



Atlantic Flooring, Inc.
Showroom:
502 Highway 64 East
in Manteo on Roanoke Island
Phone: 252.475.1811

Care and Cleaning of Ceramic Tile Floors

The beauty, elegance, and durability of ceramic tile has made it a favorite flooring choice for centuries, but these are not the only reasons for its popularity. Tile is surprisingly easy to maintain, and by using simple household products, you can keep your ceramic tile floors looking like new for years.

As with all flooring, the best care is regular care. Sweep or vacuum your ceramic tile floors at least once a week, more often if it gets regular use. Dust and lint can evolve into grime if they are not promptly removed, especially in areas where there is moisture.

Since ceramic tile is often used in "wet" areas of the home, it is likely it will be subject to different spills and spots. Simple washing or mopping with hot water and a mild household detergent should wipe away anything that finds its way to your ceramic floors. The hot water helps loosen any dirt that collects in the spill, and the detergent lifts any oily substance on the floor. If a "once-over" is not enough to remove all of the spill, try a second pass over the floor with a sponge or mop. If the spill remains stubborn, you can use a soft brush or synthetic scouring pad to loosen the spot, but do not use steel wool or a metal brush, as these may scratch the surface of the tiles.

After washing the ceramic tile floor, be sure to thoroughly rinse the floor with clean water. This will remove any detergent residue from setting and attracting more dirt to your floor. Occasionally, a tough stain will appear on a ceramic tile floor, especially floors with unglazed tiles, but these stains can also be easily removed. Prepare a paste of scouring powder and water, and firmly rub it onto the stain. Allow the paste to sit for at least 5 minutes, and then scrub it away with a soft brush or synthetic scouring pad. Repeat the process until the stain is completely gone, and then thoroughly wash and rinse the floor.

Even in the tidiest homes, mildew frequently finds its way, especially in bathrooms, spa areas and pool decks. Should mildew appear on your ceramic tile, use a simple solution of equal parts water and ammonia to remove it. Again, use a soft brush to clean away the mildew so you do not damage the tile or grout, and rinse the area thoroughly with clean water after the mildew is removed. Be sure the area is well ventilated when using the ammonia solution.

If the grout itself becomes stained or discolored, it can be brightened by a good cleaning with diluted bleach (3 parts bleach to 1 part water). Use the edge of a sponge or toothbrush for this job, and be careful to keep the bleach solution away from other surfaces. Even rust stains can be easily removed from ceramic tile. Commercial cleaners for rust stains that you can find in your local home supply store may do the job, or you can use regular kerosene to lift the offending rust. Be sure to wear rubber gloves when working with kerosene, and make sure the space is well ventilated.



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Best Methods for Deep Cleaning Carpets

You know its time. Even though you have been religious about vacuuming your carpets, quickly attending to spots and spills, and varying traffic patterns to reduce soiling and wear, your carpets are ready for a freshening, and you have decided to hire a professional to give your carpets a deep cleaning. All carpets should be deep cleaned every twelve to eighteen months; a thorough cleaning not only revitalizes the look of your carpeting, it also reduces wear, extends its life and may be required in the terms of your warranty. But just how should your carpet for cleaned? There are five accepted methods for cleaning carpets, and one is right for you.

In most new carpets, your carpet manufacturer or retailer will recommend the best cleaning procedure for deep cleaning your carpets. Always follow these recommendations. If you are attempting the deep cleaning yourself, choose a carpet shampoo or cleaner and follow the directions for application and dilution. Never use soap, laundry detergent, dishwasher detergent or other household cleaners intended for use on other flooring surfaces. For the best results, be certain to vacuum the carpet thoroughly before cleaning, and apply a preconditioning solution before the deep cleaning process. These pre-cleaning solutions are mild detergents that begin loosening soil before the actual cleaning begins.

There are several ways to find the best professional for your job. You may simply ask for referrals from friends, family or even carpet stores or you may use the internet to do your own search. No matter which means you use, be aware of the five basic methods professionals use to clean carpets. Each has its own advantage and disadvantages; discuss with a professional which is best for your carpets before you begin deep cleaning your carpets.

Dry extraction cleaning use an absorbent compound containing special detergents and solvents that is infused in and around the carpet fibers with specially-designed machines and brushes. The compound acts as a tiny magnet, attracting dirt, oils, and soil in the carpet fibers, and then both the soil and the compound are removed by vacuuming. This method is recommended for sturdy fibers, including most synthetics, and is especially appropriate for natural fibers like wool and cotton that should not be exposed to excessive moisture.

