A guide to choosing the right vacuum cleaner

A good quality vacuum will of course clean the floor but a great vacuum will also enhance your indoor air quality (IAQ). Using the right vacuum cleaner head to suit the floor type or accessory to suit above the floor vacuuming will contribute to good IAQ.

Vacuuming not only prolongs the life of the flooring but also enhances its appearance. Note there are vital differences when vacuuming hard floor versus soft floor i.e. carpet and rugs.

A vacuum's performance will also vary based on the carpet's fibre type and construction.

First and foremost, people should follow their flooring manufacturer care guides and warranty statements for cleaning recommendations. All good carpet manufacturers provide guidance on vacuum cleaner features that best suit their carpet styles and fibres.

This information is generally provided at the time of carpet installation or can be sourced from the flooring supplier. Using incorrect cleaning methods can potentially soil your flooring investment and void your flooring warranty.

Understanding vacuum cleaner heads

Suction only — known as a combination head is generally reserved for hard floor vacuuming as typically these types of heads struggle to clean below the surface of the carpet pile where most of the allergens and damaging debris sit.

Turbohead — has a rotating brush but isn't powered. It uses airflow to get the brush spinning. It's usually less effective at cleaning carpet than a power head.

Powerhead — has a built-in electric motor with a rotating brush, independent of airflow. Very good at removing debris from carpet, as they agitate the carpet pile to release more dirt.

Featured in this resource is the SEBO E3 Premium Barrel (91646AU), SEBO X7 Boost Upright (91542AU) and SEBO Felix Premium Upright (9809AU).

Vacuum cleaners for people with asthma and allergies

All vacuum cleaners with the Sensitive Choice blue butterfly have been independently tested and approved as asthma and allergy friendly.

All Sensitive Choice approved vacuums will have a HEPA-13 filter, which will filter out 99.97% of air particles that pass through it. European manufacturers sometimes use the term S-CLASS Filtration instead of HEPA on their models.

High performance filtration systems are excellent at trapping invisible irritants like fine dust, pollen, mould spores and pet dander from the airstream.

Vacuum cleaners that use multi-layered filter bags to capture bulky debris such as pet hair, dirt and larger dust particles allow the next stage filter (i.e. HEPA) to focus on removing the really fine particles so they don't make it back out into the ambient air.

A high performance filter, like a HEPA, is only really effective if the vacuum cleaner can efficiently remove debris. A vacuum cleaner filter cannot remove allergens or fine dust particles if it cannot pick them up from the surface being cleaned. Ensure vacuum is a sealed system with the final air exhausted being clean.

Debris disposal

Dust becomes airborne very easily and will almost certainly contain hazardous material, dust mite faeces, mould spores and pollen. With a sealable filter bag, dust and allergens are safely retained within the filter bag and can be hygienically and easily disposed of in the bin, inside or outside. Thus, the filter bag housing does not require cleaning.

3.5L Ultra Bag for hygenic dust disposal

Flooring types

Hard flooring

This includes smooth or textured tiles, laminate, vinyl, hybrids, wood, natural stone and polished concrete to name a few.

Soft flooring - cut pile carpets

Cut pile is a style of carpet that has upright tufts of fibre, standing on end, creating a uniform look. The fibres tend to be easily separated by your fingers. Cut pile styles include velvet, saxony, plush, hard twist and shag.

Soft flooring - loop pile carpets

Loop pile is a style of carpet made by threading the fibre through the carpet to form a series of loops. Loop pile styles include level loop, sisal, cord, multilevel loop and textured loop.

A guide to choosing the right vacuum cleaner

Vacuums for hard flooring

The ideal vacuum for hard flooring should effectively clean the floor and protect it from potential damage with the following features:

- specific suction-only hard floor head featuring protracted natural/flexible bristles for gently dislodging fine dust and uneven surfaces.
- rubber coated wheels to protect the floor surface from incidental scratches
- no metal on the undercarriage to protect the floor surface from incidental scratches
- large air channel edge to edge for greater floor cleaning coverage right up to skirting boards.

Air flow versus suction

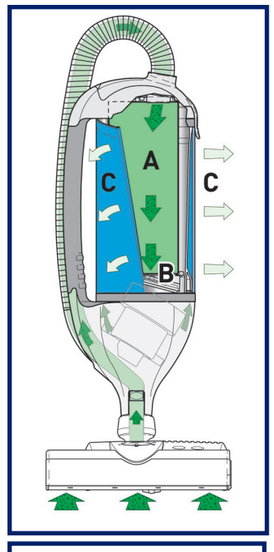
Suction is often misused as a measure of cleaning power but when it comes to vacuuming, air flow is everything.

Most vacuums have good suction but not all vacuums have great airflow. Suction lifts the particle up but air flow removes it.

To make the difference between airflow and suction a little easier to understand, consider a suction cup that you use to hang ornaments on windows.

When you push the air out of the space beneath the cup it creates an air pressure differential that produces a force, or suction, that holds the cup to the hard surface. However, once the air is pushed out there is no more air movement, or airflow, happening.

The greater the volume of air being drawn through the vacuum cleaner, the greater the volume of dust and particles that goes with it!



Vacuums for cut pile carpet

Generally, a vacuum cleaner with a Powerhead – which has an independent electric motor, is best and more effective than using a Turbohead on cut pile carpets. Avoid vacuums with very concentrated or sealed suctions.

Vacuums for cut pile carpets will ideally have:

- electrically driven brush roller as they agitate the carpet pile more effectively to release more dirt
- multi-level brush height adjustment allows greater cleaning efficiency across varying pile heights i.e. carpets, rugs, etc.
- plentiful bristles surrounding the brush roller for greater carpet pile agitation
- ample bristle length for correct contact with carpet pile. Short bristles tend to be ineffective or abrasive to the carpet fibre
- large air channel with edge cleaning for efficient air flow and vacuuming right up to skirting boards
- flat to floor profile under furniture to vacuum under furniture that isn't readily or easily moved
- large wheels allow the vacuum to sit onto top of the carpet and easily glide across the carpet pile
- rubber front bumper to protect furniture and walls whilst vacuuming
- tool free access to clean or replace brush roller. The condition of your brush roller is key for effective debris removal.

Handmade rugs and rug fringes

A vacuum cleaner with suction-only capabilities so as to not disturb the knot or fringes.

Check for any abrasive materials on the underside of the suction only / combination vacuum heads like retractable bristles, sharp plastic or metal.

Vacuums for loop pile carpet

In the past a vacuum cleaner with suction only capabilities was advised (so as to not disturb the looped fibre construction), however, many carpet manufacturers now recommend using a combination of suction only and powerhead with multi level brush height adjustment to effectively maintain the loop appearance and remove debris.

If using suction-only check for any abrasive materials on the underside of the combination vacuum heads like retractable bristles, sharp plastic or metal.

Powerheads with multi level brush height adjustment and delicate bristles are also recommended for routine wool pilling removal.

RECOMMENDED CHOICE 2024

Top Score / The Best CHOICE Recommended Product 2024

SEBO E3 Premium Barrel (91646AU)

All Sensitive Choice approved products have been rigorously reviewed and approved as asthma and allergy aware.

SEBO vacuum cleaners

SEBO upright and barrel vacuum cleaners are recommended by carpet manufacturers for the correct care and maintenance of their soft floor textiles; retaining their appearance and removing maximum debris and common allergens from your carpet and hard floors.