



Highlights: Carpet and Rug Cleaners

Whether it's a nasty spill or all-over grime that has you seeking professional help, selecting the right carpet-cleaning company can make a big difference in the quality of the job, and potentially the lifespan of your carpet. **Bay Area Consumers' Checkbook**, available at www.checkbook.org, rates local carpet-cleaning companies, some of which do a great job for a reasonable price. Highlights from the article include:

- Of the companies Checkbook rated, 32 received the top rating for quality. The highest rated companies were more than twice as likely as the lowest rated companies to get "superior" ratings on Checkbook's survey questions on "doing work properly," "neatness," and "overall quality."
- It pays to compare prices. For most jobs, most companies will be able to quote prices over the phone. If you can't get over-the-phone quotes, request in-home estimates. Checkbook found big price differences among companies. To clean a living room, dining room, and hallway (a total of 330 square feet), prices ranged from \$69 to \$264.
- For in-plant cleaning of an 8x10 rug, including pick-up and delivery, prices among area companies ranged from \$80 to \$450.
- You do not have to pay more to get good service. Some of the lowest-priced companies received top ratings for quality.
- Beware of quotes by the "room." An L-shaped room, for example, might be one room to you but two rooms to a carpet-cleaning company.
- Don't pay more than necessary for add-ons, such as soil retardants and deodorants. With some companies, these cost little or nothing; with others, they can dramatically increase the price. The specific treatments and their effectiveness vary from company to company.
- You'll want to be sure to select a company that offers cleaning methods appropriate to your carpet. If your carpet is lightly soiled, any of the methods will probably be acceptable if performed properly. But in most cases, you're likely to be best off with a company that offers hot water extraction with truck-mounted equipment.

Advice for dealing with whichever company you choose:

- Clearly communicate what cleaning method you want used and which add-ons you want.
- Make sure to get the total cost in writing before the job begins.
- Before the serviceperson arrives, move prized valuables and vacuum the area.
- Point out each stain, explain what caused it and how long it's been there, and ask if the company can remove it. If so, ask whether it will remove each stain in the normal cleaning process or for an extra cost.
- Warn the company about carpet seams, furniture with weak legs, and other trouble areas.
- Don't pay until you've inspected the carpet. (It's OK to walk on it if you're careful.)
- If you discover spots or other problems after the serviceperson has left, call the company immediately.

The media may cite selected examples of top-rated carpet and rug cleaners, as shown in Bay Area Consumers' Checkbook, and Checkbook's editors are available for interviews. Please contact Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 or jlettis@checkbook.org to schedule.