

Carpet stain removers

In our latest tests on carpet stain removers, cheaper products and even washing-up liquid outdid some of the best-known brands

Washing-up liquid

Diluted washing-up liquid got rid of blood, fresh Ribena and dried-in red wine. It didn't remove dried-in coffee but was as good as or better than many specialist options.

which?
EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

which?
BEST BUY

which?
BEST BUY

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BEST BUY

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EXCEPTIONAL VALUE

which?
BEST BUY

79% Sainsbury's Carpet & Upholstery Cleaner £2.43

This cleaner was outstanding on fresh Ribena, red wine and chocolate spread, and great on most dried-in stains. It's easy to use – just spray it on and leave it to do the work.

77% Rug Doctor Spot & Stain Remover £2.99

This was the best all-rounder in our test, leaving no trace of fresh or dried-in stains apart from dried-in black coffee.

76% Tesco Carpet & Upholstery Cleaner £2.44

Tesco's cleaner was really effective on fresh coffee and Ribena. It also vanquished dried-in Ribena and red wine. There's no need to scrub – just apply the cleaner and leave it.

75% Bissell OxyKIC £7.82

Bissell OxyKIC was fantastic on fresh coffee, Ribena and red wine stains. It was easy to apply, and the initial unpleasant smell faded within a day.

There's a huge array of carpet stain removers in the shops, but new Which? tests have shown that ordinary washing-up liquid outperforms many of them.

In our tough tests we daubed pale carpet with black coffee, diluted Ribena, red wine, chocolate spread, curry sauce and blood. As stain remedies aren't always to hand in real life, we let each stain dry overnight. We also created a set of fresh stains and used 17 popular stain removers on both sets. We threw two home remedies into the mix: soapy

water made with washing-up liquid, and soda water.

Stain reaction

Although the Best Buys had the edge with some stains (see above), and are worth adding to your cupboard for when disaster strikes, the washing-up liquid solution was as good or better on blood and fresh Ribena, and did a terrific job on red wine. Only chocolate spread and dried-in coffee defeated it and our Best Buys did slightly better on these stains. **We used Morning Fresh liquid, which cost us 78p. It isn't a Best Buy washing-up liquid, so it's likely that other brands will work, too.**

Forget soda water, though. It was good at removing blood and fresh Ribena, but it didn't match the specialist products on the other stains.

We also found some real differences between the specialist products. Cheap spray options from Sainsbury's and

Tesco outclassed the big brand names Vanish and 1001. In general, we found liquid and aerosol sprays easier to apply than other formats, and results were better. It was tricky to apply foam and brush products without being wasteful.

The Bissell Carpet & Upholstery Cleaner (17) is a Don't Buy. As well as finding it difficult to apply, it wasn't good at removing stains, and we found that it removed the colour from dark carpet when left unattended.



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HOW TO TACKLE TRICKY STAINS

A brief guide to the best techniques for tough marks

For all stains It's best to remove any solids and blot spills with a paper towel. Work from the outside in, so the stain doesn't spread. Avoid scrubbing, as you may damage carpet fibres.



Red wine In our tests, the Sainsbury's (1) and Bissell (4) Best Buy cleaners were great on fresh stains, and washing-up liquid was superb on dried stains. In our tests we've found that white wine reduces the colouration really well, but it also spreads the stain. On fresh stains, it's worth trying a paste made of baking powder and water. Salt is messy to use and disappointing on fresh stains.

Mud Allow mud to dry, then



vacuum it up and use soapy water or a stain remover to get rid of embedded particles.

Wax Cover embedded wax with a brown paper bag or kitchen paper, place a cloth on top and iron on the lowest setting. The paper absorbs the melted wax.

Dog dirt Use a piece of thick cardboard to skim solids off the carpet. Apply soapy water or a stain remover to the remainder. This may take several applications.



MODEL		SPECIFICATION			WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE				SCORE %
		PRICE (£)	TYPE	QUANTITY (ml)	FRESH STAINS	DRIED STAINS	ADVERSE EFFECTS	EASE OF USE	
1	SAINSBURY'S Carpet & Upholstery Cleaner	2.43	liquid spray	500	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	79
2	RUG DOCTOR Spot & Stain Remover	2.99	liquid spray	500	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	77
3	TESCO Carpet & Upholstery Cleaner	2.44	liquid spray	500	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	76
4	BISSELL OxyKIC	7.82	aerosol spray	397 ^a	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	75
5	K2R Stain Remover Spray	2.99	aerosol spray	100	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	74
6	1001 Spot Shot for Carpets	5.15	aerosol spray	200	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	73
7	TABLEAU Spot Remover	2.83	aerosol spray	200	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	70
8	VANISH Oxi Action Carpet & Upholstery Stain Remover	4.30	liquid spray	500	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	69
9	OZKLEEN Carpet Power	3.49	liquid spray	500	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	68
10	1001 Troubleshooter Stain Remover	2.55	liquid spray	500	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	66
11	M&S Lavender Carpet & Fabric Stain Remover	1.94	liquid spray	500	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	64
12	VANISH Shampoo Carpet & Upholstery Cleaner	4.50	liquid	450	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	64
13	LAKELAND Carpet Kind Spot Remover	6.84	liquid spray	250	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	63
14	DE-SOLV-IT Stain Eraser & Pre-Wash	3.99	pen	30	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★	51
15	1001 Mousse for Carpets & Upholstery	2.39	mousse, brush	300	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★	43
16	VANISH Power Foam Carpet Stain Remover	4.50	foam spray	600	★★★★★	★★★	★★	★	42
17	BISSELL Carpet & Upholstery Cleaner	6.70	foam, brush	355	★★★	★★	★★	★★	38

^a Quantity is in grams rather than millilitres

USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

Specification

Price See page 45.

Test performance

Fresh/dried stains We used a separate piece of beige wool/

nylon carpet for each fresh and dry stain (see opposite) and each stain remover. We attempted stain removal following the manufacturer's instructions. Our panel rated each attempt. Ratings show the combined verdict for all fresh

stains and all dried stains.

Adverse effects We applied each stain remover to a piece of navy blue carpet; after five weeks we assessed whether bleaching had occurred. ★★ means there was visible colour loss. **Ease of use**

How easy it is to apply each product, considering comfort, accuracy and effort required.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Performance **80%**
Ease of use **20%**