



Highlights: Carpet Stores

The carpet you choose will have a big impact on your home's look and feel. **Washington Consumers' Checkbook** (Checkbook.org) puts buyers on the path to solid advice, quality installation, and reasonable prices. Some highlights from Checkbook's report:

- Before heading to a showroom, decide how much carpeting you need, where it will go, how it will be used, and what will look good with your furnishings.
- A good carpet store can be a helpful source of advice. Checkbook found some stores were rated "superior" for the advice they provide by more than 80 percent of surveyed customers. But some area carpet dealers failed to get such favorable ratings from even half of their surveyed customers.
- You not only have to choose the best carpet for your home but also be confident that it will be properly installed. Checkbook often hears about delivery delays and sloppy installations. Some outlets in Checkbook's survey got very low scores on overall quality of installation.
- How much you pay—even for the exact same carpet—depends on how and where you shop. Checkbook's undercover shoppers found large store-to-store price differences when they asked for price quotes for the same carpet, padding, and installation work.
- For one job, Checkbook received prices ranging from \$1,800 to \$6,534 for the same carpet (Mohawk "Silent Wonder") and pad, installed. For another style (Mohawk "Exquisite Beauty"), the range was from \$2,880 to \$5,670.
- Unfortunately, comparing carpet prices isn't easy. Although carpets from several major manufacturers are sold at most stores, it is often difficult to find the same style and grade on display at any two stores, since thousands of styles are available. Many retailers change carpets' style names from the manufacturers' names, and some big chains have exclusive rights to sell certain carpet styles.
- Price comparisons are possible, though, if the manufacturer's style name or number appears on the carpet label and you can find at least two stores that sell it. If you provide the correct style information, many stores will provide price quotes over the phone for carpet manufacturers they regularly carry.
- Beware of "free" offers. The cost of "free" installation is often built into the price of the carpet. You are likely to get a lower price for the carpet itself somewhere else where installation is not free.
- To protect yourself from buying more carpet than you need, make a drawing of the area you want carpeted, with accurate measurements. Show it or email it to several stores and ask how they will lay out the carpet and how much is needed. Before placing an order, have the store come out to measure.
- Before you close the deal, get a written sales contract. Make all payments by credit card to preserve your rights to get a refund if you're dissatisfied.
- Many carpet styles look nearly identical, and some stores take advantage of customers by providing lower-grade carpeting to buyers. To be sure you get what you paid for, obtain a sample and carefully compare it to the rolls delivered. Ensure you get the proper pad by comparing a sample of that as well.
- Some of the biggest gripes by consumers are over delivery delays and sloppy installations. Checkbook's ratings show what percentage of surveyed customers rated each company's installation service "superior" for "doing work properly," "promptness," and "overall quality." Several companies were rated "superior" on some of these criteria by 60 percent or fewer of surveyed customers, but others were rated "superior" more than 90 percent of the time.

Checkbook's editors are available for interviews. Please contact Jamie Lettis at 202-454-3006 or jlettis@checkbook.org to schedule.