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7 steps to achieving colour

UNDERFOOT

Bright rugs and carpets can bring a sense of warmth, luxury and a welcome splash of colour. **MAGGIE STEVENSON** considers some eye-catching options to elevate your scheme

Carpet provides heat and sound insulation and promotes a feeling of richness, making it the ideal floor covering for a bedroom. 'Ulster Velvet' 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent nylon carpet in 'Imperial Red', £68 per square metre, Ulster



1 SOFT OPTION

Carpet is the first choice for rooms where texture and warmth are priorities. Use it in the hallway to give a welcoming sense of cosiness, on the stairs to muffle sound and in the sitting room to enhance the feeling of comfort. When choosing carpet, consider how much wear it will get: 'The living room is often the hub of the house, so go for a durable 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent nylon carpet. Or, if you have a young family, stain-resistant polypropylene may be the answer,' advises Rupert Anton of The Carpet Foundation. 'Remember that short pile usually wears better than long pile.'



3 PALE AND INTERESTING

Tones of beige, taupe and sand have long been the most popular choices among carpet buyers. Valued for their elegance and versatility, light neutrals provide a luxurious look and a sympathetic backdrop for a range of furnishing styles and shades. However, change is afoot and, says David Cormack of Cormar Carpets, 'shades of grey and dusty colours are becoming the latest in carpet chic with pastel tones such as delicate blush pink or subtle greens creating a simple, soothing mood.' Just as sophisticated as natural tones, pale hues make an active contribution to the decorating scheme, subtly echoing or accenting other furnishing colours. To be sure that the carpet you've chosen is the right hue, view it at home in situ. Many dealers offer small carpet swatches or may even lend larger samples for this purpose, while some manufacturers offer a free online sampling service.

Vacuum light-coloured carpets regularly and have them professionally cleaned once a year to keep them looking fresh. 'Soft Focus' polypropylene carpet in 'Starlight', £24 per square metre, Cormar Carpets

Metallic threads add a subtle sparkle to wool carpet and a touch of glamour to the room. 'Shimmer' 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent polyester carpet in 'Ocean Blue', £94 per square metre, Crucial Trading



4 SURFACE INTEREST

Texture strongly influences the style of carpet you opt for and is determined primarily by pile. Twist, velvet and loop are the most popular; twist pile being particularly hardwearing with a slight texture and even surface. Velvet carpets have a straight, smooth pile that reveals light and dark shading, while loop pile is uncut and hardwearing with an informal look. The pile can be made from a range of fibres, from traditional wool to plant materials and various synthetic

yarns. Because they reflect light differently, combinations of these can produce interesting design effects. In a plain carpet, the contrast between matt and lustrous fibres or areas of loop and cut pile can create discrete single-colour patterns. One of the newest developments in all-over textural interest is the introduction of metallics: 'Threads of lustrous fabric woven through wool provide shimmering detail,' says Emma Hopkins of Crucial Trading. 'They add a subtle sheen to softer tones and truly pop with darker shades.'

TEN OF THE BEST Coloured carpets




1 'Cube Hawksmoor' wool carpet, £102.95 per sq m, 'Quirky B Ben Pentreath Collection', Alternative Flooring 2 'Devonia Plain' 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent nylon tufted carpet in 'Ocean Deep', £43 per sq m, Axminster Carpets 3 'Honey Bee Trellis' 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent nylon woven Axminster, £64.99 per sq m, 'Regina' collection, Brintons 4 'South Pacific' wool carpet in 'Fiji', £45.50 per sq m, Kersaint Cobb 5 'Sonic' 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent wool woven Axminster in 'Electric', £72 per sq m, 'Fusion' collection, Ulster



Striped stair carpet leads the eye upwards from a plain hallway. 'Dimensions Heathers' 80 per cent wool, 10 per cent nylon, 10 per cent polyester carpet in 'Black Magic', from £29.99 per square metre; 'Black Magic Stripe', £34.99 per square metre, both Brockway Carpets

6 PARTNERS IN DESIGN

Patterned carpet conceals marks and wear, making it a practical choice for the busiest areas of your home. But it has much to offer in terms of design and decorating potential, too: 'There's a current resurgence in traditional designs such as tartan and plaid,' says Natalie Littlehailes of Brintons. 'These classic carpets create the warm, cosy feeling that is essential for a homely and welcoming atmosphere, especially in downstairs rooms.' Used alongside plain colours, stripes and designs of a different scale, patterned carpets can add pace and drama to a coordinated flooring scheme that extends throughout the house. 'To mix and match carpets successfully in adjacent rooms, stick to a similar colour palette so there's a smooth transition in flooring from one space to the next,' Littlehailes suggests.



