

Consumer's Guide to Carpet Cleaning



**Learn 7 Costly Misconceptions about Carpet Cleaning
Plus 8 Questions you should ask ANY Carpet Cleaner
before you invite them into your home**

A Consumer's Guide to Carpet Cleaning

This is Joel Belmont. I'm grateful for the opportunity to provide you with information about carpet cleaning, so when you select a cleaning company, you can make an informed, intelligent decision.

As the owner of Belmont Clean + Restore, I have spent over 20 years cleaning textiles here in Roaring Fork Valley. I have attended numerous schools, workshops, and seminars to stay abreast of changes in carpets and fabrics. I hold multiple certifications by the IICRC (Institute of Inspection, Cleaning, and Restoration Certification) and I am a second-generation cleaner – my father Charles Belmont invented the unique system we use – and spent almost 50 years pioneering green carpet cleaning.

We've been awarded the prestigious Super Service Award from Angie's List (only a few companies in all of Colorado earn this award), we are a member of www.EthicalServices.com (as seen on ABC's 20/20), and we are the only Five-Star-rated service company in the valley on Home Advisor, Yelp, Google and Facebook.

During my years of cleaning, I've learned that carpet cleaning is the subject of much confusion. In fact, people have so many misconceptions about carpet cleaning that I decided to offer this consumer education message.

I'm going to share with you **7 Costly Misconceptions** about carpet cleaning, plus I'll offer **4 Recommendations** when choosing a cleaning company. And, I'll give you **8 Questions you should ask ANY Carpet Cleaner** before you invite them into your home.

MISCONCEPTION #1: YOU SHOULD WAIT AS LONG AS POSSIBLE BEFORE CLEANING YOUR CARPET.

ABSOLUTELY NOT! Dirt is an abrasive – like sandpaper.

Every time you step on the carpet, you grind dirt into your carpet fibers. This cuts your carpet, just as if you had used a knife, causing it to wear out faster.

A soiled carpet will not last nearly as long as a clean carpet. And while vacuuming helps – by itself, it's simply not enough. The longer you wait to have your carpet cleaned, the more damage you do to your carpet and the faster it wears out.

MISCONCEPTION #2: THE ONLY REASON TO CLEAN CARPET IS TO REMOVE SOIL AND IMPROVE APPEARANCE

NOT TRUE! As you probably know, outdoor air contains pollens, fungus, bacteria, air pollution, cigarette smoke, car exhaust – and hundreds of other harmful chemicals. When you and your family members come into your home, you carry those pollens and chemicals in your hair and on your skin, clothing, and shoes. Not surprisingly, all those chemicals, pollens and bacteria end up – you guessed it – in your carpet.

Carpet cleaning is not just about removing soil and improving the appearance of your home. It's about protecting your family and safeguarding their health by removing pollutants and contaminants that can affect your quality of life. In some instances, INDOOR AIR QUALITY can be 70-100 times more polluted than outdoor air. Since carpet is the lowest and largest horizontal surface, it acts as a “sink” or filter, which needs to be emptied and cleaned regularly.

Another factor to consider is that carpet fibers are made to hide and camouflage soil and debris. So, by the time you can see evidence of soiling, your carpet is already overdue for a cleaning. Naturally, some colors do a better job of hiding soil than others. For example, earth tone colors (browns) do a beautiful job of hiding soil, so you cannot depend on appearance as a basis for deciding when it is time to clean your carpets.

MISCONCEPTION #3: ONE METHOD OF CARPET CLEANING IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER!

No. In fact different carpet cleaning companies use VERY different systems, and many of them can cause soil to reappear soon after they have been cleaned, and can permanently damage your carpet and upholstery!

Here are the most common methods:

The first method one uses a water-based dry foam, which is applied to the carpet, allowed to dry, and then simply vacuumed. Can you imagine applying shampoo to your hair, allowing it to dry and then removing the shampoo from your head with a vacuum? This method can leave a tremendous amount of soapy residue in your carpet, and it doesn't provide adequate agitation to clean and lift the carpet fibers, making it an un-effective way to clean.

The second method is called steam cleaning, or 'hot water extraction'. This is a quick, one-step process where boiling temperature water, loaded with soap, is injected into the carpet at 400 POUNDS of pressure per square INCH. This carries soapy water through the carpet, and often through the carpet pad and into the sub-floor. It can take literally days for the soaked carpet to dry out, which can cause mold problems. Also, the extremely hot temperature of the water can soften the glue in the carpet backing, causing the fibers to permanently distort, and the combination of moisture and temperature can shrink the carpet away from the walls, or stretch it, leaving ripples and causing permanent damage. Pre-vacuuming is usually left out, it doesn't provide adequate agitation, and the soap residue left in the fibers attracts the spots and traffic lanes right back to where they were before!

