home. It also allows them to move around your home unseen after they enter.

Rely on your neighbors. Make sure that you find someone to pick up your mail while you're away. If you're going to be gone more than a week, find someone to mow your lawn. Also, be sure to give a trusted neighbor a key to your home and your itinerary in case of emergency.





Wanted: A Good Contractor

Your home is one of your biggest investments. So it's no wonder that when it comes time to make repairs or renovations to your home, you want to be sure that you've chosen a dependable contractor. It may take a little leg work to find the right contractor for your home, but the time invested will be well worth it.

A good contractor should have five or more years of experience. Most contracting industries offer professional designations that indicate a higher level of education and professionalism. You should plan to solicit at least two to three bids from prospective contractors, but the first thing to do is to ask friends and neighbors if they can recommend anyone. If they had work done in their own home, inspect the finished product. If you like what you see, you may have just found yourself a contractor.

Another option is to sign up with Angie's List (www.angieslist.com), a community Web site that pools customer reviews of contractors in various areas. It costs four to five dollars a month, plus a \$10 sign-up fee. Membership gives you access to hundreds of detailed reports of contractors written by those who have hired them.

No matter how you find a contractor, it's important to check their references. After talking with past clients, you should check county records to find out if your contractor has been named in any lawsuits. The Better Business Bureau is also a good resource to see if any complaints have been made against your contractor. Finally, make certain that your contractor is properly licensed by finding out what licensing or bonding requirements exist in your state.

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Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

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