

IDEAL HOME

TRIED & TESTED

WAYS OF CLEANING CARPETS

of a similar living room carpet. I wasn't asked about specific stains, but a dirty tread line was visible on the stairs.

Tester's verdict: It perked up the pile, but this was more of a freshen up than a deep clean. I don't think I'd choose it again. However, because this is a dry method you don't have to worry about carpets shrinking or colours bleeding, and you can walk on it straight away. Also you can clean just one section—which can keep cost and disruption to a minimum.

SCOTCHCARE SERVICES

Cost: £1.75 per sq yd.

How it works: This is a hot-water extraction method. The carpet is given a shampoo and rinsed.

We cleaned: A five-year-old beige wool-and-nylon-mix living room carpet. It was fairly dirty with a pink drink stain and several marks from our dog's little "accidents". The cleaner asked lots of questions about the state of the carpet, and checked what it was made of. After vacuuming he used a shampooer, then a hot water

extraction machine with more cleaner, to remove moisture and dirt. Finally he raked the pile.

Tester's verdict: Excellent finish, all the stains disappeared and the carpet pile came up well. I'm glad I was warned that it could take up to 24 hours to dry properly because it wasn't until the next day that it felt completely dry.

SERVICEMASTER

Cost: £1.94 per sq yd.

How it works: A damp absorption process using a rotary machine that absorbs the dirt into an acrylan disc.

We cleaned: A 10-year-old oatmeal colour Berber carpet in the living room, with a black mark on it. The cleaner inspected the carpet, vacuumed it, groomed the pile and applied a pre-spray before using the machine.

Tester's verdict: The carpet was quite damp after it had been done but it was completely dry about six hours later. The colour of the carpet changed from a dirty grey back to beige and looked much better, though the black stain was still there. It also did a good job in lifting up the pile.

DOING IT YOURSELF

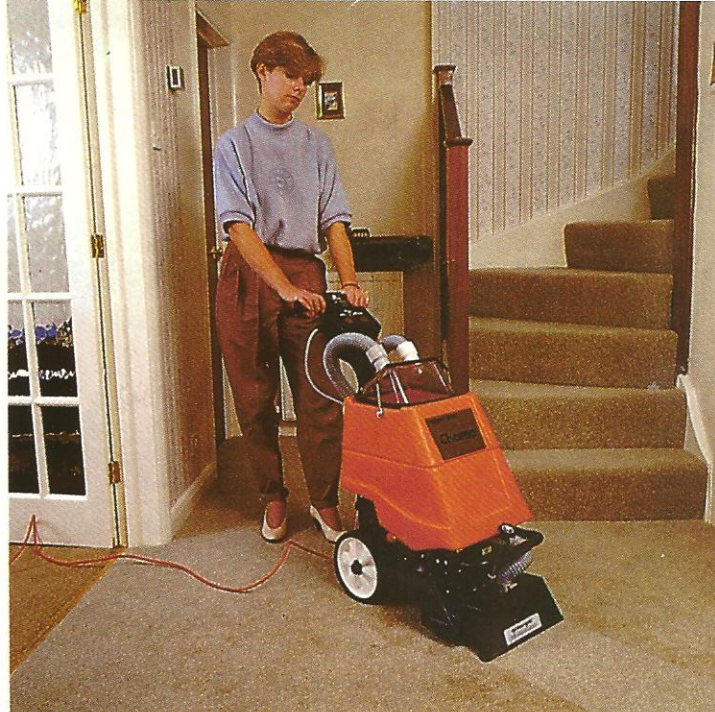
Cleaning your own carpets is cheaper and if your carpets aren't too dirty or stained you can get quite a good result.

We tried two DIY machines, both hot-water extraction models. We could see the difference they made to the carpets tested, but both methods were very hard work.

If you decide to clean your own carpets do follow the instructions carefully, whichever method you use. And take care not to use too much shampoo or soak the carpet.

VAX NEW WAVE 1100

Cost: £199.99 to buy the machine (you can't hire one of these);



Above: To save money, you could hire a DIY machine, like this Trewax Hydro-Mist Champ cleaner. But be warned: cleaning carpets is hard work

cleaning solution, £3.59 per ltr.

How it works: This method works with an upright three-in-one machine (pictured below) which vacuums, can suck up spills and also washes, circulating cleaning solution through the carpet pile.

We cleaned: A beige wool-and-nylon-mix hall carpet which was seven years old and quite heavily soiled from dirty shoes, plus the same carpet in the bathroom which was generally grimy.

Tester's verdict: The carpet looked much cleaner and brighter and had a good finish to the pile, but not all the marks came out. This is a versatile machine that's handy to have if you wash carpets regularly. One problem was that the water tube kept twisting and cutting off the flow. Also the tanks are small, so you need to keep emptying and refilling them. The carpet dried

quickly but the machine was noisy and heavy to move around.

TREWAX GEM

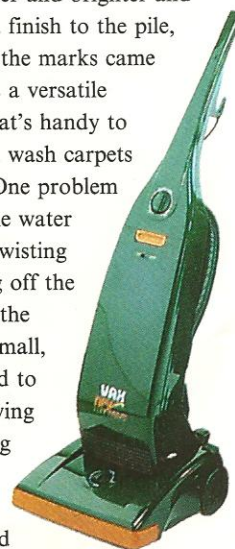
Cost: £20 a day for machine hire (£25 for a weekend) from specialist hire shops, launderers and dry-cleaners; cleaning fluid, £4.22 per ltr.

How it works: This is a domestic version of an industrial hot-water extraction machine like the Scotchcare Services machines.

We cleaned: A lightly-soiled dark beige wool-and-nylon-mix bedroom carpet which was seven years old, and the same carpet (only far grubbier) in the hall.

Tester's verdict: It's effective but I found it tricky to fill—it won't fit under a tap. Although easy to wheel, it's heavy to carry up stairs. I got a bit of a shock when I undid the hose and it squirted dirty water all over my clean carpet. I found it quieter than the Vax, but not as versatile. Like the Vax, it can also suck up spills.

For details of where to buy items featured here, see page 140



MAKING WORK FOR YOURSELF

It's widely believed that once you have your carpets cleaned they become dirty again more quickly. This isn't necessarily true, but is more likely when you clean a carpet yourself. Because DIY chemicals aren't as strong as professional ones, we tend to compensate by using too much, and it's not easy to extract surplus chemicals yourself. The result is a residue left on the carpets that soon starts to attract dirt.



Above: Safeguard your carpets—find a reputable company through the National Carpet Cleaners Association