

# Facts About Vacuum Cleaners

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Cleaning is not a very exciting topic. The satisfaction comes from the good results of your cleaning efforts. Probably few things are as frustrating as having ineffective equipment when you have a little bit of cleaning time and lots of cleaning to do.

## Decisions About Vacuums

Selection and purchase decisions for a vacuum cleaner include cost considerations: Vacuum cleaners may vary from around \$20 to well over \$300. Costs are influenced by features, style, strength of suction, and appearance. With such price differences, it is important that cleaning problems be identified and appliance advantages and disadvantages recognized to assure an intelligent purchase decision.

Basically, a vacuum cleaner has one old-fashioned, unglamorous job: Pick up dirt. The type of vacuum you select will determine how effectively it picks up dirt on the surfaces you will be cleaning.

The decision of which type of vacuum to purchase requires that you know what kinds of surfaces you need to clean and what kinds of soil you need to remove from those surfaces. The surfaces vacuumed are either hard—such as floorings, stairways, wooden structures, walls, and ceilings; or soft or delicate—such as rugs and carpets, upholstered furniture, draperies, knick-knacks, mattresses, books, etc.



## Types of Vacuums

There are basically three models: Tank or canister, upright, and combination.

### Canister

—Is available from around \$20 to over \$100.

—Is well suited for above-the-floor cleaning such as walls, ceilings, curtains, draperies, valances, furniture, etc.

—Is effective for cleaning smooth surfaced floors, vinyl, ceramic tile, wood.

—Does a fair cleaning job on short pile carpets.

—Is rather inefficient in the use of electrical energy.

—Has comparative inability to remove heavy ground-in dirt.

—Suction strength decreases with distance increase from the motor to suction point; once a wand and tool are added, longer hoses often have less suction than is felt directly at the end of the hose or at the intake near the motor.

### Upright

—May be as expensive as \$350 or above.

—Has a revolving beater-brush that does a better job on rugs and carpets than other models because the soil is lifted away from the rug pile by the beater and then removed by the suction.

—Has cleaning suction produced directly over the surface being cleaned. Since a hose is not involved in upright cleaning, less suction strength is lost.

—Is more efficient in use of electrical energy to remove a given amount of soil than a canister type.

—Is heavier to carry than a canister and often more cumbersome for stair cleaning or moving from story to story in split-level homes.

—Must adjust nozzle-to-rug distance for best results.

### Combination

—Great variations in price.

—May have advantages of both of the above as well as some of the disadvantages.

—Combines a high wattage input canister which has a wand nozzle design with a motor-driven revolving brush.

—Usually has a larger and heavier nozzle than the usual canister.

—Relatively easy to push and pull on carpeted surfaces.

## **Types of Soil**

The types of soil to be removed from various surfaces generally fall into three categories: surface litter, dust, and ground-in soil.

—Threads, cat and dog hairs, lint, etc., are examples of surface litter soil. A vacuum cleaner with concentrated suction and brush action will pick up litter from floorings. For chairs and upholstered surfaces use an upholstery tool.

—Footprints and household dust are examples of the second type of soil. Dust may come from the air or from shoes and boots tracking soil through the house. A stronger suction is needed for removing this soil from surfaces.

—The most damaging is the ground-in type of soil. This gets into carpet fibers or grinds into floorings, causing pitting, marring, or cut threads. For deep soil, use a vacuum with a strong suction. A vibrating action brush and/or bar to loosen embedded dirt and bring it to the surface of the rug will produce more effective cleaning. Once brought to the surface, soil is carried away by the suction. Upright vacuum models perform this function most effectively.

## **Deciding Factors**

Most of us live in homes where there are varieties of surfaces to be cleaned. How versatile a machine must be is dependent upon how it will be used. What kind of cleaning will be done on various surfaces? If the majority of your vacuum cleaning will be on carpeted floors and a minimum use of the vacuum will be on upholstery, your decision should reflect the most extensive use of the machine. Versatility is also dependent upon who will use the appliance. Children helping with housework will have difficulty operating a machine with attachments that are hard to change.

Maneuverability, or portability, is another important consideration in the purchase decision. This is especially important if you plan to use the vacuum in a variety of places. Think about the space you will be cleaning. Is your home multi-level? Is there an area or level where the majority of cleaning will be done? Maneuverability is also important to consider in terms of the user. The size and strength of the person who vacuums may suggest the size machine. Think again of the children. If they have the responsibility of keeping sleeping areas neat, perhaps a small, easy-to-move machine would encourage them to perform their chores. One that is power driven might be the choice if the principal user is handicapped, elderly, or of small stature. A power drive feature makes even a large, powerful machine easy to operate on carpeted surfaces.

## **Features to Consider**

You may wonder what features to look for as you assess models in terms of versatility and maneuverability.

—*Wheels or rollers* on the bottom of the appliance add convenience. This is especially true if you have carpeted surfaces over which the machine must move as the cleaning is done. Wheels extend the portability of the machine in that you do not have to carry it along as you work. They also eliminate strain on the vacuum hose, allowing the machine to roll along instead of being dragged along.

—*Weight* of the appliance is important to consider in relation to those using it. It is important to note that more powerful machines are often heavier and more cumbersome.

—*Bumperguards* are protectors around the floor-cleaning attachment or head of the machine. Guards assure that vacuuming close to furniture can be done without the danger of scratching furniture legs or marring wall baseboards.

—*The handle* should feel comfortable to your grip. It should be of a size that will allow the machine to be carried easily and yet not cumbersome for storage and use. Some handles make it nearly impossible to use the machine conveniently on stairs or small places. The handle of an upright should also be adjustable to allow cleaning under furniture.

