

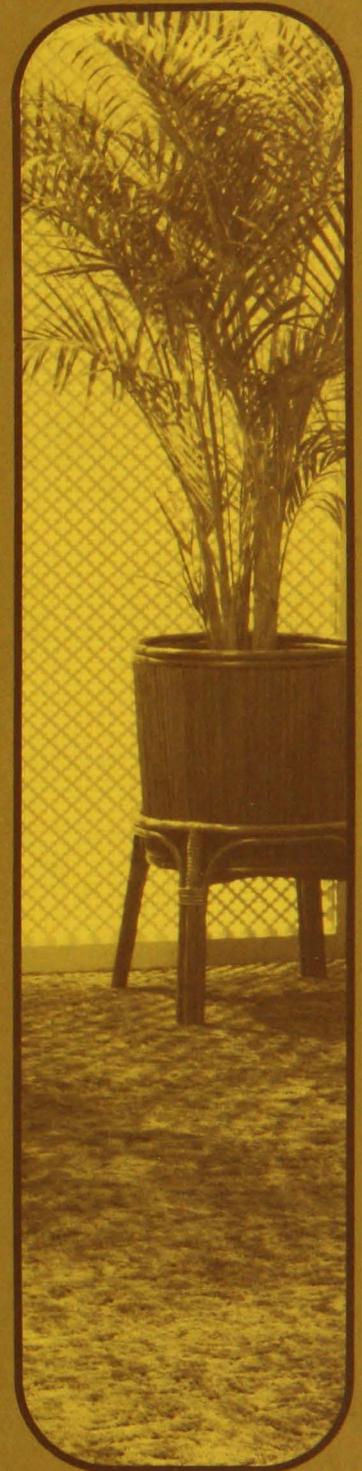
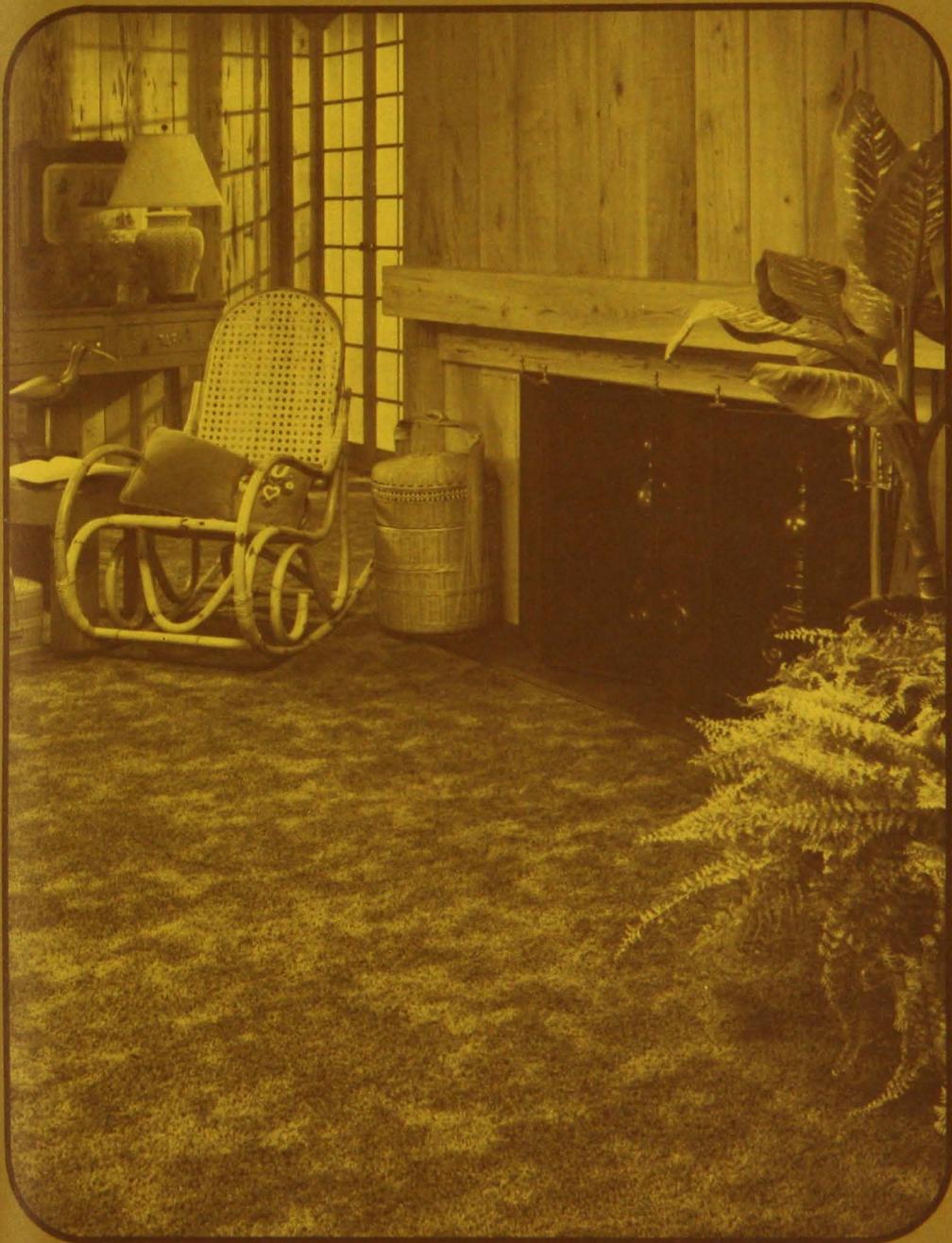
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# BUYING CARPET

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Extension Bulletin 409  
Linda E. Reece  
Agricultural Extension Service  
University of Minnesota

C1977

## Shopping Guide for Carpets

Consider the following information before you shop for carpeting.

