

SHADING/PILE REVERSAL

The terms shading and pile reversal are often used interchangeably and may be considered synonymous. They refer to a phenomenon or condition where certain areas of a rug's surface yarns lay in a different direction than adjacent yarns. This results in light and dark areas on the rug's surface. This happens because of differing light reflection.

The pile yarns of a rug have a natural direction or lay to them much like velvet or suede. When new all the yarns lean to the bottom of the rug, which is the end where the weaving began. Light reflectance can differ depending on which end of the rug you're looking at. Looking from the bottom of the rug towards the opposite or top end, the rug will appear darker than looking from the top end to the bottom end. On short piled rugs the difference may be slight but on many rugs the difference can be quite dramatic. The reason is simple. When looking into the pile, where the yarns point toward you, more light is absorbed making the rug appear darker. When looking across the pile, where the yarns point away from you, more light is reflected making the rug appear brighter.

Shading or pile reversal occur as the rug wears. Traffic lanes and pivot areas develop causing certain areas of the rug's pile direction to permanently reorient. At this point the light reflectance across the rug is no longer uniform and light and dark areas begin to appear. Soiling on the rug can help obscure pile reversal so sometimes the rug owner may not notice this until after a thorough washing. In addition, the rug could be reversed or furniture placement changed after the rug is returned from cleaning, revealing areas of shading previously hidden from view.

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