The dry foam extraction method applies a special detergent solution that has been fluffed into a foam, and then applied to the carpet. This foam, which is less dense and much drier than a wet solution, is worked into the carpet by specially designed machines, and then removed by wet vacuuming. Some dry foam machines have their own extraction capabilities, while others need a thorough vacuuming after the carpet is dry.

The hot water extraction method, or "steam cleaning," as it is sometimes called, is the most common method for do-it-yourselfers and mobile professional cleaners. After preconditioning carpet areas that have experienced heavy use, the carpet cleaner uses hot water extraction equipment to infuse a pressurized cleaning solution into the carpet. Suspended soil and the cleaning solution are immediately extracted. Use caution with the hot water extraction system so



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that carpets do not become saturated, and accelerate drying in any way possible - using fans, air conditioners, dehumidifiers or additional drying strokes - to avoid possible damage and discoloration resulting from the moisture.

The rotary shampoo method is the classic home carpet cleaning technique. A machine with rotary brushes injects a cleaning solution into the carpet, and then removes the loosened soil and cleaning solution. And as with steam cleaning, be certain your carpet dries as quickly as possible. Never use a machine intended for hard surface flooring to shampoo your carpets - pile distortion and untwisting of fibers can occur, causing permanent damage to your carpet.

The absorbent pad method should be used by a trained cleaning professional. In the absorbent pad method, a special machine similar to a floor buffer with an absorbent spin pad is used to remove the soil. The pad absorbs soil on the carpet, and the soil is then rinsed off of the pad. The pad must remain saturated with the cleaning solution or damage to the carpet pile may occur. And regularly change the pad to prevent returning the soil back to the carpet face.

When choosing a deep cleaning method for your carpets, always check the recommendations of the carpet manufacturer, the equipment manufacturer, and your carpet cleaning professional. The match between your carpet and the right deep cleaning method will give your carpets added years of beauty and wear.

Carpet Stain Removal

Its inevitable, and everyone faces it sooner or later. A stain mysteriously (or not so mysteriously) appears on your carpeting, and it seems as if the entire room is focused on the spot. But with prompt action and some simple steps, most spots can be removed, and your carpeting returned to its original beauty.

If a stain occurs, quick action is essential. No carpeting is completely stain proof, although many are stain resistant. The stain resistant carpet allow more time for you to act, but the sooner you address the stain problem, the better your results will be.

First, remove as much of the staining material (food, wine, oil, etc) as possible by very gently scraping the spill with a teaspoon or a dull knife. Don't rub hard; you may damage the fibers, or force more of the stain into the carpet. If the spill is wet, absorb as much of it as possible by blotting the wet spot with clean white paper or cloth towels. Avoid using towels with synthetic fibers, as they are not as absorbent, and again may push the staining substance deeper in the carpet.

When blotting, work from the outside of the edge in toward the center. This will prevent the stain from spreading. And be careful not to rub, scour or scrape with the cloth; blotting



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will collect more moisture than scrubbing, and the vigorous action of rubbing may result in a fuzzy or worn looking surface.

When as much as possible of the stain has been lifted or blotted away, you can remove the rest of the stain with simple household solutions. A mild solution of a liquid detergent (no more than half tablespoon to one gallon of water) is recommended by most carpet manufacturers. Always test any cleaning solution on a discreet section of the carpet before treating the stain to make sure it will not discolor the fibers. Clear detergents are preferred over creamy or oily appearing ones, as they leave less residue. Using a clean white cloth again, dab the stain with the detergent solution, penetrating the stained carpet, and again blot the wet area with a clean dry cloth. Repeat this process until all the stain is removed. A solution of one tablespoon of ammonia in one cup of water can also be used on wool or wool blend carpets. Do not use any other household cleaners on the stain, especially ones containing bleach, since many contain chemicals that may permanently damage your carpet.

After the stain is removed, clean the spot again with clear water. This will remove any of the detergent residue that may remain on the carpet. If it is not removed, the residue may become sticky and cause a new spot in the same place.

When all that is left of the stain is a wet spot, place several layers of white paper or cloth towels over the spot, and weight the towels with something heavy that will not transfer color, such as a plastic water jug. This will help absorb all the moisture left in the fibers. Wool fibers will hold more moisture (and hold it longer) than synthetic fibers, so be patient with the process to get all the moisture out.