Room(s) or area to be carpeted: \_\_\_\_\_

Who will use carpeting: Adults \_\_\_\_\_  Children \_\_\_\_\_  Pets \_\_\_\_\_

Expected wear: Light \_\_\_\_\_  Medium \_\_\_\_\_  Heavy \_\_\_\_\_

Size: Wall-to-wall \_\_\_\_\_  Room size \_\_\_\_\_  Area rug \_\_\_\_\_

Measurements of area to be covered:

Amount and direction of sunlight: \_\_\_\_\_

Colors in room: \_\_\_\_\_

Colors in neighboring rooms or hallway: \_\_\_\_\_

Color choice(s) for carpeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Texture: Plush \_\_\_\_\_  Shag \_\_\_\_\_  Level Loop \_\_\_\_\_  
Multi-level loop \_\_\_\_\_  Level tip shear \_\_\_\_\_  Random shear \_\_\_\_\_

Fiber: Nylon \_\_\_\_\_  Acrylic \_\_\_\_\_  Olefin \_\_\_\_\_  
Wool \_\_\_\_\_  Polyester \_\_\_\_\_  Acrylic/Modacrylic \_\_\_\_\_

Special features desired:

Carpet care equipment needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Price range desired: \_\_\_\_\_

# BUYING CARPET

Today there is carpeting available for every room in your home and spaces outside the home. Careful planning and shopping will help you get the most for your home furnishings dollar. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Where will you use the carpet?
2. How long do you plan to keep it?
3. Where are the most heavily traveled areas in your home?
4. Who will use it most?
5. Are there pets? What kind? How many?
6. What color and texture will create the mood you wish to set in the room?
7. How much can you spend?
8. Do you rent or own your home?
9. What care is recommended for the carpet?
10. How will you care for your carpet?

## Color

Color will probably be the first factor to consider as you are planning and shopping for carpeting. Keep in mind the over-all mood you wish to create in the room and the colors of your other furnishings. If you are doing an entire room or a whole house, choose the carpet color(s) first, and then coordinate the rest of the furnishings with your color choice.

You will have to decide whether to keep your floor neutral in tone so that you can build several different color schemes around it or whether to select a color or pattern that could limit choices. Unusual colors and

patterns may not be as versatile as neutral colors, but they are more exciting and interesting.

Multi-color and multi-level carpets show less soiling than plain smooth one-color carpets.

Color	Good	Fair	Poor
White, pastel colors			X
Yellow, gold			X
Orange		X	
Green	X		
Blue	X		
Dark (shows dust)	X	X	
Multi-color	X		
Tweeds	X		

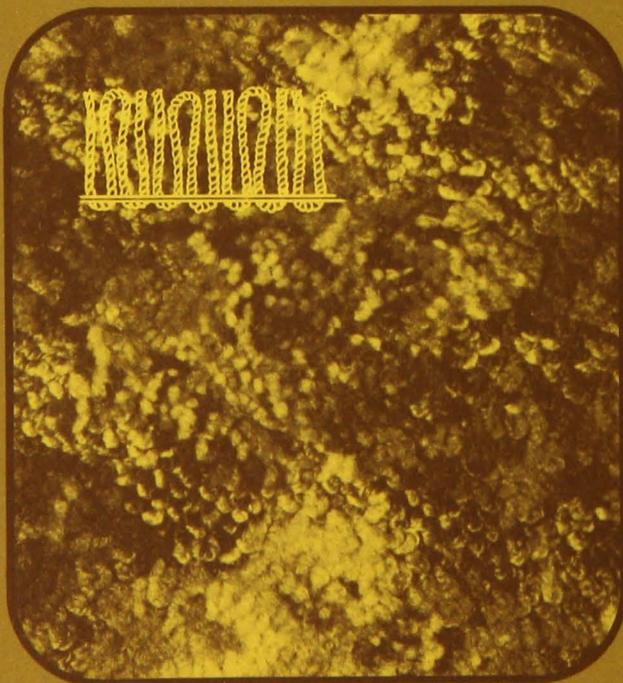
Some colors show less soil than others. They have high soil concealability. Blues and greens show the least soil, while yellows and golds show the most. (See chart) All very light colors and white show soil quickly and soon lose their original appearance. Dark colors show lint and dust if the carpet is darker than the soil. A good rule of thumb for the choice of color for any floor is to select a color value, between the lightest and the darkest, that exactly matches the color value of the soil that will be tracked in. This does not mean that you can neglect your carpet. Carpet still must be vacuumed to remove whatever soil accumulates before it is forced down deep into the pile.

Before you decide on a particular style and color, take several carpet samples home to look at in the room where they will be used. How do the colors and styles look when placed with your other furnishings? Do the colors seem to change in daylight or in the incandescent or fluorescent lighting in your home?



**Plush**

**Level Tip Shear**



**Level Loop**



Photo courtesy Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

### Style And Texture

Choose texture according to the mood and over-all appearance of the rooms.

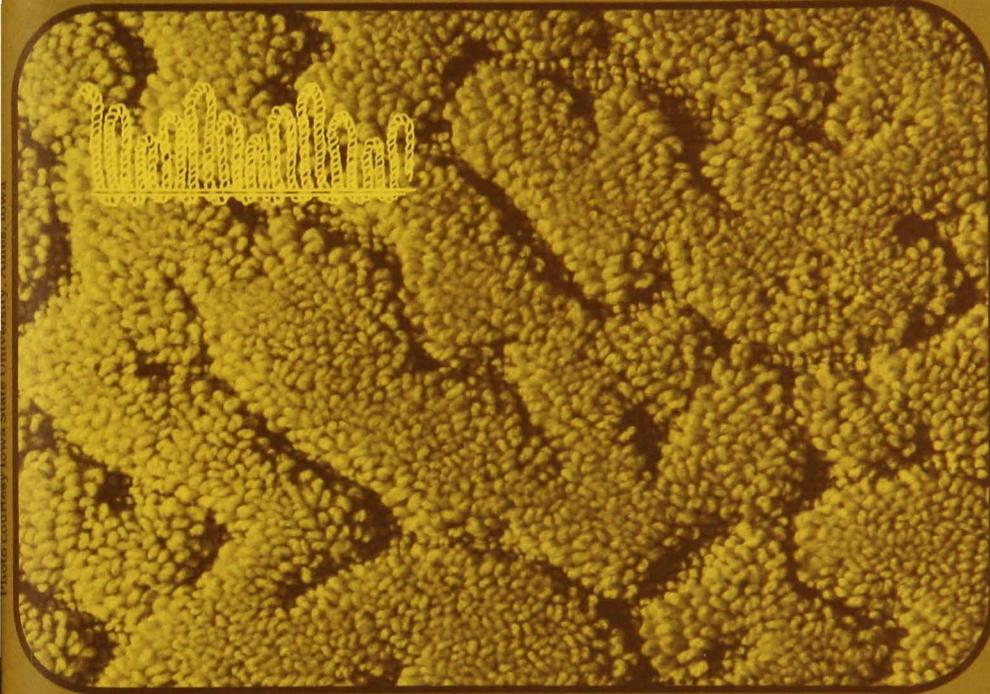
1. Plush—This creates a formal, luxurious appearance. Any plush pile carpeting is characterized by high lights and shadows usually referred to as "shading".
2. Carved or Sculptured—The multi-level pile gives an informal effect. Hides footprints.

