

NYLON FIBER

This is the most commonly used fiber in carpet today because it is strong, easy to dye, and readily available. If you have any traffic paths at all, AND the weight of the carpet you are buying is 32 ounces or less, I strongly recommend you buy a nylon carpet or the new triexta, and forget about PET or Olefin. There are many makers of fiber, but the leaders are Invista (formerly DuPont), Mohawk (formerly Solutia Wear Dated), BASF, and Shaw (formerly Allied Chemical). They all profess their nylon to be best. Invista and Mohawk (formerly Monsanto) have the most well known brands of nylon with the Stainmaster and Wear Dated types respectively.

Stainmaster nylon and Wear Dated nylon are simply trilobed (cross grain magnified picture looks like a clover leaf) fibers with a fluorocarbon added to resist staining. Your light-weight sparse carpet will not carry the Extra Body II label, heck it may not even carry the Stainmaster Label at all. Don't be confused. You can purchase a super tightly twisted, medium dense carpet that is multicolored to help hide traffic and soil, and you will love the way it looks new for years; it just will last even longer if the fiber is nylon. Newer to the market is Mohawk's Wear Dated EMBRACE Nylon line that has pushed to achieve a new level of soft for the Wear-Dated line. To accomplish this, each yarn has been spun from TWICE as much fiber as ordinary soft nylons, resulting in extraordinary plush comfort. The concept is similar to what you'll find if shopping for bed sheets. Where a 700 thread count sheet is much softer vs. 300 thread count, the end result is a stronger and softer material.

NEW SOFT NYLONS:

The newest thing on the market is the introduction of the so called "soft nylons" This type of fiber has been around for a long time, but has always been more expensive because of how much of the fiber must go into the carpet in order to give the carpet a good feel (or hand). The fiber feels soft due to its super small diameter. Think of it like baby hair vs. coarse hair; or better yet like gauges of wire. The small gauge wire is has a smaller diameter than the larger gauge wire. This is similar to nylon fiber; only instead of gauge we use the term "denier". The new soft feeling nylons are made from a very fine "denier" fiber. Thus, it takes a lot more of this fiber to feel and look like other carpets that may be full of air. Imagine fifteen very fat people in an elevator. The space is full, but there are only fifteen people inside. However, that same space can take 25 very thin people, and the combined strength of the 25 people will be stronger than the fifteen people. These new nylons will go under various brand names i.e. "Tactesse" and "Luxerell" (Invista) or "DuraSoft" (Mohawk), or "Anso Caress" (Shaw Industries). If you are willing to pay a little more for this fiber, I think you will love it, but just be sure to purchase one well constructed.

PET POLYESTER:

This is a new type of polyester fiber that has this long chemical name: Polyethylene Terephthalate, but still falls in the class of fibers known commonly as polyesters. This PET fiber, however, is "not your daddy's polyester". This fiber has natural and permanent stain resistance. PET fiber is stronger than the old polyester and has better abrasion resistance. Unlike the old polyester, the PET product has a higher melting point and is more resistant to abrasion.

PET POLYESTER (continued):

The fiber is made from PET chips, some of which come from recycled plastic containers, hence the name "pop bottle carpet". Recycling does not affect the quality of the fiber, thus this product could be a future fiber that could be recycled over and over.

Recently, some PET carpets have been produced in solution dyed form, and in continuous filament form. This has resulted in a carpet that is even stronger than the old staple versions of the fiber, and in a fiber that holds its twist even better. So if you find a newer PET carpet that has a great twist to the fiber, a face weight of at least 40 ounces, and continuous filament, then go for it, as you will like the end result. Just keep this and all carpets clean.

TRIEXTA:

This fiber is known as SMARTSTRAND (trademark) when marketed by Mohawk. Mohawk recently received FTC approval to market this fiber under its own class. This PTT fiber will now be known as TRIEXTA. You are sure to see more about this name change. This fiber is even stronger than PET polyester, and has better colorfastness and cleanability features than PET. PTT is as colorfast as solution dyed nylon. This fiber is extremely soft, and yet behaves better than staple nylon, especially in a shag construction. If you have kids and pets, and are going to be in the home more than 10 years, PTT is a good choice; especially the 3GT Sorona Dupont Polymer offered in select Mohawk carpets. We have not had a consumer complaint on this fiber in the eight years I have been selling it. By the way, PTT is just one step away chemically from 4GT polymer that is used to make tough auto parts. Triexta will indeed be a fiber for the future. The newest triexta is called "silk" and is the softest fiber on the planet. Lookout Stainmaster soft Touch!

OLEFIN or Polypropylene:

This is one of the most color fast fibers on the market. It also is one of the most naturally stain resistant. Thus, this fiber is best suited for indoor-outdoor carpet in both loop and grass styles. Olefin is a cheap fiber. It performs well in wear tests if the profile of the pile height is super low. If one adds air to the fiber to give it some bulk (so it feels good), it will not produce a carpet that looks good for longer than six months. This puffed up Olefin will crush! I guarantee it. Also, Olefin has such a low melting point it must have oil added to the fiber in order to survive the tufting process. When the carpet is finished, most American manufacturers do not spend the money to rid the fiber of all the oil. As a result the carpet crushes even quicker. The one exception to this process is a new type of olefin fiber called "Comfortouch" by Shaw Industries. This new fiber is softer to the feel because this olefin fiber is scoured three times during the making. Then the fiber is treated with R2X. The result is a fiber that feels like cotton, resists soil and stains, and wears better than other olefin carpet. My advice is to leave olefin to the outdoor market or light traffic indoors unless you are able to find a dealer who carries olefin carpets from Europe, or the new Comfortouch from Shaw. Those of you who have fallen in love with the Berber style of carpet make sure it is not made of polypropylene or olefin with the larger loops.

WOOL:

When it comes to carpet, wool is king. Nature provides a fiber that is renewable and environmentally friendly to produce, and out-performs man-made fibers in almost every way. Wool offers a unique combination of softness, warmth and resilience. They resist general soiling, crushing, and most stains and are naturally resistant to fire, due to a unique filament structure. Though it is priced higher than most carpet with synthetic fibers, wool carpet can often outlast your mortgage! If you are looking for your basic commodity carpet, do not expect to find it in wool. Look for wool carpets made with jute backing (yes like the good old days) as it has a superior tuft bind. The soft look and the rich feel of wool is still unmatched by any man-made fiber, but be prepared to pay for it. The best quality wool is from New Zealand. Economy wool and wool blends will not perform the same. **Inexpensive wools will be a lot more work to maintain & keep. Mid to upper priced wools will far outlast the entry level products so if you are willing to commit to wool - go all the way.** Look for the "Wool Mark" and fiber mostly from New Zealand and your wool carpet will indeed be a long lasting luxury.

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