



## The Wonder of Wands

**Never underestimate the importance of the wand**

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What always amazes me is how often building service contractors and in-house facility service providers- as well as carpet cleaning technicians- overlook the importance of the wand when they are selecting a carpet extractor.

It's almost like buying a brand-new flat screen, high-definition TV, then hooking it up to an old rabbit ear antenna. No matter how good the TV is or how great the picture and sound is, the limitations of the antenna will prevent the TV from being all that it can be.

The same goes for wands on carpet extractors. There have been cases where a machine tested by the Carpet and Rug Institute was effective enough to earn the Seal of Approval. However, by retesting the machine using a more efficient and effective wand, the machine moved to the top of the list of the Seal of Approval ranking system.

But before we start exploring the importance of the wand and discussing what to look for when selecting one, we should mention that there is a reason the wand's importance has been so often overlooked.

For many years, carpet extractor manufacturers put little time and effort into designing wands. They, just like end customers, underestimated the importance of wands. So except for making them lighter and easier to use, little re-engineering of wands had taken place in many years. But all that has changed in the past five to 10 years as several new wand technologies have become available.

**A Bit About Wands**

Before the 1960s, most carpet cleaning was handled by using either the shampoo or bon- net methods. Today, these methods have been mostly replaced by carpet extractors that use wands. Most of the early wands looked very similar and performed in the same way: They sprayed water or a cleaning solution on the carpet when they were pushed forward and then vacuumed up- or extracted- the moisture when they were pulled backward.

The extraction process is key to effective car- pet cleaning. In addition to designing wands that are more ergonomic, lighter, and easier to use, engineering them to more effectively remove moisture and, along with it, soils and chemicals is paramount to effective, healthy carpet cleaning.

Most of the early wands were made of aluminum, stainless steel, or rotationally molded plastic. They varied in weight, and the weight of the wand has always caused a dilemma for extractor manufacturers: A heavier wand forms a better seal between the carpet and the wand, which can make it more effective at removing soils. But if too heavy, the wand is difficult to work with, causing operator fatigue, which can negatively impact cleaning results.

Some more wand details you should be aware of include:

- The diameter of the wand tube can affect how well it extracts moisture from the carpet; this diameter will range from 1.5 inches to 2 inches. A 2-inch tube is typically more effective.
- Every wand has jets that spray water/ solution onto the carpets. The jets can vary widely. For instance, some wands have more jets than others; similarly, the distance from the jets to the carpet surface, the materials used to make the jets, and the size of the jets can all vary.
- Related to this, some newer technologies are designed to atomize+the cleaning and recovery process. Atomizing can make the water easier for the machine to recover- improving moisture recovery by as much as 50 percent compared to more traditional wands. It also can allow deeper and more thorough cleaning of the carpet.

This last item needs a bit more explanation. First, moisture recovery is very important. Not only does it help ensure that moisture, chemicals, and soils are removed from the carpet, but it also expedites drying. The faster the carpets dry, the less chance there is

for mold or mildew to develop, and the sooner the carpeted area can be put back into use.

Further, agitation is important because it is a key component of all cleaning, including carpet. As the wand is moved over the carpet, it loosens soils so they can be more easily removed from the carpet. Not all wands perform the same when it comes to agitation.

### **Selecting a Wand**

With a better understanding of wands, the first word of advice when selecting a wand is very simple: As in the TV example earlier, consider the wand as important to the carpet cleaning process as the machine selected. Compare wands by considering the following:

- **Weight.** The lighter the weight of the wand, up to the point where cleaning effectiveness is not negatively impacted, the better.
- **Width.** A wand 11 inches wide should work well in most cleaning situations.
- **Pounds per square inch (psi).** The psi refers to the pounds of force delivered per square inch. The higher the psi, the more powerful the machine. The maximum psi of the wand should be 1,000.
- **Type of material.** A stainless steel wand is often more durable and can hold up to all types of wear and tear.
- **Recovery.** The more rapid the recovery, the more effective the carpet cleaning and the faster the carpets dry.

A final and very important piece of advice: Do not select wands online. The wand is so important to the machine's effectiveness and the user's health and stamina that you should work with an astute JanSan distributor familiar with wands and the different types available before making a product selection.

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