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Patterned Carpets: Finding the best match For your project

Patterned Carpet Trends

Patterned carpet is not new but its design sophistication is **breaking new ground**. With multiple **colors** and intricate **patterns**, these carpets were originally introduced to hide foot traffic wear and stains in large spaces. Today's patterned carpet visuals have evolved into an **art form**. Carpet mills have engaged the services of **big-name designers** to develop exquisite patterns. The variety of standard and custom yarn colors is virtually endless. Plus, in addition to standard and semi-custom carpet patterns, state-of-the-art equipment can produce practically **any visual you can imagine**: small patterns, large patterns, geometrics, florals, free-forms and more!

Patterned carpet usage has grown beyond the original customer base of hotel lobbies and restaurants. In fact, well **over 90% of commercial carpet is patterned**, and it's finding its way into every commercial space and application. Today, patterned carpets are used throughout offices, health care facilities and schools. And, thanks to advancements in manufacturing technology, it's not uncommon to see patterned carpet offered with a variety of backing options including **moisture-resistant** and **extra cushioning**. Once the domain of **broadloom carpet**, patterned **carpet tile** is also growing.



One aspect of patterned carpet that hasn't changed over the course of time is the need for an **experienced installation team**. Although the carpet mills have made enormous improvements in manufacturing quality, there are no CRI (Carpet and Rug Institute) or other carpet industry standards* for pattern-matching variations or manufacturing tolerances. Since carpet is a **textile material** that is subject to pattern distortion throughout the manufacturing process, most manufacturers do not guarantee an exact pattern match. So, if you're thinking about using patterned carpet on your project you should also think about working with the **best possible flooring contractor**.

* See CRI 104-2002 "Standard for Installation & Specification of Commercial Carpet."

“Roll out every roll of carpet first. Clearly, if there is more than 1 1/2” deviancy in the pattern, reject the roll.”

— StarNet Member Contractor

Experience Counts

Every patterned carpet installation takes expertise, but the true test of the installation team comes into play especially when the pattern is slightly out of tolerance. Patterned carpet requires meticulous craftsmanship to align and stretch the rolls so that the pattern match is acceptable. A good installation crew can work around minor issues and resolve them on the spot. Then there are those times when no amount of skill can make up for a carpet whose pattern is too far out of tolerance. When this happens, good flooring contractors are worth their weight in gold to help you recognize the problem, inform you of your options and help you resolve the situation with the manufacturer.

StarNet Member contractors are uniquely qualified to handle patterned carpet projects because they are the most experienced professionals in the business. Period. They will provide professional services during the design stage including advice about fiber selection, recommendations about the yarn dye process and guidance about the manufacturing process. Equally important to the patterned design that you see on the surface is the primary backing used in the manufacturing process. The better the carpet backing the better the quality of your carpet visual and performance, which lead to a great-looking finished floor. Count on your StarNet Member contractor to know what your options are and what would be the best choice for your project.

Big and Small, We Work With Them All

As the saying goes, everyone has an opinion. Some think the smaller, specialized mills are the best source for patterned carpets because they're not “high volume” producers. The thought being that small mills can focus on running their equipment slowly and monitoring their production lines more carefully. Others think the larger, big-name mills are the best source because they can handle large volume orders easily, may offer faster delivery and may have a wider array of services for customers to select from. Rather than get in a small vs. large size debate, the important things to keep in mind for any patterned carpet order are:

- **Allow plenty of lead time for production. Patterned carpet in particular is sensitive to the speed of the tufting equipment. A rush-job is more likely to be out of tolerance.**
- **Be clear about your expectations. Get the tolerance variations in writing. This will save you a lot of debate and headaches when the product is delivered.**
- **Make sure you have an independent party to champion your project. Contractors who are aligned with mills will be hard-pressed to have a non-biased perspective. Your StarNet Member contractor, on the other hand, is not aligned with any mill, and can be objective about the situation.**

StarNet Member contractors have relationships with all the major mills—both big and small. Their knowledge of who-does-what-best can help you determine which mills would be good choices for your carpet project. They'll partner with you to communicate quality expectations prior to and during the manufacturing process. They'll be available to analyze the product quality upon delivery. Finally, they'll be able to determine if the delivered product can be installed to your satisfaction and resolve any conflicts with the manufacturer.

“StarNet Member contractors have the client’s best interest at heart. Not that the mill doesn’t, but if you run into trouble with a patterned carpet, the manufacturer can’t be as neutral.”

— Lew Migliore,
Carpet Industry Consultant

You Get What You Pay For

We can’t emphasize enough that there’s absolutely no substitute for good quality when it comes to patterned carpet. You should expect to pay more for a patterned carpet. Steer clear of any mill that says they can produce a quality product inexpensively. It not only won’t look as nice, it will be harder to power stretch if any on-the-job tweaking is necessary, and it won’t wear well, costing you more money in the long run with replacement carpet. You should also avoid any contractor that tells you that you won’t have to pay more for a patterned carpet installation. Experienced flooring contractors roll out and inspect the carpet before the installation. Patterned carpet takes approximately one third more time to install and requires more expertise than solid-color carpet, even when the patterns are within tolerance. If the delivered product does have pattern match issues, the job can take much longer than anticipated. Budgeting properly is well worth it to ensure a top-notch product, a great installation and your peace of mind. A good flooring contractor, like your StarNet Member, will be honest about this up front and inform you of the additional cost. Even though many mill reps will be quite up front about cost, quality and pattern match issues, involving an objective third party such as a StarNet Member contractor helps foster open and honest communications and expectations between the specifier, the manufacturing mill and the end-user.

“Patterned carpets can be power-stretched to hide pattern match issues, and to fix bow and skew issues. But not a lot. Think of it like wallpaper. What do you do if the patterns don’t line up?”

— StarNet Member Contractor





“You can install 80-100 yards/day per man of solid color carpet, compared to 60 yards/day per man for patterned carpet. If the pattern is way out of tolerance it can take even more time. This needs to be factored into the cost.”

— StarNet Member Contractor



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1-800-787-6381



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