RASHMO

RUGS - FURNITURE - LIVING

The guide to looking after a handmade rug

Everyday care, spills, moths, storage and when to call a specialist, from a rug house in Bhadohi, making handmade rugs since 1927.

BEFORE YOU START

A good rug asks for very little. Almost all of it is habit.

A handmade wool rug is built to last decades. In our experience the things that shorten its life are rarely dramatic: grit left in the pile, a spill that was rubbed rather than blotted, a rug never turned, a cleaning product that promised too much.

This guide sets out, in plain terms, what to do every week, what to do when something goes wrong, and what to leave to a specialist. It applies to most handmade wool rugs, whoever made them. Silk, bamboo silk, antique and very fine pieces are more delicate, and the safest rule for those is to ask before you act.

If you are ever unsure, photograph the rug and write to us. We would rather answer a question than repair a mistake.

AT A GLANCE

Weekly	Vacuum, beater bar off, with the pile
Straight away	Lift solids, blot with white cloth, cool water, dry well
Every 6 months	Turn end for end, shift the furniture, vacuum the floor beneath
Every season	Check the back and edges for moths, check the pad
Every 3 to 5 years	Professional flat wash by a handmade-rug specialist
As soon as noticed	Moth signs, loose binding, frayed fringe, holes, dye run

01 Every week: vacuum, gently

Dust and grit fall through the pile and settle at its base. Every footstep then grinds that grit against the fibre where it is anchored. That, far more than the footsteps themselves, is what wears a rug out, and regular vacuuming is the single most useful thing you can do for it.

- Vacuum once or twice a week in a room you live in, and more often in a hallway or entrance.
- Switch the beater bar off, or lift the head. A spinning brush pulls fibre from a hand-tufted pile and can catch loops in a flatweave.
- Go with the direction of the pile, not against it. Stroke the pile with your hand: it feels smooth one way and rougher the other.
- Keep the nozzle off the fringe. If the fringe is untidy, comb it by hand.
- Once a season, lift the rug, vacuum the floor beneath it and the back of the rug.

02 Spills: the first ten minutes

Wool carries a natural waxy coating, so a spill sits on the surface for a short while before it soaks in. Everything below is about using that pause.

1. **Lift**
   Take up any solids with a spoon or blunt knife, working from the outside of the spill inwards so it does not spread.
2. **Blot**
   Press a clean white cloth or plain paper towel firmly onto the mark, lift, move to a dry part of the cloth, repeat. White, so you can see what is coming out and no dye can travel from the cloth into the rug. Never rub: it drives the spill deeper and can felt the wool.
3. **Cool water, sparingly**
   Dampen the cloth, not the rug, and keep blotting. Hot water sets milk, blood, egg and most pet accidents.
4. **Dry thoroughly**
   Blot out as much moisture as you can, then let air move around the area, with a fan if you have one. A rug left damp against the floor can develop a mark or a smell that the spill never caused.

If a stain remains after one careful attempt, stop. Further scrubbing makes most marks worse. Photograph it and ask a specialist.

03 Twice a year: turn it

Rooms wear a rug unevenly: hardest along the route people walk, and wherever the light crosses. Turn the rug end for end every six months so that wear and light are shared across the whole piece rather than one strip of it. Move heavy furniture a few centimetres at the same time, or use wide coasters under the legs. Pile that has been crushed for months will recover; pile crushed for years will not.

04 Sunlight

Every dye fades in strong direct sun, natural and synthetic alike, and silk and bamboo silk are especially sensitive. If a rug sits in a bright window, draw a curtain or blind at the brightest part of the day, and use the twice-yearly turn above to even out whatever light does reach it.

05 Underlay, or a rug pad

A good pad stops the rug creeping, protects the back from the floor, and gives a little cushioning that reduces wear. Choose a natural felt or a felt and rubber mix, cut slightly smaller than the rug so that it cannot be seen. Avoid cheap plastic or PVC grids on a polished or lacquered floor, where they can mark the surface over time. Lift the rug every few months and check the pad has not begun to break down.

06 Moths

Moth larvae feed on wool, and they prefer dark, undisturbed places: under furniture, along a wall, and in a rug that is stored. A rug that is walked on, vacuumed and turned is rarely troubled.

- Do not let a rug lie unmoved under a sofa or a bed for years. Pull it out and vacuum it now and then.
- Look at the back and along the edges for fine webbing, small cases, or bare patches in the pile.
- To store a rug: have it professionally cleaned and fully dried first, roll it with the pile facing outwards, wrap it in breathable cotton or paper, and check it from time to time. Do not seal wool in plastic, which traps moisture.
- If you find signs of moths, isolate the rug and get it treated promptly. Early damage is a small repair, left alone it is not.

07 Shedding, sprouting and shading

Three things look alarming and are normal. A new wool rug sheds loose fibre for the first weeks and months: vacuum it gently and it settles. A single tuft that stands proud of the pile is a sprout: snip it level with scissors, never pull it. Pile that looks lighter or darker in different places is shading, an effect of the way light catches the pile direction, and it does not mean the colour has changed.

08 When to have it professionally washed

A rug in a normal living room benefits from a proper wash every three to five years, sooner in a hallway or a home with children or animals. Choose a specialist who washes handmade rugs flat, off site, with the right detergent and a controlled drying room, not a service that cleans carpet in place with a machine.

Do not wait for the routine interval if a spill has soaked through to the floor, if a pet has soiled the rug, if a dye has run, or if you can see damage to the edge binding or the fringe.

09 What not to do

- Do not use a steam cleaner or hot water extraction. Heat and saturation together shrink wool and can distort the foundation.
- Do not use bleach or oxygen bleach: both strip colour from wool.
- Do not use ammonia. It smells like urine to a pet and invites a repeat.
- Do not use all-purpose carpet sprays or foams. Most leave a sticky residue that attracts soil.
- Do not rub, scrub or brush a stain.
- Do not pull a loose thread or a sprout. Cut it level.
- Do not shake a large rug hard or beat it: it can break the foundation.
- Do not fold a rug, and do not roll it while damp.
- Do not leave a wet pot, a flower vase or a damp mat standing on it.

WHEN YOU WOULD RATHER LEAVE IT TO US

We wash and repair handmade rugs, ours or anyone's, from our base in Bhadohi. Cleaning has published rates. Repairs are assessed from photographs and quoted before any work begins, so there are no surprise charges.

Wash your rug with Rashmo	raheemandson.com/rashmo/wash
Repair your rug with Rashmo	raheemandson.com/rashmo/repair
Write to us	rashmo@raheemandson.com

This guide is general advice for handmade wool rugs and is not a guarantee against damage. Always test a product on a hidden corner, and follow any care label that came with your rug.