

What to Expect from a Good Cleaning Company

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Knowing what questions to ask is essential in avoiding problems. The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification is a nonprofit certification body that sets and promotes high standards and technical proficiency within the cleaning industry.

Here's what they say you should expect:

- **No hidden costs.** Expect itemized costs for services and firm prices before technicians begin each portion of the work sold. Consumers should never feel pressured to accept anything more than the services they request.
- Customer satisfaction. Cleaning firms should offer workmanship guarantees in writing.
- **Vacuuming.** The cleaner should start by vacuuming high traffic and open areas where soils accumulate.
- Moving furniture. Unless clearly specified, moving of most furniture to clean carpet underneath should be considered part of the normal cleaning job.
- **Spot-cleaning.** Special attention to spots is included in normal job performance. However, time-consuming specialized spotting may incur an additional charge. Customers should be advised of additional charges before extensive spotting procedures are undertaken.
- **Preconditioning.** Special treatment with "preconditioning" agents in heavily soiled entry, traffic and general areas should be included in the cost of the cleaning.
- **Minimal drying time.** It is the cleaner's responsibility to ensure that the carpet is dried and returned to normal use within a reasonable time frame. The amount of time required for drying will vary with different methods, the degree of soiling and the aggressiveness of cleaning necessary. But under no circumstances should drying require more than 24 hours with proper ventilation. However, the consumer's cooperation in providing continuous air flow and/or ventilation to expedite drying cannot be overemphasized.

NORMAL VS. SPECIAL

There should be no differentiation between a "normal" cleaning job and "special" cleaning job. Cleaning is cleaning. Diligent effort must be made to remove as much

soil as possible from the carpet. And technicians must take steps to leave fibers as residue-free as possible to prevent accelerated resoiling.

Do not expect an exact price quote over the phone. Honest, reputable carpet cleaning companies almost never price carpet cleaning by the room. Carpet cleaning is usually priced by the square foot; if you'd like to know the exact cost, you need to know the exact number of square feet you want cleaned. To get an accurate measurement, cleaners should use a measuring wheel or tape measure to calculate the exact size of the carpet area.

Other variables affect the price as well:

- The type of carpet. Some are harder to clean than others.
- The amount of soiling. Carpet that hasn't been cleaned for 10 years will take longer to clean than carpet that was cleaned within the past six months.
- The amount of furniture that must be moved. In many cases, if you move your furniture, you'll save money.

DIFFERENT METHODS AVAILABLE

In shopping around for a cleaner, you'll find out that there are several different cleaning methods offered. Obviously, each company will be biased toward their own method. And each method does have advantages. But some carpet manufacturers recommend specific methods for their products, so check your warranty before making a final decision.

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