



Understanding carpet terms.

Carpets have been a popular floor covering around the world for more than a century because they provide a soft, cushioned surface in almost any location.



1 Carpet Fibers

There are a variety of natural and synthetic fibers used in the manufacture of carpeting. The four described on the right are the most common.

Nylon. Very soft, durable and resistant to stains, this fiber is the most popular material and is used in nearly 75% of all manufactured carpets.

Polyester. These fibers are highly-regarded because they're able to hold vibrant, dramatic colors that resist fading over time. Polyester is non-allergenic and, in many cases, crafted from recycled plastic bottles making it eco-friendly. Its only drawback is its susceptibility to having the fibers flattened under repeated exposure weight, making it a poor choice for high-traffic areas.

Polypropylene. Almost as soft as nylon, polypropylene is extremely resilient and resistant to stains, mildew and shedding.

Wool. This natural, luxurious, long-lasting carpet fiber is the softest you can find. Some manufacturers combine wool and synthetic fibers to create a carpet with the benefits of both.

Carpet Durability: Twist and Density

Durability is heavily reliant on a carpet's density and twist, two specifications listed on the label. **Density** refers to how close together the strands of fiber are – expressed as fibers per square inch. You can judge density by bending it back and seeing how much backing peeks through. Denser carpet tends to last longer because it withstands impact better. It also protects from dirt and stain by making it more difficult for particles to sink through it, keeping soils on the surface and easier to clean.

Twist is the number of times a strand of fiber is twisted per inch. Carpet that has a high twist level of 4 or more will also be more durable and less likely to unravel. Carpet doesn't have to be dense to be durable, as long as it has a high twist level (and vice versa).

Don't confuse density and twist with **face weight**, which is the amount of fiber measured in ounces per square yard (as opposed to **total weight**, which includes the weight of the carpet backing). Face weight won't tell you a lot about the durability of a carpet without knowing the density and twist, as well.



2 Understanding Carpet Pile

Carpet is made by looping yarn through a piece of backing material in a movement similar to sewing a button on a shirt. All carpets begin as a loop carpet, but these loops can be cut—hence the name ‘cut pile’ carpet. In other words, if a carpet doesn’t consist of loops, it’s a cut pile. The way the loop is treated will define the carpets “pile.” Popular cut piles are plush, Saxony, and frieze. Below are the most common carpet pile types available.

Uncut Carpet Pile or Berber



Also known as “loop pile” or “Berber pile,” this method leaves the entire loop intact on the surface of the carpet. These pieces tend to be highly durable, easy to clean and resistant to stains, making them ideal for high-traffic commercial applications and active family areas. Uncut pile carpets will also not show indentations caused by feet and vacuum cleaners.

Cut Carpet Pile



In this method, the loops are trimmed to produce very soft, attractive looking carpets that are easy to clean. The drawback might be that the vertical threads make it easier to see footprints and vacuum tracks.

Combination Pile



This refers to carpets which incorporate loop and cut carpet strands together, resulting in a uniquely attractive surface with qualities of both techniques.

Saxony Cut Pile



An iconic carpet pile, Saxony is woven in loops and then sheared to make an even surface. This pile is often a dense weave and a soft fiber, creating a plush, luxurious and very soft carpet known for its comfort and softness underfoot. The carpet tufts are fine and densely packed and appear to blend together to create a rich sweep of color. This pile is another pile that can be crushed and tracked by foot traffic and vacuum cleaners.

Textured Cut Pile



Sometimes called “trackless” because it doesn’t show footprints or other indentations on its surface as much as Saxony pile carpets, this pile is formed by taking individual yarns and twisting them into spirals which are set using heated steam.

Frieze Cut Pile



In this pile, the individual strands are tightly twisted and kinked, causing them to curl randomly across the surface of the carpet. This is often found in commercial buildings and other high-traffic locations.

Plush Carpet Pile



Sometimes called “velvet cut pile,” this style features short, densely-packed fibers which create a rich and luxurious carpet surface.