

Carpet cleaners

NEED TO KNOW

Stain removers or spot cleaners are handy for treating small areas of carpet that are stained, whereas carpet shampoo is better for cleaning a whole carpet or large parts of it.

Many spot cleaners can be used on upholstery as well as carpet. But check the label, as not all can be used on fabrics such as brocade, rayon, silk or velvet, or on fabrics that can't be cleaned with water. It's always wise to do a test patch.

BEST RESULTS

For best results, remove any solids from the area and blot fresh spills with a paper towel. This is to help stop the stain spreading. After applying the stain remover, dab the stain away with a clean white cloth. Never scrub it, as you could damage the carpet.

All types of stain remover, whether foam, mousse, spray or wipe, take roughly the same amount of effort to use. They usually have to be left for two to three hours to dry, so leave an exclusion area around the stain to avoid trailing more muck into the damp patch.

Worryingly, some stains, such as chocolate spread, felt-tipped pen and shoe polish, are made worse by certain stain removers, so check our table carefully before tackling these stains. Bear in mind the effect on the carpet's colour, too (see 'Colour change', right).



1 Vanish

COLOUR CHANGE

Cleaning stains on carpets and upholstery is a delicate balance between ousting the stain and affecting the colour of the material. Most of the stain removers, including this Vanish, didn't affect the colour of the dark blue synthetic carpet that

we left them to dry on. But the 1001 (5), which is otherwise a very effective stain remover, lightened the carpet very slightly (see below, right). So you should always do a spot test on a hidden area to check that your carpet or fabric will not be affected.



RED WINE STAINS

Nothing breaks up a party like spilling red wine and seeing guests argue over whether salt, white wine, soda water or lemon juice is the best remedy. This Vanish is better than all of them.

Salt slightly removes a fresh red wine stain but turns it dark grey. You have to wait for the salt to dry before vacuuming so it's messy. White wine and soda water are OK but don't take out the stain first time and tend to spread it. Lemon juice turns the red wine pinker. White wine, soda water and lemon juice work better on nylon than on wool-blend carpets.



BEST BUYS

We tested the spot cleaners for their ability to remove fresh and dried stains first time from pale wool-blend and nylon carpets and compared the results with washing-up liquid and soda water. Our Best Buys are effective overall and didn't discolour the carpet.

Vanish (1), £3.29 from supermarkets, is the best choice if you slop your drink, working well on coffee, red wine and Ribena. This spray foam for carpets and upholstery is easy to direct

at the stain. Like most products, it's not good at removing felt pen, shoe polish or wax, but sees off other stains in two applications. It's equally effective on fresh and dry stains and on wool-blend and nylon carpet.

OzKleen (2), £3.68 from Tesco, is good at removing mud. It smells pleasant and foams well, but is hard to aim. It works equally well on fresh and dry stains and two applications is usually enough. It's better at removing stains,

especially coffee, from nylon than wool-blend carpets.

Rug Doctor (3) is a good all-rounder. The fine spray is easy to direct but covers a wide area. You leave it to work overnight. It's equally effective on fresh and dried stains, but is better on nylon than wool-blend carpets. Call 01903 235558 for stockists.

To remove felt pen or shoe polish, consider 1001 (5), £2.49 from supermarkets. But it lightened our dark synthetic carpet slightly.



2 OzKleen



3 Rug Doctor

USING THE TABLE

We tested widely available, best-selling stain removers and carpet shampoos. Products that lightened a dark carpet were marked down.

Stain removal

How well the product removed fresh and dried stains on its first application from beige nylon and wool-blend carpets. ★ means the stain was completely removed; ○ means the stain was only partly removed.

Colour

Change Whether the remover affected the colour of a dark blue carpet when it was left for several weeks. ★ means the carpet was unchanged; ○ means there was very minor colour lightening.

SCORE

Ignores price and is based on:
Stain removal 80%
Colour change 12%
Wear 4%
Odour 4%

KEY

★ ☆ ○ ● ●
Best —————> Worst
■ Best Buy

Carpet shampoos

There is little difference between the cleaning power of the carpet shampoos that we tested.

Despite the six years' worth of dirt from people, dogs, brick dust and spillages that coated our test carpet, all of the products did a good job. But it is worth picking one that can be used in a carpet-cleaning machine, as this makes shifting the grime easier, especially on large areas. The Vax and Bissell products can all be used in a machine.

Bissell (1), which has a pleasant citrus aroma, is a Best Buy, pipping the others to the top of the table by being an excellent cleaner that is easy to dilute for use in a cleaning machine. It costs £17. Call 0870 2250109 for stockists.



1 Bissell

Carpet shampoos

BRAND

	Price (£)	Cleaning	Ease of use	Score (%)
1 Bissell Wash & Protect for Carpets & Upholstery	17.00	★	★	92
2 Vax Spring Clean AAA Carpet Cleaner	2.99	☆	★	84
3 Bissell Lavender Essence Fiber Cleansing Formula	14.50	☆	★	84
4 1001 Shampoo Large Area Cleaner	2.59	★	○	83
5 Astonish Shampoo for Carpets and Upholstery	1.19	★	●	66

Spot cleaners

BRAND

	Price (£)	Blood	Chocolate spread	Coffee	Curry	Felt pen	Shoe polish	Mud	Red wine	Ribena	Wax	Change	Score (%)
1 Vanish Oxi Action	3.29	☆	☆	★	○	●	●	☆	★	★	●	★	70
2 OzKleen Carpet Power	3.68	☆	☆	○	○	●	●	★	☆	○	●	★	60
3 Rug Doctor Spot Remover	3.29	☆	☆	☆	○	●	●	☆	☆	☆	●	★	59
4 Vax Spot & Stain Remover – Pets	2.99	★	●	☆	○	●	●	☆	☆	○	●	★	56
5 1001 Troubleshooter Stain Remover	2.49	★	★	★	○	☆	○	★	★	☆	○	○	56
6 Chem-Dry Carbonated Stain Extinguisher	12.00	★	●	☆	●	●	●	○	☆	○	●	★	55
7 1001 Spot Shot for Carpets	3.99	○	○	☆	●	○	●	○	○	☆	●	★	52
8 Carpet Pride Stain Remover	4.99	○	○	○	○	●	●	☆	○	○	●	★	50
9 M&S Naturally Inspired Stain Remover	1.99	○	●	☆	○	●	●	☆	○	○	●	★	49
10 Scotchgard Cleaner	4.29	★	★	○	☆	●	●	★	○	○	●	☆	44
11 M&S Naturally Inspired Wipes	1.99	☆	○	○	●	●	●	○	☆	○	●	☆	40
12 Vanish Carpet and Upholstery Mousse	2.75	★	○	☆	●	●	●	○	☆	○	●	●	38
13 1001 Mousse For Carpets & Upholstery	2.89	☆	●	☆	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	☆	37
14 Dyson Dysolv Spot Cleaner	5.99	☆	○	☆	○	●	●	☆	○	○	●	○	33

HOUSEHOLD ALTERNATIVES

Washing-up liquid	n/a	☆	☆	●	●	●	●	☆	☆	○	●	n/a	n/a
Soda water	n/a	☆	●	●	●	●	●	☆	○	○	●	n/a	n/a