

**Consumer
Awareness
Insiders Guide
To Carpet Cleaning**

By

Knight Kare *Cleaning & Restoration*



KNIGHT KARE CLEANING & RESTORATION CONSUMER EDUCATION MESSAGE - NEW, REVISED EDITION

Hi! This is Kevin Wood. Thank you very much for your time. I'm grateful for the opportunity to provide you with information about carpet cleaning and help you choose a carpet cleaning company.

I'm a certified Carpet Cleaning Technician registered with the IICRC and owner of Knight Kare Cleaning & Restoration. I've been in the carpet cleaning business for nearly 20 years. And in that time, 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 publish this consumer education guide so when you select a carpet cleaning company, you can make an informed intelligent decision.

In just a moment, I'll share with you six costly misconceptions about carpet cleaning. Plus I'll offer four recommendations. And I'll give you seven questions you should ask a carpet cleaner before you invited him into your home.

If you want to speak with me personally, call 890-2450, if I don't answer, leave a message and I'll return your call as soon as I can.

Now, here's

Misconception #1: You should wait as long as possible before cleaning your carpet.

No. 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 dirty 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 carpets is to get out the dirt.

No. As you probably know, outdoor air contains pollens, fungus, bacteria, air pollution, cigarette smoke, car exhaust -- and hundreds of other chemicals. When you and your family members come into your home, you carry those pollens, bacteria and chemicals in your hair and on your skin, clothing and shoes. Not surprisingly, all those chemicals, pollens and bacteria wind up -- you guessed it -- in your carpet.

If you have allergies, asthma, emphysema, or other breathing problems -- one major source of your problem could be the pollens, fungus, and chemicals in your carpet.

In addition, as you may know, tobacco smoke contains over 4000 different chemical compounds, 43 of which cause cancer. And even if you don't smoke, those chemicals get on your shoes, you track them in to your home and you leave them in your carpet.

If you're sensitive to cigarette smoke, you might find that you'll breathe easier after you hire a company to get those harmful chemicals out of your carpet.

So in addition to getting rid of dirt, another important reason to clean your carpet is to get rid of pollens, fungus, bacteria, chemicals and the tars and residue from tobacco smoke.

Misconceptions #3: One method of carpet cleaning is as good as another.

No. You can choose from two primary methods: Dry cleaning or hot water extraction.

First, I'll explain dry cleaning. Many people believe that dry cleaning your carpet is like dry cleaning your clothing. This is not true. All carpet cleaning methods use water in one form or another. Here are the three methods of dry cleaning carpet.

When a carpet cleaner uses dry foam, he applies shampoo to your carpet, allow it to dry, and then sucks the dried shampoo into a vacuum. 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 residue in your carpet, which is one reason dry foam is not very effective.

The dry-chem method is similar to dry foam. The major difference is that when dry-chem is used, the company sets a large cotton bonnet on your carpet. Using a machine, the bonnet spins from side to side, absorbing the dirt that's in the carpet. After the bonnet is saturated with dirt, another cotton bonnet is applied. Bonnet cleaning is like trying to use a large towel to rub the dirt out of your carpet. Like dry foam, it's not very effective.

The dry-compound method spreads an absorbent mixture that looks like wet sawdust all over your carpeting. Then the machine brushes the mixture into the carpet, which in theory causes dirt to absorb into the mixture. When the mixture has dried, a vacuum cleaner sucks the material out of the carpeting. Because the carpet is not rinsed in any way, this method is not very effective.

The second carpet cleaning method is called hot water extraction. This is a fancy way of saying that a hot water cleaning solution under high pressure is forced into the carpet and then sucked out of the carpet. This method is also referred to as steam cleaning even though steam is not used.

Shaw Industries, the world's largest carpet manufacturer, recommends hot water extraction and you can choose from two different types: Portable extraction, which is done with a small machine. Or truck mount extraction which means the large cleaning machine is mounted in a truck or van.

Not surprisingly, the truck mount extraction cleans much better because it heats the water to a higher temperature -- and shoots the cleaning solution into the carpet at a higher pressure -- which breaks up the dirt, bacteria and pollens. Then the machine uses high suction to draw the dirt out of the carpet. This is the method my company uses.

No question, the most effective way to clean carpeting is with a hot-water unit mounted in a truck. It's the most powerful cleaning machine on the market and the only machine that thoroughly cleans your carpet of dirt, harmful bacteria, fungus, chemicals, pollens and tobacco residue.

Methods that use cold and even warm water remove dirt -- but are not as effective as the hot-water truck mount method.

Some people believe that hot water damages your carpet, but this isn't true. By washing and then rinsing your carpet with hot water, we clean your carpet completely -- in the same way that the person who showers and then rinses off the dirt and soap will be much cleaner than the person who takes only a sponge bath.