If the stain does not respond to the mild detergent, you can use any number of commercial spot removers for specific offenders, such as chewing gum remover, non-oily nail polish remover, or spot removers designed specifically for grease, oil, or tar. These are available in most hardware and home improvement stores; be sure to follow their specific directions carefully. If the stain persists, give us a call so we can advise you on certain types of professionally cleaners that might be able to rescue your carpet.



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Caring for your Hardwood Floors

Few things match the beauty of hardwood flooring, and with simple proper maintenance, your hardwoods can retain the sheen, warmth and durability that make them a classic flooring choice. It is important to remember that in caring for your hardwood floors, you are actually caring for two separate surfaces, the finish and the hardwood beneath.

The first thing to remember is to keep grit off the floor. Those fine particles of dirt and dust can act like sandpaper on your hardwoods, and subtly scratch and dull your hardwood finish. Vacuum hardwoods at least once a week, and dust mop or sweep the floors in between vacuuming.

When spills on your hardwood floors happen, immediately clean them, and tracked on dirt, with a clean, soft cloth. After wiping the spill away, dry the area with a dry cloth. Moisture is the enemy of both the hardwoods and their finishes; never allow a wet area to stand. Use protective mats, runners, and area rugs. Rugs at exterior doors reduce the amount of dirt and grit that can enter your house, and mats and runners in high traffic areas will reduce the wear on your hardwood surfaces. Mats, rugs, and runners can capture an amazing amount of dirt, so be certain to shake them out often and clean them regularly.

Be careful about the movement of chairs and tables on hardwoods; this can cause excessive wear to the floor's finish. Use felt or fabric covered casters or glides on all furniture legs that come in contact with the floor, and replace them regularly. When moving a piece of furniture, lift it, don't slide it. If it is too heavy to be lifted, place a towel or heavy sock under each leg to avoid damaging the floor.

Be mindful of what kinds of footwear are best for hardwood floors. High heels or shoes with deep treads that can hold grit or small stones can create permanent gouges or marks.

Keep the humidity in your home between 45 and 55%. Excessive humidity can cause wood fibers to swell, causing cracks and buckles in the finish. Unusually dry conditions can cause separations between the floor boards. Depending on which extreme you are encountering, install a humidifier or dehumidifier.

Select the appropriate cleaner; the right cleaner will match the specific needs of your hardwood flooring's finish. Never use any product on your hardwood floors until you have carefully read the label. If it does not specifically say "suitable for hardwood floor," don't use it! Also, never use self polishing waxes, vinyl or tile floor care products. Although they may leave your floors looking glossy at application, the polishes will discolor over time, and will create problems when future refinishing of your hardwood floors is required. Be careful not to over-clean your hardwoods - too much cleaning with commercial products will ultimately dull the finish.

Also, never pour water or allow water to puddle on your hardwood floor. Water and wood are



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not a good combination, especially if you have applied a wax finish to your floors. Remove any wet spots from your hardwoods immediately, and dry the area thoroughly.

If your hardwood floors are sealed (that is, have a polyurethane finish), use clear vinegar and hot water on a barely damp cloth to clean them. Commercial cleaning products can damage the polyurethane surface, and make adhesive of a new coat of polyurethane in the future a problem. And never use wax on sealed wood floors. It can create a dangerously slippery surface, and also create difficulties should a future recoating of polyurethane be necessary.

If your hardwood floors are waxed, decide between a buffable and non-buffable wax product, and stay with it. Mixing the two can cause a dull and streaky finish. Buffable waxes are a good choice for high traffic areas; non-buffable waxes (which contact acrylics) are recommended for low traffic areas protected by rugs. And never use a cleaning product that includes or requires water on a waxed floor. Carefully read the products label, and be certain it is compatible with the kind of wax you are using. And never wax over dirt! By following these few simple steps, your beautiful hardwood floors will be as satisfying in years to come as they were the day they were installed.



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Care for Laminate Flooring

The rocketing popularity of laminate flooring choices is not just because of the products' beauty, simplicity of installation, and reasonable price. Maintaining a laminate floor is simple, easy, and requires no special equipment; with regular care, your laminate floors will give you years of enjoyment.

The care regimen for laminate floors couldn't be simpler. As with any floor, vacuum the laminate flooring regularly using a soft brush attachment. When needed, a wipe down with a damp cloth or soft mop will return the flooring's original shine. The new, disposable dust mop products seem to work especially well in removing dust and pet hair from laminate floors.