Multi-Level Loop—All yarns are looped and loops are of several different levels. This hides footprints and dust better than level pile.

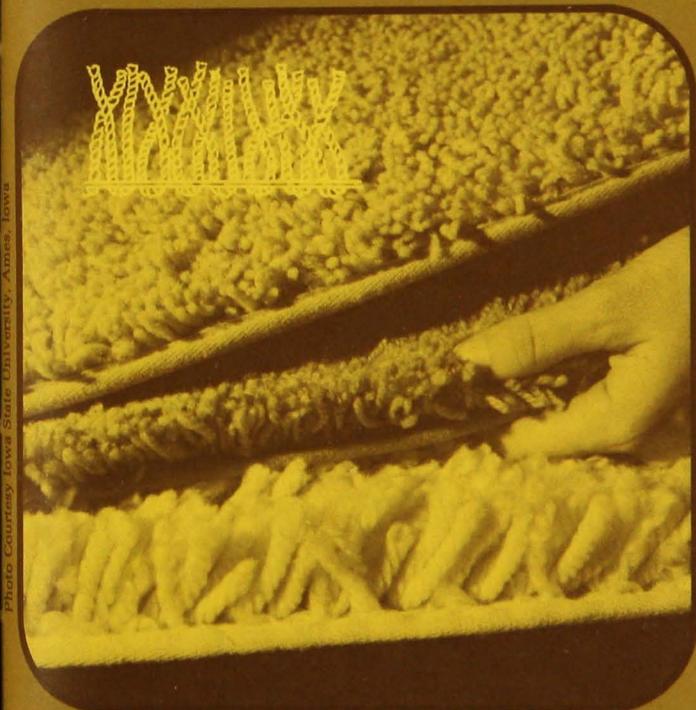
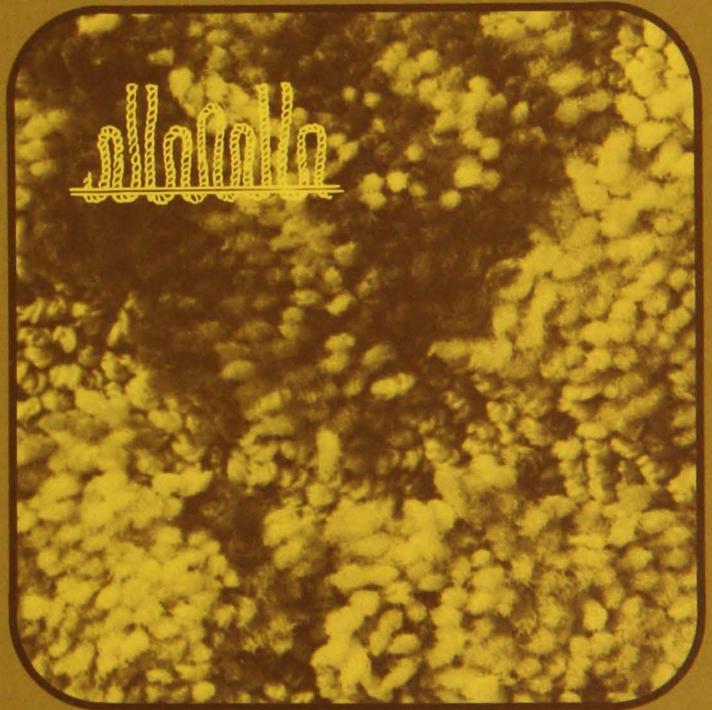
Random Shear—This is similar to multi-level loop except that the highest level of loops is cut. It hides footprints and dust but is harder to vacuum.

3. Level-Loop—This texture is most practical for heavy traffic areas. It is available in tweeds, solids, or printed. Spills clean up easier with a thick, high-density pile.
4. Level Tip Shear—This carpet surface is level, with some yarn loops cut and some uncut. It is easy to vacuum and hides footprints better than a plush pile. It tends to show dust and lint readily.
5. Shag—It creates an informal atmosphere. The longer the shag, the more casual the mood, but it requires more effort to clean and rake.

## Multi-Level Loop



## Random Shear

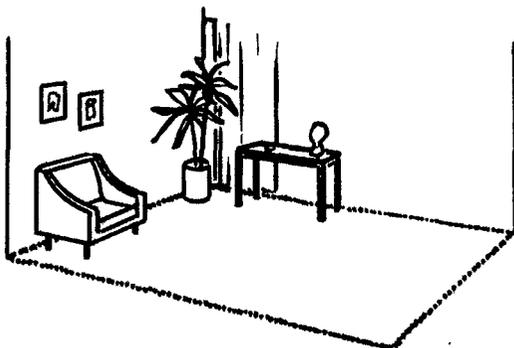


## Shag



## Rug And Carpet Sizes

Consider how much floor area you want to cover with a carpet or rug. Carpet extends from wall to wall and is attached to the floor. A rug is a loose floor covering which usually does not cover the floor from wall to wall. Broadloom carpeting is made in widths of 9, 12, and 15 feet. Stair and hall carpeting may be found in 27-inch widths or may be cut from broadloom rolls.

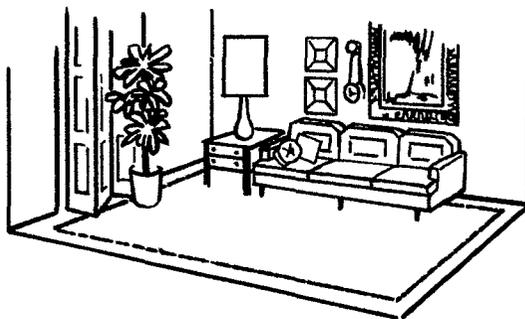


### WALL-TO-WALL CARPETING

- Conceals bare or unsightly floors
- Unifies rooms and furnishings
- Makes a room appear larger
- Has a luxurious appearance
- Makes a floor warmer
- Allows cleaning to be done in one operation with one piece of equipment
- Does not permit turning for distribution of wear
- Usually cannot be taken with you when you move
- Cannot be removed for commercial cleaning outside the home