Within a few weeks, it can look like your carpet was never cleaned, and over time it can ruin your carpet.

The third method spreads a 'dry-compound' mixture that looks like wet sawdust all over your carpeting. Then a machine brushes the mixture into the

carpet, which in theory causes dirt to absorb into the mixture. When the mixture has dried, a machine with 2 brushes tries to remove the chemical out of the carpeting. In a cut pile or berber carpet, it is impossible to remove all the particulate, leaving cleaning compound in your carpet (which you can see if you inspect the fibers), and the cleaning doesn't penetrate to the base of the carpet (only cleans the upper section) which means that any spots or spills that have soaked down deep – will only have the visible part cleaned – and the remaining deep soil can wick back up to the surface, making it an un-effective way to clean. This method is common with companies like “Oxy Fresh”. They also often claim to be ‘the greenest on earth’, yet encapsulant products can contain oxygenated bleach (the ‘oxy’ part), Dipropylene glycol, N-butyl Ether and Monomethyl Ether, Isopropanol and other chemicals which are eye and skin irritants, and can also be harmful if swallowed.

The fourth method uses the same process as steam cleaning but uses carbonated water (like ‘Chem Dry’) to try to ‘float’ dirt to the surface. Carpets need to be deep cleaned with an effective cleaner and a thorough system, and effervescent bubbles simply do not provide a thorough cleaning.

In summary, the reason why none of these methods are effective, is because they are lacking 5 important elements of a proper cleaning: (1) they leave a residue to attract soil, (2) they don't pre-vacuum, (3) they use too little or too much moisture, (4) they don't agitate the carpet fibers enough to clean and restore them, and (5) they may use irritating and harmful chemicals.

The last method is a Five-Step Low-Moisture Process:

First, the carpet is pre-vacuumed with a 3hp commercial extractor and pile lifter. Scientific studies show that 70-75% of all the soil, allergens and foreign objects in carpeting can be removed with a professional vacuum, making this a critical step for a thorough cleaning.

Next, an environmentally friendly cleaner that contains no soaps, bleaches or caustics—thus leaving no harmful residue to attract more soil—is gently applied to the carpet fibers, allowing it to penetrate to the base of the carpet pile. The cleaner is 100% safe for you, for your carpets and for the environment, and because it doesn't leave any residue, the cleaning will last 3 to 4 times as long!

Third, a rotary floor machine with a nylon brush (or a softer brush for wool and other delicate carpet fibers) is used to clean all four sides of the carpet fibers. This breaks up stubborn spots, liquefies any remaining soil or bacteria, and lifts the carpet nap back up to its original condition.

Once the soil has been liquefied, special soil-sorb bonnets are used on the floor machine to absorb and thoroughly remove the liquefied soil, leaving the carpets fibers clean, healthy and beautiful.

The last step is to groom the carpet by hand with a pile lifting brush, leaving all the fibers lifted up in one direction. This helps the carpet to dry in just a few hours and leaves the carpet like new again.

Without question, the most effective way to clean carpeting is with a five-step, low-moisture, no residue system. It's the most effective cleaning method on the market and the only method that thoroughly removes dirt, harmful bacteria, fungus, chemicals, pollens and other residues, while restoring the carpet fibers to their original condition. This is the method my company uses.

MISCONCEPTION #4: ALL METHODS OF CARPET CLEANING ARE GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

Unfortunately, no. There are three important factors that make a system environmentally friendly: one, the equipment must be powered by clean energy; two, the cleaning solution must be certified as non-toxic and safe for the environment; and three, a carpet cleaner must dispose of the waste water correctly.

(1) Many carpet cleaners use machines that are petroleum powered, using diesel fuel or unleaded gasoline to run their equipment. That means that not only is your neighborhood being polluted by the exhaust from their van and equipment, which runs for the duration of the cleaning whether it's 1 hour or all day long, but this also adds unnecessary greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere, increasing the effects of climate change. Other carpet cleaners use equipment that is just as powerful, but is powered by electricity, which is a cleaner and more efficient form of energy. So make sure that the company you hire uses clean energy—electricity—to power their equipment.

(2) Many carpet cleaners use chemicals that are non-biodegradable, and are harmful to people as well as the local watershed. A cleaning solution that is Green Seal Certified is a good standard to use when making sure a chemical is environmentally friendly.

(3) It's unfortunate, but some companies do not dispose of their wastewater correctly. I have seen carpet cleaners on several occasions pump their wastewater right out into the street, which locally runs through the storm drains and right into the river, with no treatment. This can cause big problems for our local rivers, and there have been many occasions where carpet cleaning companies have been sued for improper wastewater disposal, resulting in fish kills and damage to the local environment. An ethical carpet cleaner will dispose of wastewater properly.