Should you face an especially soiled area, such as a spill that has dried, or a heavy traffic area that has been neglected, a wet sponge and a little elbow grease is all you need to remove the soil. Avoid using soap based detergent when cleaning a spill, and never use harsh chemical cleaners on your laminate floor; these cleaners may cloud or discolor the floor's finish. Also, never use steel wool, scouring pads or sandpaper on your laminate floors. If a soiled area remains particularly stubborn, simply repeat the sponging process until the spot is gone.

One of the great advantages of laminate flooring is that they require no special products or equipment to maintain their beauty. Do not use polish or wax on these floors; these products designed for other flooring surfaces will only diminish the beauty of your laminate, and leave you with an extra job of removing the polishing product from your floor!

Laminate floors are especially durable. But as with any hard surface flooring, laminates can be scratched or gouged, so you should always use felt pads or wide-base casters under all furniture. Be careful to lift rather than slide when moving furniture or heavy objects in a room with laminate flooring. Also, step-off mats at exterior doorways and junctures where flooring surfaces change in your home can help prevent unintended scratches. If a dent, scratch, or stain does appear on your laminate flooring, there are easy commercial touch up kits available, with instructions, that can lead you step-by-step through the simple repair process. If you are faced with an extraordinary cleaning situation with your laminate floor, you should always refer to the manufacturer's care and maintenance instructions and recommendations.



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Keeping your Area Rugs at their best

Your area rugs are a special part of your room design, and as such, deserve special care. With a little regular maintenance, and an understanding of the rug itself, your area rugs can provide years of enjoyment.

The first consideration in caring for your area rug is understanding what specific kind of rug it is, and what kind of care is appropriate for it. A delicate needlepoint rug under a living room coffee table will receive much lighter use than a rugged dhurri in a playroom. Likewise, the beautiful Oriental rug that defines a reading area in a master bedroom will call for slightly different care than the durable knotted hall runner near children's rooms. But regardless of the type of area rug you own, certain steps are essential for the care of every style.

First and foremost is the area rug pad. Every area rug, even those going over carpet, should have a good quality pad underneath it. The pad will keep the area rug in place, keep the floor surface underneath the rug cleaner, and prevent any "bleed" of colors from the area rug to the floor. Area rug pads are an important safety feature as well, especially for rugs placed in high traffic areas and on hard surface floors such as wood or tile. The pad will hold the area rug in place, and help prevent slips and slides. Use only quality vinyl rug underlay from your flooring retailer as rubber, foam back, or plastic mats may discolor the floor.

A weekly vacuuming (or more often, if the rugs are in high traffic areas) will extend the life of your area rugs. A thorough vacuuming prevents dirt and soil from becoming embedded into the rug's fibers, and helps keep the nap of the rug fresh-looking. The traditional practice of shaking small area rugs is not recommended. The stress of flapping the rug by hand to loosen dirt and dust will stress the fibers of the rug, and accelerate its wear. When vacuuming those rugs that have fringed edges, avoid the fringe while doing the body of the rug. Then set your vacuum on the rug and pull it towards you over the fringe. This should avoid any tangles or damage to the fringed border, and keep those fibers dust free as well.

Should a stain or spill occur, warm water and a mild soap may be all that is needed for the clean-up. Cleaning instructions should come with new, manufactured carpets, so be certain to follow the maker's cleaning recommendations. Older and hand-made rugs are a bit trickier. If a stain occurs on one of these, test your cleaning solution (soap and water, club soda, commercial spot remover, etc.) on a small, hidden part of the rug, or on the reverse side, to make sure the dyes in the fibers will not run. Once you are certain that you will not damage the rug by spot cleaning, proceed carefully as you would with any carpet. If it seems that the solutions may damage your rug, it's time to call a professional.

Even with good weekly vacuuming, rugs will collect some dust and dirt over time, so a professional cleaning should be done at least every two years. In-home steam cleaning companies may be able to take care of your area rugs, and reputable off-site rug cleaners (often operated in conjunction with dry cleaners) can also give your rugs a fresh, renewed look.



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To reduce uneven wear from traffic and fading from natural light, rotate your rugs 180 degrees every two or three months. By turning the rug, you will distribute the actual use of the rug over its entire surface.

Following these guidelines will protect the appearance of your rugs and increase their longevity by years.