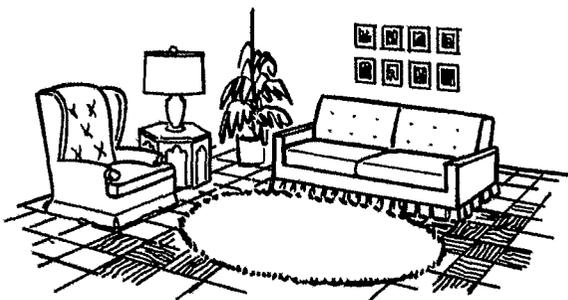
### ROOM-SIZE RUG

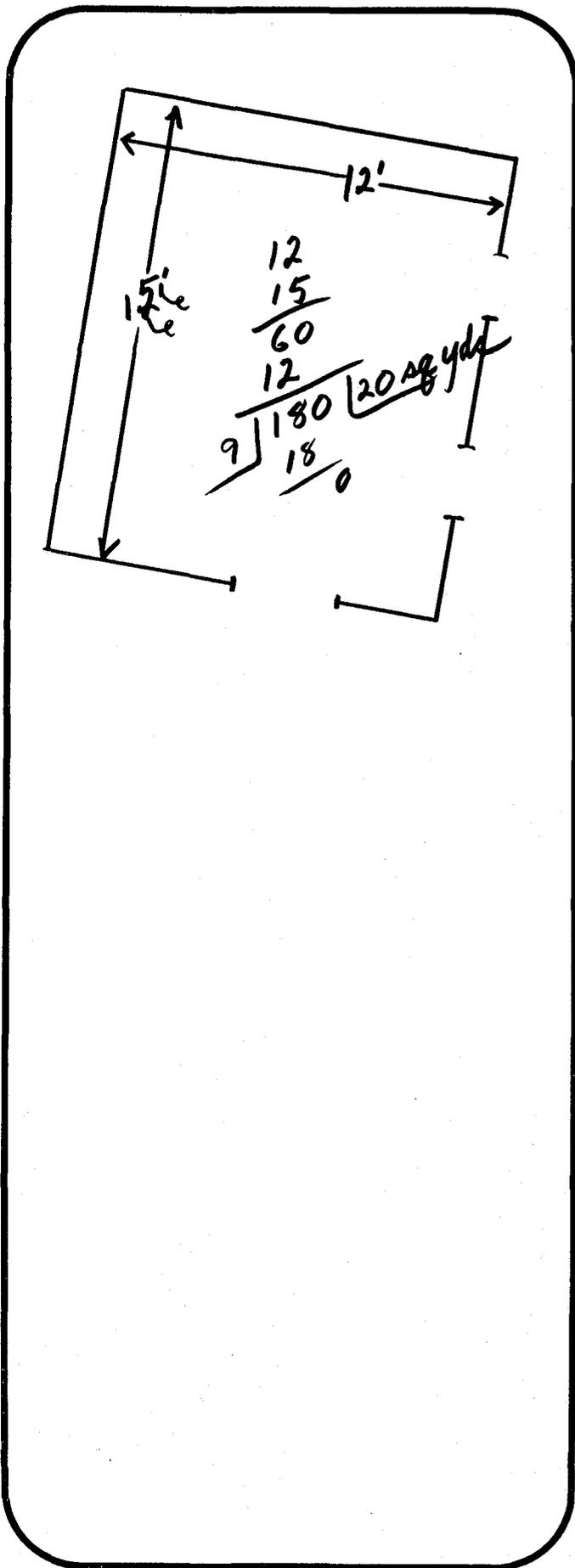
- Can be taken outside the home for cleaning
- Can be used in another room or home
- Eliminates installation costs but usually includes binding costs
- Can be turned to distribute wear
- May be less expensive than wall-to-wall carpeting
- In small rooms the space left at the sides of the rug may be from 6 to 9 inches wide
- In large rooms the space left at the sides may be from 12 to 18 inches
- Two floor surfaces mean more work and equipment for cleaning (wood or tile and carpet)



### AREA RUG

- Provides a concentrated area of color or pattern
- Shows attractive floors
- Unifies a conversational grouping
- Gives a furnished look when a larger carpet is not feasible
- Separates one area from another in a multi-purpose room
- Is easily moved from one home to another
- Large variety of sizes, shapes, and patterns
- Priced as a unit rather than by the yard





## Figuring Yardage

There are usually three items of cost to be figured in estimating the approximate cost of your carpeting. The carpet itself is priced by the square yard and you can estimate the cost by measuring your room and finding the number of square yards needed to cover the area. Add some extra for carpet that extends into the doorways. If a room is not exactly 9 feet, 12 feet, or 15 feet, the usual widths carpeting is made, you will lose what has to be trimmed off to make the carpet fit your room. Some of the trimmed sections can be pieced for use in hallways. Sometimes there is considerable loss to keep the carpeting running in the same direction in "L"-shaped rooms or in adjoining hallways. To the cost of the carpeting you will need to add two more costs: those for cushioning and for installation. There are four methods of installation: tacking, stapling, tackless with a wood strip, and application with adhesive. Some carpets have factory-applied foam rubber cushions. With these you need no additional cushioning.

## Fibers

All fibers have advantages and disadvantages. Analyze which one is best for your situation, according to the following performance characteristics:

Abrasion resistance—durability or resistance to friction

Resilience—ability of a fiber to bounce back to its original shape after being crushed

Texture retention—ability of fiber to retain the original appearance

Soil resistance—resistance to dry soil, water-borne stains, and oily stains

Cleanability—ability of soil to be effectively removed by ordinary cleaning methods

Flammability—ability of a fiber to ignite and burn. Burning characteristics of carpets are dependent upon the fiber, the length and density of the pile, the twist of the yarn, flame retardant finishes, and the heat source

Heat resistance—the ability of a fiber to resist melting when subjected to sparks or heat.

Physical Characteristics	Wool	Acrylic	Nylon	Polyester	Olefin
Abrasion Resistance	Good	Good	Exceptional	Very Good	Fair
Resilience	Exceptional	Very Good	Good	Average	Average
Texture Retention	Very Good	Good	Exceptional	Good	Average
Soil Resistance	Very Good	Good*	Good	Good*	Very Good
Cleanability	Good	Good	Very Good	Good	Very Good
Flammability	Low	Moderate**	Slightly higher than wool	Slightly higher than wool	Moderate
Heat Resistance	Scorches and chars	Softens 400°-490°F.	Melts 420°-480°F.	Melts 480°-500°F.	Softens 285°-330° Melts 320°-350°

\* Some oil-based stains may be difficult to remove.