—*On and off switch* should be easy to reach and operate. A foot-operated switch may be a convenience in that it is controlled with the toe and leaves hands free for holding or positioning the hose and wand. If the switch is on the handle of an upright model, it should be easy to reach from a comfortable grip position. When you turn on the switch, what else happens? Can you hear anything else going on in the room—telephone, doorbell, etc.? You may want to check also for a radio-TV filter to prevent interference with programming should you want to vacuum while family members are trying to enjoy programs.

—*The cord* should be long enough to reach from the outlets in your home to the areas you want to clean. Cord lengths vary; this may be something you will want to check. It is also a good idea to be aware of how the cord will be stored when the appliance is not in use. Some have a cord winder that retracts the cord. Others have a convenient way of winding the cord for storage after use.

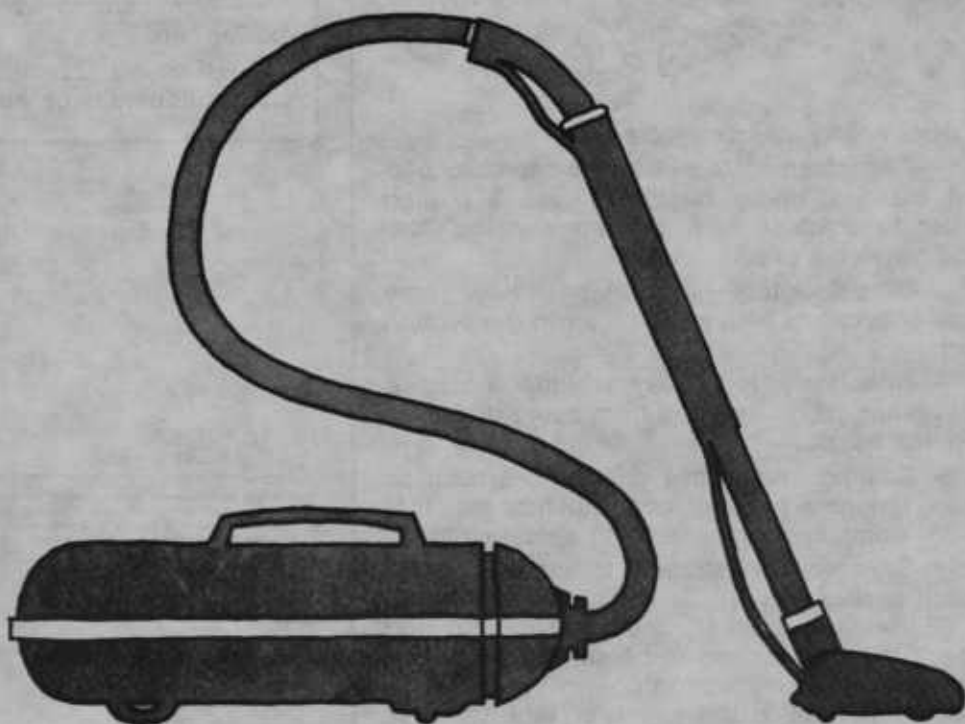
1 Upright



2 Canister



3 Combination



## Accessory Parts

Versatility and maneuverability are also affected by the accessory parts. These include the hose, the wands, and various cleaning tools.

The hose should be flexible but reinforced. It should have a suction adjustment so light-weight or delicate items, such as curtains, can be cleaned without being sucked into the machine, and so suction can be increased for effective cleaning of areas with ground-in soil.

Wands connect the hose to the attachments. The shape of the wand when connected should make a comfortable handle that provides cleaning ease in hard-to-reach places or high areas. Sections of the wand should have a positive means of locking together.

Tools, like wands, should be made of sturdy, non-corroding materials. Many are made from heavy-duty plastic. When shopping, always check to be sure tools are included in the purchase price. Having to add these as accessories greatly increases the final purchase price of the vacuum.



Commonly included tools are:

—Rug cleaning tool—should swivel to permit cleaning under furniture; have a trailing brush or comb to help dislodge clinging litter and revive the pile.

—Bare floor tool—should swivel; have some type of brush to help gather litter in the suction path.

—Upholstery tool—may include a device preventing fabric and trim from being drawn up into the nozzle.

—Dusting brush—use on surfaces such as wood furniture, pictures, books, blinds, etc., that might normally be cleaned with a dust cloth.

—Crevice tool—shaped to clean hard-to-reach spaces.

Before you buy, try the machine out and check the connections to be sure they are airtight for maximum suction power. This is especially important in the canister/tank varieties since they generally have less suction power to begin with. Check the connections by turning the machine on and feeling for air leaks or excessive exhaust air.

## Safety Guidelines

For long service life and safe use of your vacuum cleaner, the following guidelines are recommended:

—Your cleaner is designed to pick up dirt and dust particles. Avoid picking up hard or sharp objects with your cleaner to avoid bag breakage, hose clogging, or possible motor damage.

—Your vacuum cleaner is not a toy. Do not allow children to play with the cleaner. Don't leave the cleaner connected to an electrical outlet when not in use.

—Do not use your vacuum cleaner in areas where flammable and/or explosive vapors or dust are present. Do not use attachments, such as a demolisher or paint sprayer, in a manner that creates hazardous conditions.

—Areas cleaned with cleaning fluids should be allowed to dry completely before vacuuming.

—Do not pick up matches, fireplace ashes, or smoking material with cleaner, as possible fire hazard may result.

—Switch cleaner off before removing power cord from electrical outlet.

—Disconnect cord from electrical outlet before servicing cleaner, such as changing bags, belts, etc.

—Use care to avoid running cleaner over power cord.

—*Warning.* Electric shock could occur if used outdoors or on wet surfaces.

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