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SHADING or PILE REVERSAL

Shading or Pile Reversal is the term used when a carpet or rug seems to change color in certain areas.

Carpet pile has a natural slope in one direction. As long as the tufts slant in the same direction, the carpet has a uniform color throughout. However, some of the tufts may slant against this normal pile lay, causing a variation in the way light is reflected from the napped surface.

When you look at the carpet from one angle, these areas will appear to be lighter than the rest of the carpet. Viewed from the other side, these spots appear darker. On the dark side you are viewing the ends of the fibers and on the light side you are seeing light reflecting off the side of the fibers.

Changes in the lay of pile usually develop gradually in traffic areas or in front of frequently used articles of furniture. However, shading may also occur in areas of less traffic and under furniture.



It can even be present in brand new wall-to-wall installations.

Installers have been known to butt sections of carpet running in the opposite direction. Occasionally a roll of carpet may have been incorrectly stored at the bottom of a stack that is too tall. This creates a crushing effect that results in 'waves' every foot or two. (See photo)

Shading occurs most frequently on dense, deep, velvety, cut pile carpets. Many Chinese and dense pile Indian rugs show some pile distortion after use or the first cleaning. Although it can affect multicolored or printed design carpet, the problem is most obvious on solid colors.

"Pooling" refers to smaller, usually round areas that resemble a puddle. These are frequently found at staircases where the foot must turn or rotate to enter or exit the stairs.

"Water marking" refers to larger areas that look like sections of the carpet have become wet. (see photos below) As you can tell the photo on the left has the dark shading at the bottom. The photo on the right has the light shading at the top.



In some cases, shading becomes more apparent after the carpet is cleaned which may lead you to believe the shaded appearance developed during the cleaning process. The shading was probably not visible before cleaning because of lighting, the placement of furniture, or uniform soiling over the entire surface.

Little can be done to prevent or correct shading; it is an inherent characteristic of certain types of carpet. It can be slowed by vacuuming or brushing the pile in one direction during daily or weekly maintenance.