

## General guidelines for the use of underlays

Carpets are installed on a wide variety of underlays and whilst we know that in the majority of cases an acceptable performance of carpet and underlay may be achieved, careful choice of underlay can actually enhance the performance of the carpet.

We acknowledge that there is a balance to be achieved between providing the right underfoot comfort and the right support to the carpet and from our experience and evaluation of various underlays we would make the following points.

1. Firmer underlays give added protection to the carpet against the hard sub-floor during normal walking. 'Bottoming out' can occur on soft, low density underlays where the carpet pile is effectively squashed against the sub-floor, accelerating wear and appearance changes.
2. Indentations from furniture will be less severe where the carpet is fitted on a firm underlay. A softer product will collapse under the pressure and allow the carpet backing to be distorted, preventing good recovery.
3. Firmer underlays will prevent excessive vertical movement and stretching of the carpet in use and will therefore help to prevent rucking problems. Thicker, softer products have been seen to create dimensional stability problems in some installations where the carpet has stretched due to the excessive vertical movement as the underlay is compressed during normal use. They can also cause problems with seams.
4. The choice of underlay on stairs is particularly important and, again, firmer products are needed to give a good cushion and support to the carpet. 'Bottoming out' and breakdown of the underlay over a stair nosing will obviously lead to premature wear and appearance change. Felt or felt combinations help to round out the stair nosing preventing undue wear and will at the same give a better more rounded appearance to each stair.

In summary, in order to achieve optimum performance from our carpets, we recommend the use of firmer, more supportive underlays.

Firm crumb rubber products, hair felts (minimum weight 42 oz) felt/rubber combinations and high density supportive foam underlays are recommended as are combinations of firm rubber and felt in the form of a sandwich. Thick, softer foam and lightweight felts are not recommended.

Double stick systems such as "Durafit" and "Tredaire Technics" are approved for commercial installations. System 10 is suitable for domestic use and is ideal for border installations.

In our experience it is false economy to fit new carpet over old or softer, cheaper underlay. As already mentioned carpet needs to have as firm a support as possible in order to achieve its maximum performance. An old flattened or new soft underlay will not be capable of providing adequate support to the carpet.