These three factors are important to our current quality of life, as well as that of future generations, and it's a high standard to which we are committed. We are one of the only carpet cleaning companies in the Roaring Fork Valley that meets all three of these criteria.

**MISCONCEPTION #5: HAVING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT
IS ALL A COMPANY NEEDS TO
CLEAN YOUR CARPETS PROPERLY.**

Not true. Many companies hire employees that don't know how to use carpet cleaning equipment properly. This can result in an improper cleaning and even damage to your carpets and home furnishings. Many carpet cleaners are taken to court each year because of improper cleanings that resulted in damage. This is another reason why it's important that you choose your carpet cleaner carefully.

The best carpet cleaning companies are those that have been certified by the INSTITUTE OF INSPECTION, CLEANING, AND RESTORATION CERTIFICATION, known as the IICRC. A carpet cleaning company cannot buy this certification. The carpet cleaner must EARN the certification through study, experience, and the successful completion of formal, written examinations. Technicians who are certified by the IICRC have, in effect, earned a degree in carpet and textile cleaning, and continuing education is a must to remain certified.

The IICRC provides written credentials to the companies it certifies. So, before you choose a reputable company, ask to see written proof of the company's IICRC certifications - and especially the technician(s) that will be performing the actual work.

MISCONCEPTION #6: THE COMPANY THAT OFFERS THE LOWEST PRICE IS THE COMPANY YOU SHOULD HIRE.

No. We've seen so many problems arise from the lowest-bid companies that I suggest you NEVER hire a company that quotes the cheapest price. The three most common problems are:

(1): The price you see offered may not be for the services you want performed. Before you select a company, decide what you want to accomplish. If you want the technician to remove only some of the dirt, you can choose from dozens of companies that offer low prices, poor equipment and limited knowledge.

On the other hand, if you want your carpet thoroughly cleaned – if you want to remove the harmful dirt, bacteria, pollens and chemicals – then you need to hire a company that uses a thorough Five-Step System. This is the only way to assure that your carpet remains healthy and free from dirt, disease-causing bacteria, and harmful chemicals.

So, remember, the price you see offered may not be for the services you want performed.

(2): An inexpensive cleaning may last only a few weeks, and leave harmful chemicals in the carpet! Most cleaners in the carpet cleaning industry (especially the ones that don't charge much) clean with soap and detergent-based cleaners, leaving a sticky residue in the carpet. The residue attracts soil like a magnet, and pretty soon it looks worse than before the cleaning! It's great business for them, because you have to hire them to clean more often, but that's not good for you or your carpet. It's a bad cycle of which there is no way out except to use a system that can break down the residue, or to replace the carpet.

And since carpet is the single most expensive replaceable item in your home, you might save a few cents per square foot with a cheaper cleaning process, but it can cost you thousands of dollars in premature replacement costs.

(3): The price you see advertised may not be the price you pay!

Many homeowners have learned that the low price they saw advertised was not the amount they were charged.

BAIT AND SWITCH is the term used to identify those who use fraudulent advertising, just to get their foot in the door. You probably know someone who has learned the hard way. Some carpet cleaner offered a cheap price – usually around \$9.95 per room – and then pressured them into paying a lot more. This amounts to breaking the law.

As in all businesses and professions, the carpet cleaning industry has its share of bad apples. I take no pleasure in telling you this, but some are unethical and, sadly, a few are dishonest. By their misleading advertising and false promises, they cast a dark shadow on our entire industry.

Then you'll find other carpet cleaners, professionals like me, who work hard to earn your trust and respect, and to provide you with the highest amount of value.

As a way of improving our profession, I've dedicated my business to educating the public. The only way you can make an intelligent decision is to have all the facts. That is why I've written this consumer awareness guide.

In addition to being one of the best Carpet Cleaning Technicians in the Roaring Fork Valley, I have studied at great length with Master Cleaners to be knowledgeable with current textiles. Therefore, in addition to cleaning, I am happy to provide for my clients a wealth of information when choosing to buy new carpet.

WHEN YOU BECOME PART OF OUR FAMILY OF ELATED,
THOROUGHLY PLEASED CLIENTS, YOU ALSO GET A TEXTILE
CONSULTANT FOR FREE!

MISCONCEPTION #7: ANY HONEST CARPET CLEANING COMPANY SHOULD BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU AN EXACT PRICE OVER THE TELEPHONE.

First, honest, reputable, carpet cleaning companies usually price carpet cleaning by the square foot. So, if you'd like me to tell you the exact cost of cleaning your carpet, I need to know the exact number of square feet that you want cleaned. To get an accurate measurement, I personally take exact measurements of the carpeted area.