\*\* Modacrylic/acrylic blends may be used to reduce flammability.

## HOW TO TELL CARPET QUALITY

The density of pile refers to the closeness of tufts (yarns) and is one of the most important factors in the life of a carpet. The closer the yarns, the more durable the carpet is likely to be. Brand name or fiber alone does not determine quality. Density is the most important factor to consider in determining carpet quality. Checking the specification sheets to determine density may be possible. Ask your dealer to show them to you.

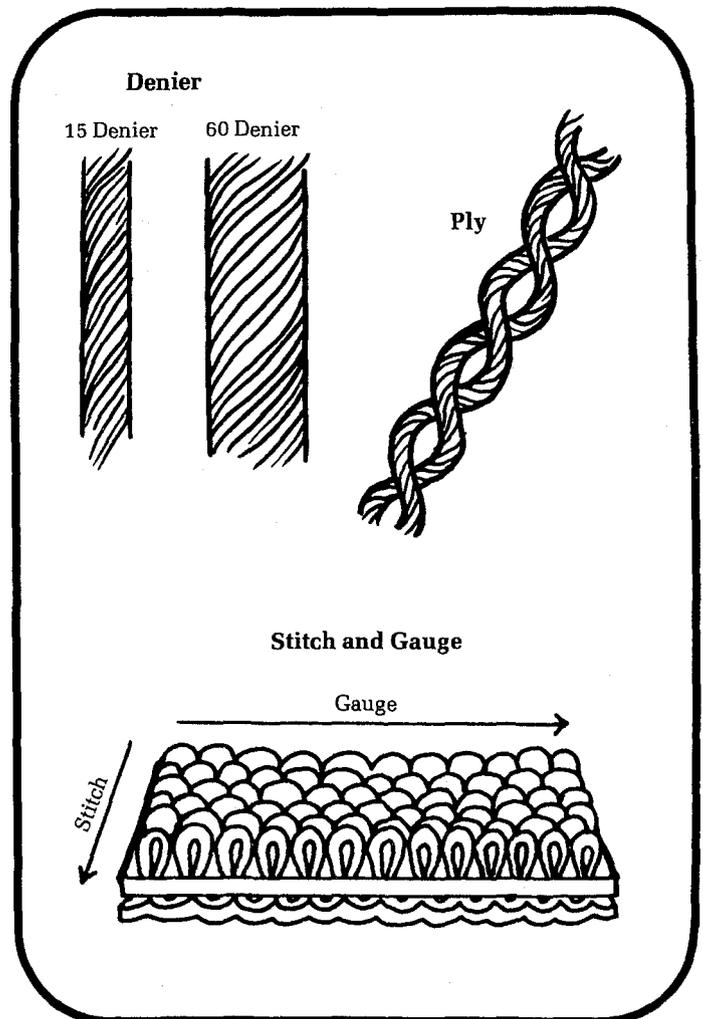
**Denier**—the size and weight of the yarn. The larger the denier number, the better the carpet. The denier of the yarn is the weight in grams of a piece of yarn 9,000 meters long. For example, a nylon yarn 9,000 meters long that weighs 1,300 grams is a 1,300 denier yarn.

**Ply**—number of single yarns twisted to form one yarn (2-ply, 3-ply, 4-ply). Usually the greater the number of yarns twisted to form one yarn, the better the carpet.

**Stitch and Gauge**—together these two equal the number of tufts per square inch. Stitch measures the number of tufts vertically and gauge measures the number of tufts horizontally. (Caution: compare only the same textures, since shag carpeting will have a lower number than plush or other styles. Shag needs more space between tufts for the texture characteristics.)

**DENIER + PLY + STITCH + GAUGE = DENSITY**

Simply add up these numbers. The highest number will give you the greatest density.



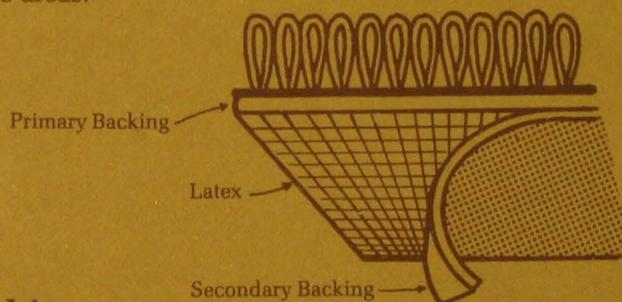
## Construction

The three most common types of construction from most expensive to least expensive are: (1) woven, (2) tufted, and (3) needle-punched.

**Woven**—The weaving process is more complicated and takes longer. This accounts for its relatively high price. It is easily identified because the carpet can only be rolled in the direction in which it was woven.

**Tufted**—This is the most popular, widely used construction. It is made on a machine that loops the yarn into a jute or synthetic backing. Yarns are either cut or left in loops.

**Needle-punched**—This method is often used for indoor-outdoor carpeting. Needles compact up to 6 inches of carpet fibers, usually olefin, into a surface approximately  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick. Its density makes it useful for high traffic areas.



## Backings

Tufted carpets have two backings, made either of jute or synthetic fiber. The tufted machine constructs the loops

on a primary backing. A latex coating is applied to this first backing to keep the tufts in place. The secondary backing gives dimensional stability and helps to keep the carpeting from stretching out of shape.

## Labels

Reading labels will help you know what you are getting for your money. Use this information to compare the quality and price of various carpets.

The Textile Fiber Products Identification Act of 1960 specifies that the label must include:

Brand name and carpet company

Pattern and color name

Fiber content (unless under 5 percent by weight). It takes at least 15 percent of any fiber to show the characteristics of that fiber in the finished product.