Misconception #4: Having the right equipment is all a company needs to clean your carpets properly.

Not true. Many companies own hot-water cleaners -- but a large number of employees don't know how to use them. You probably know someone who bought the newest computer on the market -- but didn't learn how to use it for a year or more. The same is true with carpet cleaning machines. The company may own good equipment, but the employees may not know how to use it correctly. This is 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. Cleaners who are certified by the IICRC have, in effect, earned a degree in carpet cleaning.

The IICRC provides written credentials to the companies it certifies. So before you choose a carpet cleaner, ask to see written proof of the company's IICRC certification.

Misconception #5: The company that offers the lowest price is the company you should hire.

Maybe -- but not always. Here are two important points to consider.

Point #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 carpet cleaner to remove only some of the dirt, you can choose from hundreds of companies that use small shampooers or other cleaning methods. Or, you can even rent a machine at the grocery store and do the job yourself.

On the other hand, if you want your carpet thoroughly cleaned -- if you want to remove the harmful dirt, bacteria, pollens, chemicals and tobacco residues -- then you need to hire a company that uses a hot water cleaner mounted in a truck. This is the only way to assure that your carpet remains healthy and free from dirt, disease-causing bacteria, and hurtful chemicals.

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

Point #2: 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.

And if you've ever hired a carpet cleaner, you too may have been the victim of false or misleading advertising. You probably learned the hard way that some carpet cleaners offer a cheap price -- usually between \$3.95 and \$9.95 per room -- and then pressure you into paying a lot more once they get inside your home. Some of them may even break the law by using illegal bait and switch tactics. 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.

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 you need. This is why I've published this message. And to help promote my efforts at consumer education, I have committed myself to continue to learn as much as I can about the industry.

Misconception #6: Any honest carpet cleaning company should be able to give you an exact price quote over the telephone.

I wish this were true, but it isn't. Consumers often think that if they want to clean four rooms and the price is \$6 per room, then the price will be \$24. But this isn't always true.

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 have a measuring wheel I use to calculate the exact size of the carpet area.

You'll be glad to know that the carpet 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 1200 square feet. This is because most home measurements are outdoor measurements. Plus I deduct the area taken up by walls, room dividers and the like. The result is that the actual area to be cleaned is usually only about 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 carpet you want cleaned.

Second, the amount of soiling, Carpet that hasn't been cleaned for ten years will take longer to clean than carpet that was cleaned within the last six months.

Third, the amount of furniture that has to be moved. If we have to move your furniture, the bid must include that labor. But if you move your furniture, you'll save money.

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

If you're thinking about having your carpets cleaned, I offer these four recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Make a commitment to yourself to get your carpets cleaned. The longer they remain dirty, the sooner they'll wear out. Plus the longer you have to breathe all the pollens, fungus, chemicals and dust mites that live in your carpet.

Recommendation #2: List your objectives. Do you want only the dirt removed, something you could do with a rented machine. Or do you want the bacteria, fungus and chemicals removed, which will require a hot water truck mount cleaner, 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 you the lowest price -- knowing that company might not be in business tomorrow.

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 method of carpet cleaning do you recommend?
2. What type of equipment do you use to clean carpet?
3. What does your equipment remove from my carpet?
4. How often should I get my carpets cleaned?
5. What training have you had in cleaning carpets?
6. Are you a member of any trade associations and, if so, which ones?
7. Are you certified by the IICRC and will you show me your certificate?

Recommendation #4: Once you're satisfied that you're working with an honest, competent professional, invite him 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 carpet cleaning job, many companies in the phone book can help you. Or you can rent a shampooer and do the job yourself.

But if you want your carpeting to be completely and thoroughly cleaned -- removing the bacteria, fungus, chemicals, pollens, and tobacco products -- then I invite you to call me.

I'll be happy to answer your questions -- provide you a cost estimate over the telephone -- or come into your home and give you a free written quotation -- without obligation of any kind. To reach me, call 896-4100 or my cell @ 890-2450.

Here's one last point: I know that many consumers are skeptical about carpet cleaning companies. Before I got into the business, I was skeptical too. 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 carpet cleaning job we do. If you aren't happy with our work, we'll reclean the area for free. And if you still aren't pleased, you pay nothing. Not one cent.

What could be fairer?

As a matter of fact, add this question to the list. Question #8 is "Do you guarantee your work?" Not all companies do -- and it's important that you have this information before you make your decision.

Thanks very much for your time. I hope you found this consumer message helpful. If you have questions or comments -- or if you'd like to schedule a free, in-home quotation, please call me at 896-4100 or my cell @ 890-2450. I'll return your call promptly.

On behalf Knight Kare Cleaning & Restoration -- I thank you for your kind attention.

Kevin D. Wood.