Deep colours add a touch of drama and cosy feel to small rooms. 'City Plaids' 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent nylon carpet in 'Knightsbridge', £69.99 per square metre, Brintons

7 BOLD APPROACH

It takes courage to step away from neutral flooring in favour of bright or deep-toned carpets, but confidence can pay off. In hallways and on staircases, positive colours give personality to what is essentially a functional through-route. Dark-hued flooring is a daring but effective choice for smaller rooms such as studies and 'snug' sitting rooms, especially if the design incorporates a second colour as a sharp counterpoint to its depth. 'Living rooms and bedrooms are great places to

experiment with darker colours,' says Jemma Dayman of Carpetright. 'Choose a deep pile Saxony or textured carpet that really makes the shades pop.'

While grey and beige carpets can form a versatile background for a range of decorating schemes, a bolder hue should be at its heart. For that reason, when you buy, consider the carpet colour in the context of favourite objects, heirloom furniture and other enduring elements of your scheme. A carpet is an investment item but the right colour will complete the room.

Metallic threads add a subtle sparkle to wool carpet and a touch of glamour to the room. 'Shimmer' 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent polyester carpet in 'Ocean Blue', £94 per square metre, Crucial Trading



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5 STYLE STATEMENT

A showstopping carpet or rug is sure to grab attention, but there are other ways of creating a strong scheme around it. 'It's important to consider the overall look and decide how bold you want to go,' says Lorna Haigh of Alternative Flooring. The obvious way is to tone it down with plainer fabrics and simple furniture. 'However,' adds Haigh, 'it's good to challenge convention and work in plenty of pattern, playing with scale. So maybe have a decorative carpet with a small motif alongside large-scale patterns for curtains and cushions. Or go for large-scale on the floor as the ultimate statement with smaller-scale designs on other textile furnishings.' Adding contrasts is the key to creating an eye-catching scheme.

In this room, furnished with decorative mid-century pieces, its contrasting style draws the eye to a rug with a graphic design. 'Tapis D'Avignon' 100 per cent wool rug in 'Raspberry', 'Mulberry', 'Ash' and 'Smoke', 210 by 280cm, £1,675, Roger Oates

Plain, patterned and textured weaves to suit your home and interior style



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6 'Africa' tufted loop pile wool carpet in 'Impala', £76.47 per sq m, Natural Elements 7 'Solar' 80 per cent wool, 20 per cent nylon twist carpet in 'Forget Me Not', £39.99 per sq m, Brockway Carpets 8 'Audrey' wool carpet in 'Daybreak', £140 per sq m, Crucial Trading 9 'Perendale' New Zealand wool carpet in 'Fossil', £108 per sq m, Flock Living 10 'New Town & Country' 80 per cent wool, 10 per cent nylon, 10 per cent Tuftbond twist carpet in 'Borage', £39 per sq m, Cormar Carpets



Cushions in the same shade add colour and visually connect the rug to the rest of the scheme. 'Maze II' rug in hand-knotted Tibetan wool with bamboo silk, from £2,570 for the 180 by 240cm size. Jennifer Manners

2 A SPLASH OF COLOUR

Adding tonal accents is a tried and trusted way to invigorate a room and it is easy to do with soft furnishings and accessories. However, if you're looking for more impact, consider introducing a carpet or rug. 'Stair runners work well in older properties where you might want to see the detail of the woodwork,' says interior designer Amelia Carter. 'And practically, even if you have wooden floors elsewhere, you'll need a stair runner to provide warmth and reduce noise, as well as add colour.' When it is used strategically, in judicious amounts, colour brings an element of surprise and anticipation to interiors. A vibrant carpet used on

a staircase leading up from the entrance hall looks enticing, while a bright rug glimpsed through an open door gives a tantalizing peek of an area yet to be discovered. Meanwhile a lively rug under a dining table frames the furniture positioned on it, inviting a closer look.

There is no easy guide to how much colour you need to achieve a pleasing effect, but rug designer Jennifer Manners has some useful advice: 'Regardless of how bold or subtle your taste, the key to a well-designed room is balance,' she says. 'If you have a colourful rug in a bold pattern as your centrepiece, offsetting it with other objects in softer, more muted tones ensures the rug remains the focal point.'