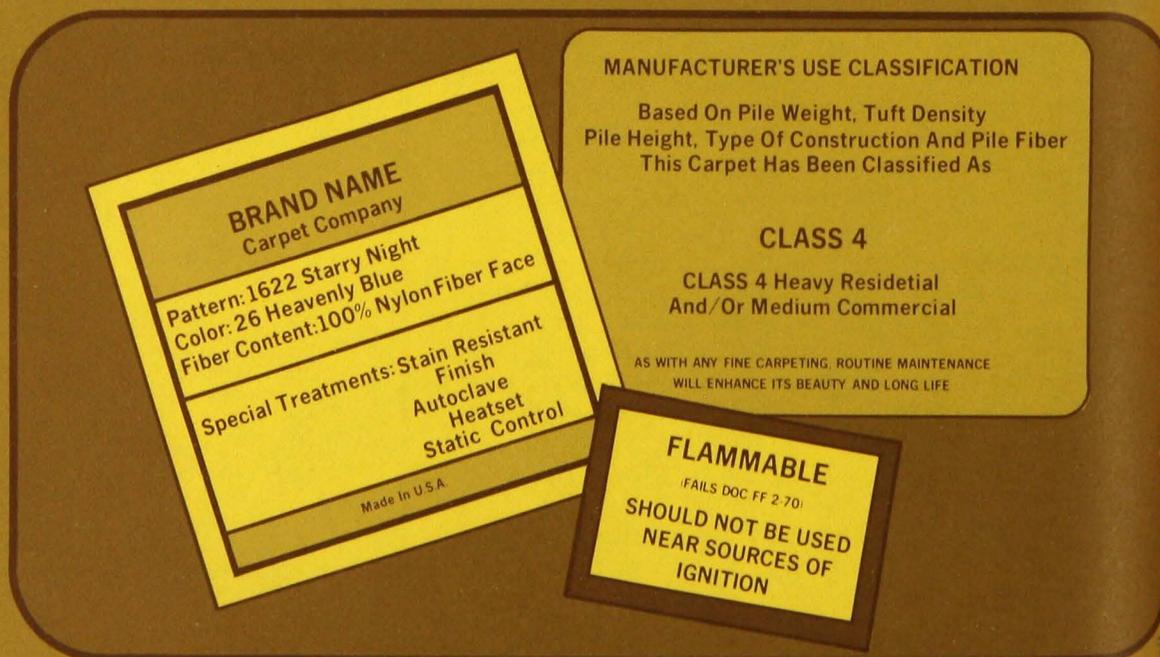
Any treatment applied to the carpet, except non-flammability. This includes soil and stain resistant finishes or anti-static finishes.

Country or origin, unless it is the United States.

Some companies indicate the type of traffic for which the carpet is intended—heavy, moderate, or light. This is helpful, but not required.

Flammability standards have been in effect since 1971. Labeling laws vary. All wall-to-wall carpeting must pass the test and does not necessarily need to be labeled. Scatter and area rugs must be tested also. If they fail, they must be labeled "flammable."

## Labels



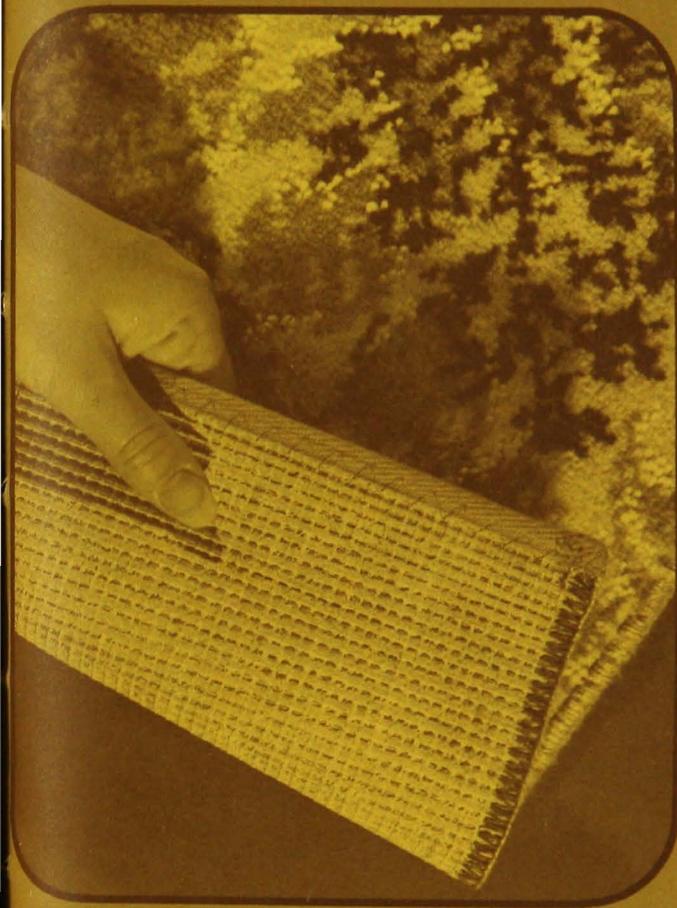
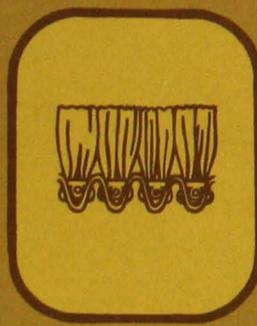
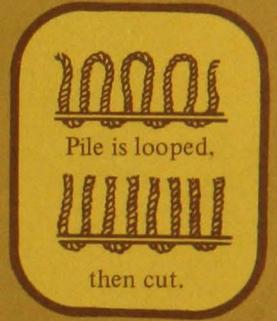


Photo courtesy Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa



**Woven**



**Tufted**

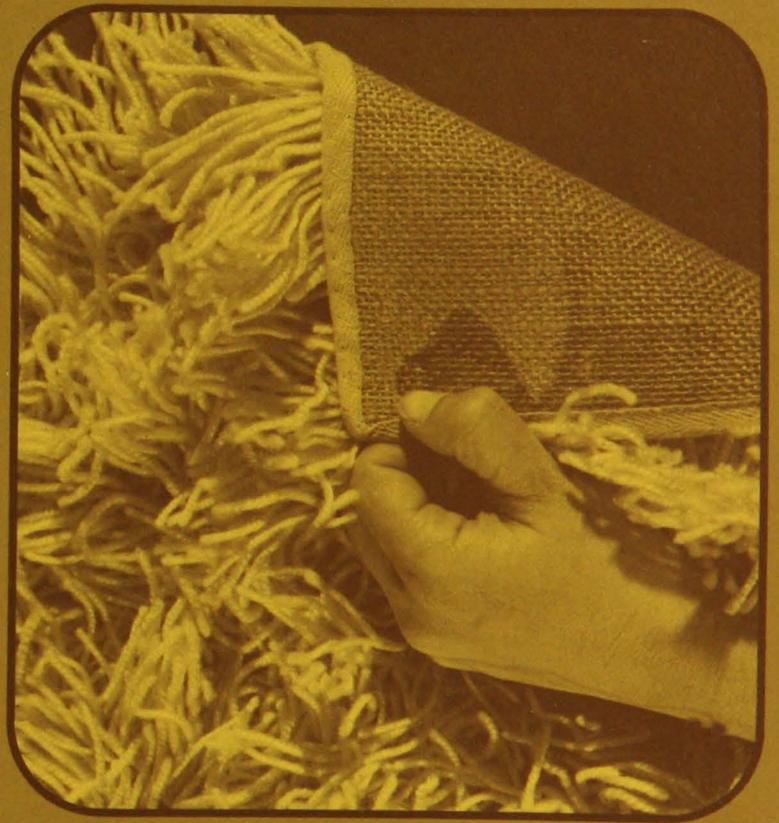
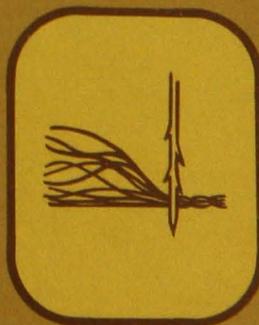