You'll be glad to know that the carpeted area to be cleaned is not nearly as great as most people think. For example, if you want your entire home cleaned, and your home is 2000 square feet, the amount of carpeting to be cleaned might be only 800-1200 square feet at most. This is because home measurements are typically outside measurements. Plus I deduct the area taken up by furniture, walls, etc. The result is that the actual area to be cleaned is usually only about 40-60% of the square footage of the home.

So, even though I can't give you an exact quote over the telephone, here are things I consider when quoting a price. First, the type of carpet. Certain types of carpet are harder to clean than others. So, before I can give you a quote, I need to know the type of fiber your carpet is made from, as well as the wear age and style.

Second, 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 last 6 months. When carpet has been neglected for any length of time, (perhaps more than 2 years) our approach to the job changes from a regular maintenance cleaning, to a more aggressive RESTORATIVE cleaning.

Third, the amount of furniture that has to be moved. If we have to move furniture, it will take us longer to clean than an empty room.

To recap, I consider the type of carpet, the amount of soiling, the maintenance history, and the amount of furniture that has to be moved. So, as you can now imagine, every quotation is different.

RECOMMENDATIONS #1-3

IF YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT HAVING YOUR CARPETS CLEANED, I OFFER THE FOLLOWING FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS:

RECOMMENDATION #1: Make a commitment to yourself to get your carpets cleaned. The longer they remain soiled, the sooner they'll wear out. Plus the longer you have to breathe all the pollens, fungus, chemicals, and dust mite droppings that reside in your carpet. Also, make sure to have your furniture, area rugs and stone/tile cleaned as these also wear out prematurely if not professionally cleaned on a regular basis.

RECOMMENDATION #2: List your objectives. Do you want only the dirt removed? Or do you want the bacteria, fungus, and chemicals removed, which will require a thorough 5-step process, like I use? Do you want to work with an honest, reputable company – or are you willing to risk working with the company that offers the lowest price – knowing that your carpet and upholstery could be poorly cleaned and permanently damaged?

RECOMMENDATION #3: Ask questions. The way you learn about a company is to ask specific questions and listen carefully to the answers. Here are the questions I suggest you ask:

1. WHAT TYPE OF EQUIPMENT DO YOU USE TO CLEAN CARPET?
2. WHAT DOES YOUR EQUIPMENT REMOVE FROM MY CARPET?
3. DO YOU USE ANY SOAP OR DETERGENT-BASED CLEANERS?
4. ARE YOUR CHEMICALS GREEN SEAL CERTIFIED – AND IF NOT, CAN YOU SHOW ME A SAFETY DATA SHEET TO SEE WHAT'S IN THEM?
5. DOES YOUR EQUIPMENT RUN ON ELECTRICITY OR PETROLEUM, AND HOW DO YOU DISPOSE OF WASTEWATER?
6. WHAT TRAINING HAVE YOU HAD IN CLEANING CARPETS?
7. ARE YOU A MEMBER OF ETHICALSERVICES.COM?
8. ARE YOU A MEMBER OF ANY TRADE ASSOCIATIONS?
9. ARE YOU IICRC CERTIFIED & CAN YOU SHOW ME YOUR CERTIFICATION?

RECOMMENDATION #4

RECOMMENDATION #4: Once you are satisfied that you're working with an honest, competent professional, invite them into your home and ask for a specific quotation in writing. A written quotation gives you the assurance that you know exactly what your job will cost. NO SURPRISES! By following these four recommendations, you'll gain all the information you need to make an informed, intelligent decision. If you want a quick, cheap, 'scrape the dirt off the surface' carpet cleaning job, there are many companies to choose from. Don't even think doing it yourself with a machine you can rent. I know of individuals who have caused severe damage by trying this.

However, if you want your carpets to be completely and thoroughly cleaned – removing the bacteria, fungus, pollens and chemicals – then, I invite you to call me. I'll be happy to answer your questions and provide you with a FREE Healthy Home Assessment – without any obligation. To reach me, call (970) 927-1313.

Here's one last point: I know that many consumers are skeptical about carpet cleaning companies. So, in addition to dedicating my business to consumer education, I do one more thing as well. I GUARANTEE MY WORK! That's right. I fully guarantee every cleaning job we do. If you aren't happy with our work, we'll re-clean the area for free. And if you still aren't pleased, you pay nothing. Not one cent. What could be more fair than that?

As a matter of fact, add this question to the list. "Do you fully guarantee your work?" Not all companies do – and it's important that you have this information before you make your decision.

I hope you found this consumer awareness guide to be helpful. If you have any questions, or if you would like to schedule a cleaning or free Healthy Home Assessment, please call me at (970) 927-1313. We also specialize in cleaning Furniture, Oriental Rugs, and Stone, Tile & Grout – as well as providing 24/7 Flood Damage Restoration and Mold Remediation – and I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have about these services.

