

Carpet Cleaning Tips

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We asked the certified expert we consulted for our carpet cleaning story, Joe Polish of EthicalServices.com, to put together this consumer guide to help you protect yourself from carpet-cleaning scams: Here are eight mistakes consumers should avoid making when picking someone to clean their carpets:

8 Mistakes to Avoid

MISTAKE #1:

Choosing a carpet cleaner based on equipment alone. No question, your carpet cleaner needs first-rate equipment. But he also needs something else. He needs employees who are skilled at operating that equipment. Many companies own hot-water extractors, but very few companies teach their employees how to use them properly. The best way to know that the carpet cleaner's employees have been properly trained is to make sure the cleaner has been certified by the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC). Before you choose a carpet cleaner, ask to see written proof of the company's and the technician's IICRC certification.

MISTAKE #2:

Low price could be a problem in three ways: (1) low price can be the bait that attracts your phone call. But once the cleaner gets into your home, he pressures you into a much more expensive job. (2) Low price can be for single-process cleaning. Rarely does the consumer know what this means and, when told, ask for dual-process cleaning instead, which costs much more. (3) Low price means the carpet cleaner has cheap equipment, which will not effectively clean your carpet.

MISTAKE #3:

Choosing a carpet cleaner based on a single telephone call. Instead, invite the person to your home and ask for a specific written quotation. Then you'll know exactly what the carpet cleaner recommends – and you won't be the victim of high-pressure tactics when the technician steps into your living room.

MISTAKE #4:

Choosing a carpet cleaner who doesn't offer a money-back guarantee. In my view, every carpet cleaning company should be fully accountable for its work. And if you aren't pleased with the job in every way, you shouldn't have to pay for it. Period. Not all carpet cleaners offer a guarantee. Or, if they do, the guarantee may be "limited." Ask the carpet cleaner if he offers a money-back guarantee and then make sure the carpet cleaner includes his guarantee on his written quotation.

MISTAKE #5:

Choosing a carpet cleaner without getting comments from his other clients. Any carpet cleaner can say anything about his past jobs. And, sadly, some of what he says may not be true. Make sure you ask for references or read comments from current customers so you can depend on the carpet cleaner and his work.

MISTAKE #6:

Choosing a carpet cleaner who isn't certified by the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC). If your carpet cleaner isn't a close friend, you may not know whether he has the knowledge or experience to clean your carpet well. If you want to be sure you're hiring a competent professional, make sure he is IICRC certified. The carpet cleaner must earn that certification through study, experience and successful completion of formal, written examinations. In effect, cleaners who are certified by the IICRC have earned a college degree in carpet cleaning.

MISTAKE #7:

Choosing a carpet cleaner who isn't a member of the Carpet and Fabricare Institute (CFI).

CFI is a trade association of carpet cleaners who are dedicated to:

- (1) honest, ethical business practices,
- (2) staying current on the latest methods for carpet and upholstery care, cleaning and restoration, and
- (3) the highest possible level of customer service. You're making a wise decision when you have your carpets cleaned by a member of the Carpet and Fabricare Institute.

MISTAKE #8:

Choosing a carpet cleaner who doesn't use a truck-mounted hot water extraction system. You might expect this from me, since my employees and I use this type of system. But there are several good reasons. Portable hot water systems are good, but they aren't as good as truck-mounted systems. Truck-mount systems are the Rolls Royce of carpet cleaners. Compared with portable hot water systems, truck-mount systems use hotter water, higher pressure and stronger suction. So all the way around, you get a much better job. No two ways about it.

Joe Polish is a certified carpet cleaner. He is part owner of AA Certified Carpet and Floorcare in Tempe, Ariz., and President of Piranha Marketing and EthicalServices.com.

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