Photo courtesy Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa



Photo courtesy Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

**Needle-punched**



## Padding

A good quality padding will add to the comfort of your carpet and help insulate against noise, heat, and cold. Padding will help to increase the life expectancy and ease of care of every carpet, especially the inexpensive ones. (Caution: do not depend on padding to compensate for poor quality carpeting in areas of medium to heavy traffic.)

Look for a padding that is firm but soft enough for comfort. A very soft padding may be appealing but is more apt to produce leg fatigue. The carpet backing may stretch and possibly break under heavy weight.

Paddings for rugs and carpets are made from several different materials. Usually a carpet store and installer will recommend one type over another as being the most effective. Common types of padding are:

Felt or Hair. There are four kinds of felt padding:

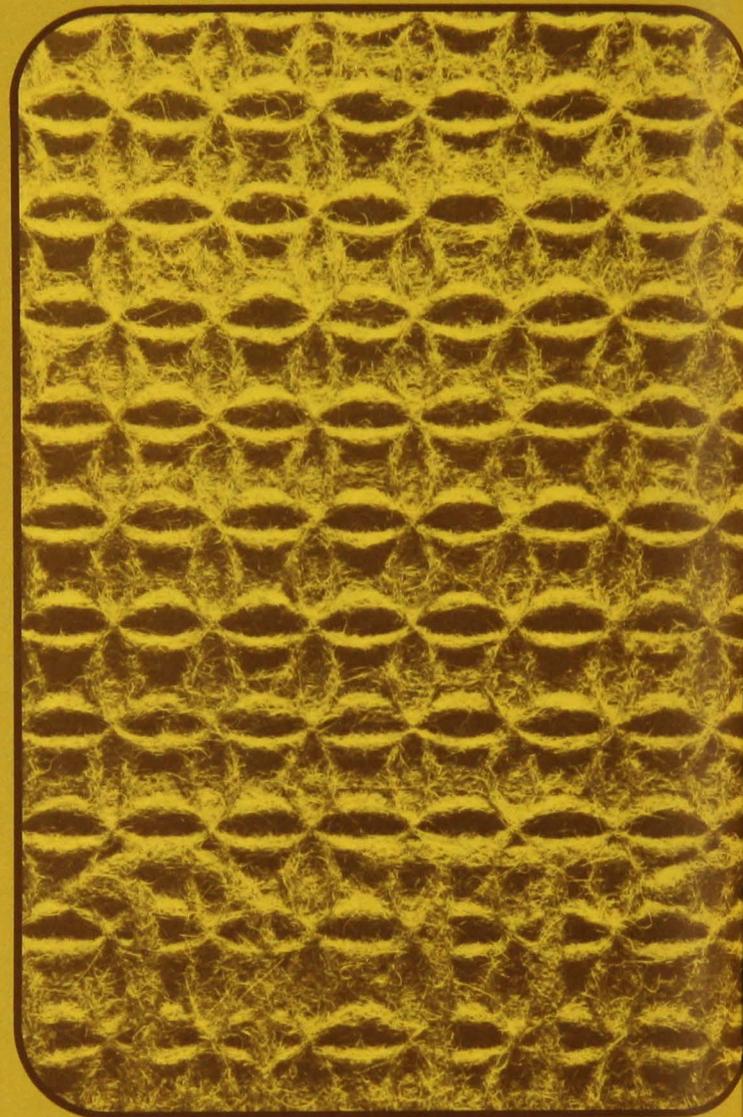
1. Hair Felt (100% animal hair)
2. Combination felt (animal hair and other fiber)
3. Fiber felt (100% fibers)
4. Rubberized felt (rubberized backing applied to any of the above).

The grade of hair or felt padding is determined by weight per square yard. One-fourth to three-eighths inch thickness, ranging in weight from 32 to 86 ounces per square yard, is recommended for home use. Felt paddings are sturdy and absorb impact well, but tend to mat. They can be used for light, moderate, or heavy traffic areas. Since they can mildew if continually damp, they are not suitable for use on concrete slabs or in basements.

Those paddings that are coated on one or both sides with rubber give increased stability and protection from moth and mildew damage. An embossed waffle design will help to reduce skidding.

Foam or Sponge Rubber. Paddings of foam or sponge rubber are moth, beetle, mildew, mold-proof and non-allergenic. They are very slow in drying, so it is best to use this type of padding where there will be no problem with moisture. Foam or sponge cushioning is sold by weight or thickness. In choosing this type of underlay, consider the effect you want, the depth and texture of the carpet pile, the type of traffic, and methods of cleaning. For normal family traffic, the ¼ inch thickness or 40 ounce weight will do the job. On stairs and upstairs halls, use a little heavier weight for more peace and quiet.

Be sure to check the carpet and cushion at doorways to see if the doors will move easily over both thicknesses. A fiber facing on one side will keep the padding from stretching, will help in installation of carpet, and will prevent slippage of rugs after installation.



