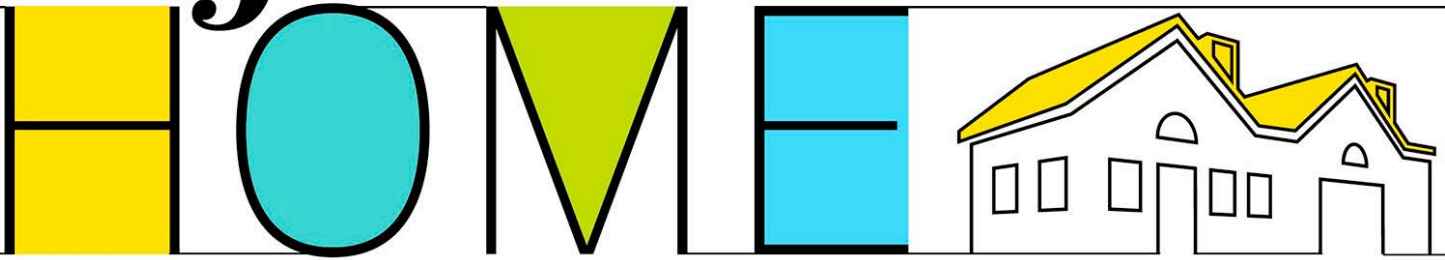


# your



Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

## Carpet Cleaning 101



It can be a struggle to keep your carpets clean and presentable. Should you hire a professional cleaning service or take care of the maintenance on your own? Follow this advice to keep your carpet in top shape.

**Dirt and vacuuming:** Dirt can be damaging to your carpet, acting as small razor blades that shred the fibers. When this happens, the sheen of the fibers deteriorates, making the carpet look dull and dated. Vacuum regularly to avoid this issue. High-traffic areas should be vacuumed twice a week, and less-used areas once a week. Quicker passes can be made over the low-traffic areas, while the areas that people walk on frequently require at least two slow passes to ensure all grime is removed.

**Hot-water extraction:** Vacuuming helps with day-to-day cleaning, but you'll also want professional help. While a do-it-yourself (DIY) carpet washer will remove the surface level of dirt, deep cleaning will eliminate the dust, allergens and grease between the fibers. A professional carpet

cleaner applies detergent to the carpets, followed by a hot-water rinse solution. Then moisture is removed with a high-powered vacuum. Use this service every 12-18 months to keep your carpet fresh.

**DIY washing:** For periods in between professional cleaning, perform enhanced carpet care on your own. Here are some tips for using carpet-cleaning equipment:

- Clean your carpet before it becomes filthy.
- Pretreat stains or blemishes with detergent and let them sit for 5-10 minutes prior to cleaning.
- Vacuum well before and after washing.
- Don't oversoak the carpet—DIY machines don't have enough suction to remove large amounts of water.
- Open your windows and use fans and dehumidifiers to help the carpet dry when you're done.

## Winter Home Prep

The weather is still hot and humid, but cooler weather will be arriving before you know it. Preparing your property for the cold and snow may seem daunting but being proactive can make it easier. A well-thought-out plan in the fall for home winterization can save time and alleviate stress as temperatures drop. Companies that provide winterization services will be more readily available in early fall. Use this checklist to track your progress as you prepare for the upcoming winter season.

### Gutter Care

- ☑ Clean gutters mid-fall, and double-check your work before winter to avoid clogs or backups.
- ☑ Consider installing leaf guards to prevent debris from accumulating in your freshly cleared gutters.

### Heating System

- ☑ Replace the filter in your furnace.
- ☑ Hire a heating/furnace expert to check your furnace's efficiency.
- ☑ Test your heating system before you actually need to use it.

### Doors and Windows

- ☑ Check for gaps in all doors and windows where warm air can potentially escape.
- ☑ Weatherproof with caulking or weatherstripping for all drafty areas.
- ☑ If not already installed, consider double-paned windows to increase energy efficiency.

### Chimney, Roofing and Decks

- ☑ Make sure to clean all chimneys and wood stoves prior to use.
- ☑ Hire a professional to check for any damaged shingles or gutters.
- ☑ Add a coat of sealer to your deck to prevent snow from damaging the structure.

### Supply Check

- ☑ Make sure you have a snow shovel and salt prior to the season beginning.
- ☑ Store extra canned food and water in case of emergency.





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Tips and trends for homeowners, buyers and sellers

## Keep a Tidy Lawn This Fall

While fall is a beautiful season when the leaves turn colors on the trees in your neighborhood, it's another story once they begin to drop and accumulate on your lawn. Piles of leaves can be a chore to rake and remove and leaving them unattended can be an eyesore and can damage the health of your lawn. Here are some tips to make lawn care less stressful this fall.



**Avoid big piles**—While a few stray leaves on your lawn isn't a big deal, full coverage becomes an issue. The fallen leaves will block sunlight to your lawn and can introduce a number of different diseases. For example, a layer of leaves can prevent the soil from drying out properly after it rains, causing the roots of the turf to rot and deteriorate. The best time to start leaf removal is when the top half of the grass blades are covered, or when leaves cover one-third of your lawn. And try to act prior to any forecast rainfall—removing dry leaves is much easier than wet ones.

**Avoiding raking**—Not a fan of strenuous raking? Consider using your lawn mower to chop up the leaves into small pieces. You then can either use a grass catcher to collect the remnants for easy removal, or you can keep the leaves on your lawn for decomposition. Letting these small pieces decompose will strengthen the health of your soil, resulting in lush grass. If the layer of leaves is deep, you may have to make several passes over them with your mower to get them small enough to decompose efficiently. Thick, wet leaves will need to be collected with a bag attachment and either disposed of or added to a compost pile.

**Don't waste space**—If you're collecting leaves for community disposal, think about how much waste you'll be collecting. Consider getting a leaf vacuum that includes a shredder, saving the amount of space taken up in the disposal bags. When you're purchasing one of these leaf shredders, look at the volume reduction ratio listed on the packaging. For example, if the ratio is 10:1, that means the shredder will convert what would normally amount to 10 bags of leaves into just one. Leaf vacuums work best for smaller areas, but if you have a large outdoor space, a mower/bag attachment combination is probably your best bet.

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