

# ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET!

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Carpets are still one of the most popular flooring choices. They provide comfort and shock absorption, thanks to their flexibility and cushioning. Carpets are excellent thermal insulators, and with good underfelt, they can significantly reduce heat loss through the floor. Carpets provide acoustic insulation and are one of the most effective ways of reducing noise.

The textile surface of a carpet and its three-dimensional structure make it a particularly safe surface on which to walk. The carpet surface has excellent slip resistance and will offer a soft, forgiving surface should a fall occur. From luxurious and elegant to casual and comfortable, carpets have a style of their own.

**References:**

- <https://www.mckenzieandwills.co.nz/the-great-debate-synthetic-vs-wool-carpet/>
- <https://flooring-innovations.com/pros-cons-synthetic-carpet-vs-wool-carpet/>
- <https://hostdrycarpetcleaningsystems.com>

## Synthetic or natural fibre?

Deciding on the right carpet for a commercial building can be a tough decision. You may be undecided about choosing between natural and synthetic fibres. Should you go for wool carpets that have been used for centuries or opt for synthetic fibre carpets that are more affordable? Always weigh up your various options to avoid splitting hairs when making the final decision.

The synthetic versus woolen carpet debate has been ongoing, with manufacturers tending to 'agree to disagree' that both fibres are great options. Your choice should be determined by a variety of factors such as durability, ease of cleaning and budget.

Choosing between natural fibre and synthetic fibre carpets could be compared to searching for the perfect winter coat. Retail stores stock a variety of coats manufactured from different types of fibre. Your final decision may be motivated by durability, price, and/or quality. Your choice of a synthetic coat may not have the lush feel of a woolen coat, and may not be as warm, but it will not cost a lot and it is easier to care for in comparison to a wool coat. However, a wool coat is a reliable investment that will last a lifetime if carefully cared for.

## The birth of a carpet

All synthetic fibres start off with plastic pellets, which are melted and then pressed through a spinneret to produce the yarns. Dyed yarns are tufted to a primary backing, and a secondary backing is glued to the primary backing which then adds strength to the carpet. In most cases, carpet padding as an underlay gives it a softer, more luxurious feel.

There are five main carpet fibres: synthetic fibres such as nylon, olefin (polypropylene), polyester, acrylic as well as natural fibres such as wool. Today, a large percentage of pile yarns are made up of synthetic polymers such as nylon, acrylics, polyester and polypropylene. The largest percentage of commercial carpets are made from synthetic fibres, which are often 'reborn' from recycled plastic containers.

Used to make clothing and other textiles for centuries, wool is one of the oldest natural fabrics and is often associated with luxury. However, only a small percentage of carpets are 100 per cent wool.

## The deciders

Choosing the right carpet for the correct application in commercial buildings can be challenging, especially with the broad range available. Before placing an order, it is important to consider factors such as health and safety, durability, maintenance and sustainability. Commercial carpets are rigorously evaluated for the above qualities and certified accordingly.

Based on the test results, carpets are usually grouped into commercial or domestic classifications, and according to their usage suitability:

### Domestic

- Class 21: Moderate domestic use
- Class 22: General domestic use
- Class 23: Heavy domestic use

### Commercial

- Class 31: Moderate commercial use
- Class 32: General commercial use
- Class 33: Heavy commercial use

## Types of carpet fibres to choose from

### Wool fibres:

Wool carpets are the most luxurious choice and are synonymous with quality and durability. Their resilient fibres, with their natural ability to 'bounce back' make them suitable for high traffic areas. Wool carpets are slow to soil and naturally resistant to stains. A well-maintained wool carpet can last a lifetime. Wool carpets are also naturally resistant to fire and are hard to ignite and slow to burn. Wool is a renewable fibre that is 100 per cent natural and biodegradable. It is recommended that wool carpets be cleaned with a dry-cleaning system, as using a wet one can result in over-wetting, which could lead to the carpet shrinking.

### Wool blend fibres:

Not all wool carpets are made from 100 per cent wool fibres. To save costs and to add other characteristics to carpets, wool carpet blends are often used. One of the three synthetic fibres (nylon, acrylic, polyester) will be used as a blend, with nylon fibres being the most popular. Based on proportions, a blended fibre carpet will take on the attributes of the materials being used. A carpet that is 80 per cent wool and 20 per cent nylon will act like nylon 20 per cent of the time and like wool 80 per cent of the time.

### Nylon fibres:

Considered the ultimate carpet fibre, nylon carpets should be your first choice when considering a well-balanced carpet. It has a good yarn memory, making it a durable and suitable carpet for heavy traffic areas, including stairs. It is also easy to clean and maintain, especially when treated for stain protection.

### Polypropylene/olefin fibres:

Polypropylene, also known as olefin fibre carpets, are common in commercial properties as they offer a solid combination of performance and affordability. The solution-dyed fibres are often referred to as 'miracle fibres' due to their stain resistance. The carpet is strong, mildew- and moisture-resistant, as well as easy to clean. These fibres are colour-fast because the production process involves mixing polypropylene with dyes. Olefin works best in loop carpets such as Berbers. The disadvantage of these fibres, however, is their poor resilience—which can lead to crushing of the fibres. It is therefore used in low, loop-pile carpets or carpet tiles. While they are resistant to stains and liquids, they are susceptible to soiling from walk-off or spilt oils.

### Polyester:

These fibres have a fair resilience and are not suitable for high traffic areas. They tend to mat and are therefore more suitable for low- to medium-traffic areas, especially in residential spaces. Polyester fibres are susceptible to piling, oil-based stains and shedding.

### Acrylic:

These are fibres made from acrylonitrile, which became a substitute for wool in a number of carpets after the 1950s. The acrylic carpet has some advantages. It is less expensive than wool, resistant to mould and mildew, easy to dye in bright colours, is fast-drying and fairly stain-resistant. Although these fibres have the look and feel of wool, the carpet lacks in quality. Acrylic fibres have poor resilience and tend to fuzz and pile. Acrylic is the least durable of all synthetic fibres.

### Synthetic blend fibres:

Synthetic blends combine nylon, acrylic and/or polyester. Olefin is very rarely used for blends as it tends to attract dirt and has poor resilience. Nylon and polyester blends are the most popular, offering durability at an affordable price. The 80/20 per cent rule also applies to these mixes, as a blended fibre carpet will take on the attributes of the materials being used based on proportions.



## Comfortable!

Carpets are cosy, chic, smooth and give a plush underfoot feeling, making people feel instantly comfortable in a carpeted room. We can all agree that carpets are soothing in the kind of manner that no other floor covering can offer. Carpets are timeless and manufacturers always ensure that recent technology continually enhances the durability and beauty of these floor coverings.