**Hair Felt**

**Foam**



Photo courtesy Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

## Rubberized felt



Photo courtesy Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

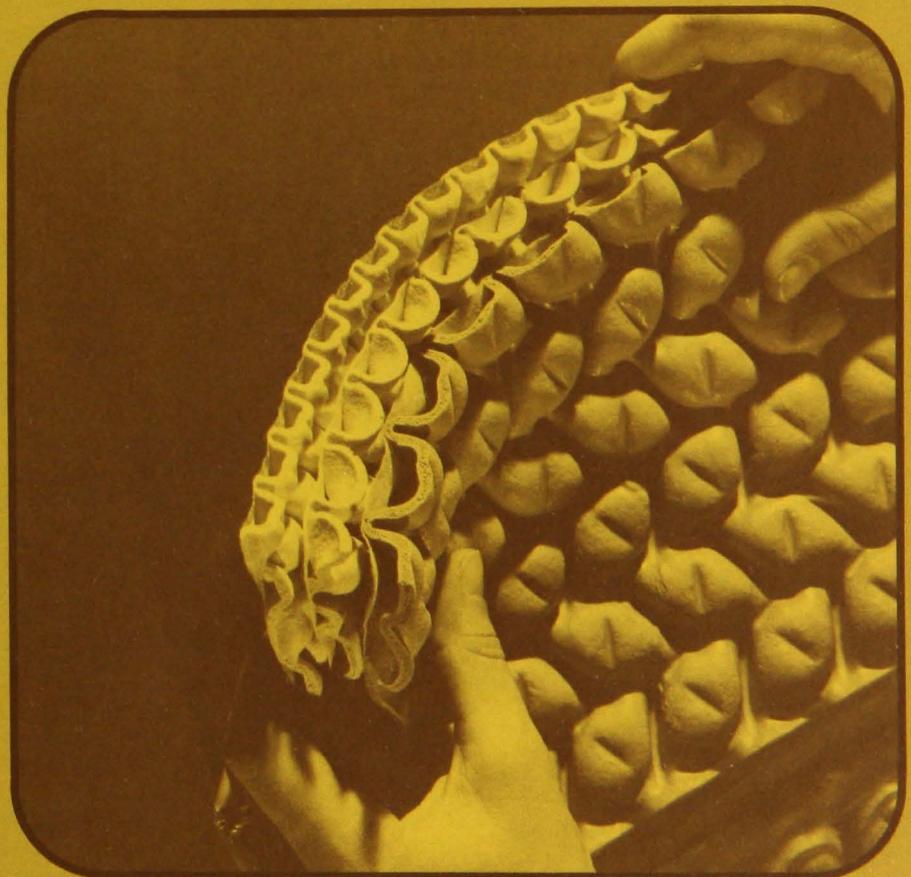


Photo courtesy Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

## Sponge

**Pneumecel**



**Urethane**



Photo courtesy Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

**Urethane Foam** is a light-weight cushion that provides a degree of firmness underfoot, depending on the resiliency achieved in manufacture. It is less buoyant than rubber but is more resistant to dampness and heat. It can be used on concrete slabs and in basements. A minimum thickness of  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch is recommended for home use.

**Pneumecel** This carpet cushion is a pressurized cellular structure chemically composed of a polyester and a fluorinated hydrocarbon inflatable bonded together with a thermoplastic, flame-retardant binder. Pneumecel has low flame spread rate, low smoke density, resists mildew and moisture, and does not absorb water. It can be used on wood or concrete floors, above, on, or below grade, or out-of-doors. It is available in two thicknesses, 30 and 48 inch. It gives firm, resilient support.

**Resinated Synthetic Cushion** This type of padding is  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch thick. It is made by bonding together clean cotton and synthetic fibers with a thermosetting resin under heat and pressure.

**Attached Pads** Many carpets come with pads laminated to the back. This padding is usually of foam rubber or urethane and should be at least  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick. Attached pads are usually thinner and less dense than a separate pad. However, they are usually used on less expensive carpeting and will probably last the life of the carpet. Cleaning can be more difficult, since attached pads tend to hold moisture and take longer to dry than separate ones. If the carpet is for a kitchen or utility room, be sure there is a moisture-proof barrier between the carpet and the foam rubber. If there is nothing on the label indicating the presence of a moisture barrier, then make a test by pouring  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of warm water on a small spot on the sample to see if water comes through. For more information on buying kitchen carpeting, see Form HF-1 (Rev.).

**Types of installation** There are two types of carpet installation:

- 1 Carpet installed over a separate cushion. This is the best installation and generally the least costly to install in the long run.
- 2 Direct glue-down cements the carpet directly to the floor with or without any cushioning. Because of the variety of carpet backings and sub-floors, the carpet manufacturer should recommend the method and/or adhesives to be used. Most adhesives have excellent properties, but each one does not have all the properties necessary for all of the different types of installations.

## As You Shop—

Plan for your needs before you shop. What colors and styles do you want to consider? What size would be best for your situation? Do you prefer one fiber over another? What special finishes do you want? How much can you afford to spend? How long do you plan to keep it?

One rule of thumb that is often used for carpet is to plan to spend \$1 per yard for each year you plan to use it. Buy the best quality you can afford for heavy traffic areas.

As you shop for carpet, compare choices and prices at several reputable carpet dealers. You should feel comfortable asking for information and advice when shopping. A reliable dealer will show different styles and qualities of carpet, explain procedures and costs of installation, and assist you in making a decision with which you will be satisfied. A reliable dealer will not use misleading advertising, high pressure sales tactics, or rush you into signing a contract that you have not fully read or understood.

## Before You Buy—

Be sure that you understand all of the information on the warranty or guarantee. This should be written, specifying exactly what is covered and what the retailer will do if a problem should occur. Note the time limit of any warranty or guarantee.

The sales slip should include the following information:

Name of the carpet manufacturer, dealer, or distributor

Style name, color, and number of the carpet

Kind of pile fiber. If yarns contain more than one fiber, be sure the weight percentage of each is listed.

Price per square yard

Total yardage

Description of padding and its cost

Installation cost

Finance charges

Full contract price

## Your Responsibilities—

**Be Informed.** Read labels, ask questions, get information about the product you are about to purchase.

**Select Carefully.** Compare a variety of styles, colors, prices, and qualities.

**Read Instructions.** Follow the recommended care instructions on the label or those you receive from the retailer. If you have questions, check with the retailer where you purchased the carpet.

**Guard Against Carelessness.** You are as safe as you care to be! Non-flammable carpets are not completely fire-proof. They are still susceptible to burns, scorching, and melting.

Follow Recommended Procedures if Dissatisfied

- 1 Let the retailer know if you are dissatisfied. Allow him time to inspect and service the carpet.
- 2 If not satisfied with the store's response, write to the manufacturer. Give details of the problem and allow a reasonable amount of time to investigate and respond.
- 3 As a final step, contact the Carpet and Rug Institute, Dalton, Georgia.



**Cover photo--Belle Mondo by Pepperell**

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