

How to shop for an area rug



Expert advice on buying an area rug.

By **Alison Bowen**
Chicago Tribune

APRIL 27, 2016, 2:30 PM

Sometimes spring cleaning turns into spring throwing out.

Maybe you're tired of looking at the grubby rug on your living room floor. Or maybe you're tired of looking at the rug-less floor. Either way, buying a rug can seem intimidating. If you're gathering your strength, we talked to experts.

RELATED: TRENDING LIFE & STYLE NEWS THIS HOUR

First, know that options abound. Purchasing in person is always a safe way to feel out what you want. But many varieties are online. Also, think about vintage shops and antique fairs, where you might find great quality at an affordable price, said New York interior designer Robin Wilson.

Think outside the room: Wilson also looks at places like Green Demolition or Habitat for Humanity's ReStore, whose storefronts sell furnishings for a good cause.

And a little-known option? Some carpet stores will custom-cut a carpet into a rug. For example, at Sisal Rugs, anyone can order and make any size from its carpets, a spokesperson said.

Size: First, assess the dimensions. For an elegant feel, match the exact measurements of a room. Most experts suggest a foot away from the wall, depending on the room.

For a rug underneath a dining table, make sure it's enough to fit all chairs and table, said Ashley Turner, co-founder of [Shanty 2 Chic](#) design blog.

New York-based designer Alexa Hampton says that if she likes the floor of a room, she prefers to leave uncovered space around the edge.

In smaller spaces, Hampton, who also offers advice for [ATGStores.com](#), suggests keeping 6 inches to a foot between rug and floor.

Johanna Mele counsels clients at West Elm, which offers free tips through its Design Lab, to have all of the seating pieces' front legs, at least, hitting the rug.

Pattern and design: If the rug should be the focal point, buy the rug before everything else. Or match the rug to your furnishings.

Trust your own preferences. "Don't let the rug salesman tell you what color rug," Wilson said.

You can have a white rug, for example, especially if the room is rarely used.

Turner added that a lighter rug can nicely stand out on a dark floor. She and Whitney Gainer, her sister and co-founder, prefer a neutral rug, bringing out color and prints with pillows and curtains.

Added Michael Poczalski, owner and principal designer of [Michael P Design](#) in Buffalo, "If you get tired of a certain color, it's simple to make a definitive difference by changing out these items."

Use: "Where is the rug going?" asks Mele, West Elm's lead home stylist. Is it a high-traffic area, for example, or by the bed?

She suggests a "low-pile" rug for areas with a lot of foot traffic. Low piles tend to be more durable, Mele said, and trap less dirt.

Higher-piled rugs might work well for less-used places like the bed or a reading nook.

Beyond your budget, Wilson said, "be honest about how clean you are."

For example, if pets or children are running around, perhaps you don't opt for the highest-end rug.

Wilson prefers wools, not synthetics. "It lasts a long time if you keep it clean," she said.

Think down the road, too, Wilson suggests.

"Imagine your child at 3 crawling across with wet hands and rug dye on their hands," she noted. "Those are things that people don't think about at all."

abowen@tribpub.com

Twitter @byalisonbowen

RELATED STORIES:

[How to buy a high-end coffee maker](#)

[From curtains to coasters, an elevated homespun look](#)

[8 tips to make moving day faster, smoother](#)

Copyright © 2018, Chicago Tribune

A version of this article appeared in print on May 01, 2016, in the Life+Style section of the Chicago Tribune with the headline "How to shop for an area rug" — Today's paper | [Subscribe](#)