

magic

Not only are area rugs practical, comfortable and luxurious, they can easily solve a plethora of decorating and design problems.

BY KIMBERLEY SELDON

I don't believe anything underscores a beautiful room quite like an area rug. Whether it's a hand-woven Oriental, a French needlepoint, a rustic sisal, or a modern loop, an area rug is what I call a desirable necessity. Intensely practical, these self-bound carpets satisfy our craving for comfort and luxury, two things I could never live without. So, for true success underfoot, here are a few things you may want to know about area rugs.

Prior to the 17th century, carpets made on hand looms were used primarily to cover walls, tables and chairs. That may seem strange to us, but remember, at that time, carpets provided much needed warmth in cold, stone interiors. Today, of

course, area rugs still provide warmth and comfort, although they are used primarily on floors. Fortunately, an immense variety of sizes, designs, materials and colours means that there is an appropriate carpet for just about every budget.

Area rugs have a multitude of practical purposes beyond providing a beautiful backdrop for a room's furnishings. A well-placed carpet can introduce structure to an open concept floor plan. It can also intimately enfold a conversation grouping, direct the flow of traffic, and help define distinct areas of activity.

The right area rug will link disparate furnishings, and even provide inspiration for colour schemes. One large carpet or several smaller carpets can hide unsightly flooring such as worn carpeting or

Tables can be centred on an area rug (left). Carpets can energize a room (centre). Dining room chairs should fit onto the rug.



carpets



Traditional-style rugs usually have intricate detailing.

linoleum, help stop dirt at entranceways, and anchor individual seating arrangements. As well, area rugs can actually help dampen noise levels within rooms – something that may appeal to you if you have toddlers or teens at home.

The sheer enormity of choice in selecting a carpet prevents any kind of brief dis-

cussion on which type of pattern to choose. However, it is safe to make a couple of generalizations. Modern and contemporary styled area rugs tend to involve less pattern, while traditional-style carpets usually contain more pattern and more intricate detailing.

While all-over patterns visually help to widen and energize a room, geometric patterns, or those with a border, visually enclose a space. Choose a central medallion on carpets in open seating arrangements or centred under glass tables. However, if a space is an awkward shape or proportion, a central medallion will only accentuate that. Dynamic stripes can be used to widen narrow spaces while a darker carpet can anchor furnishings in monochromatic or minimal interiors, even providing a room's focal point.

The most common question I am asked regarding area rugs is "How big should it be?" To determine the maximum size, subtract 3 ft from the room's width and 3 ft from the length. This allows for a sufficient "frame" of floor around the perimeter of the carpet.

The second most common question is whether or not you should place furniture on or off the carpet. This answer is a little more subjective. My feeling is that it is always more gracious to have furniture on an area rug. The decision to place furni-

Photos courtesy of Giant Carpet

ture on or off the rug is based on the proportion of floor left showing. Sometimes you have to experiment.

I have a strong preference in a dining room, though. Because you want guests to be able to move in and out from the table with ease, it's preferable to have chairs firmly planted on a carpet. For this reason, it's ideal to choose a carpet that is 42-in. to 48-in. larger (by width and length) than your table.

Quality carpets can appreciate in value, making them a fairly secure investment. Before selection, consider a rug's individ-

ual merits. Is it made by hand? Where does it originate? How durable is it? Is it easy to clean? All of these things will help determine its ultimate worth. An area rug's ability to move with ease between rooms (and into a new home, should you decide to relocate) also increases its desirability. ✨

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TYPES OF AREA RUGS

- Dhurries are flat, woven Indian rugs, which usually feature pastel colours and stylized, traditional motifs. Made of cotton, they are easy to maintain, affordable and reversible.
- Killims are woollen, flat weaves, usually made in Turkey or Afghanistan. They typically feature geometric motifs in rich colours and are durable and affordable.
- Oriental carpets are usually a wool pile that's hand knotted through a linen or cotton backing. Generally, the greater the knots per square inch, the higher the quality. Though somewhat costly, they can sustain their value.
- A Persian carpet is a type of Oriental carpet from central Asia. The majority of patterns are based on floral motifs. They are highly practical, comfortable and long lasting.
- Aubusson carpets are of French origin and feature hand-stitched tapestry weaves. The colours are typically soft pastels and they usually feature a central medallion design.
- Sisal carpets are made of the braided leaves of the agave plant. Although they are highly fashionable, they stain easily and can be scratchy underfoot. Sisal carpets are paintable.
- Seagrass is similar to Sisal except its leaf is waxier, thus softer and more stain resistant.
- Chinese carpets are often richly sculpted with a thick, luxurious pile. In general, the motifs are based on natural forms such as flowers and birds.