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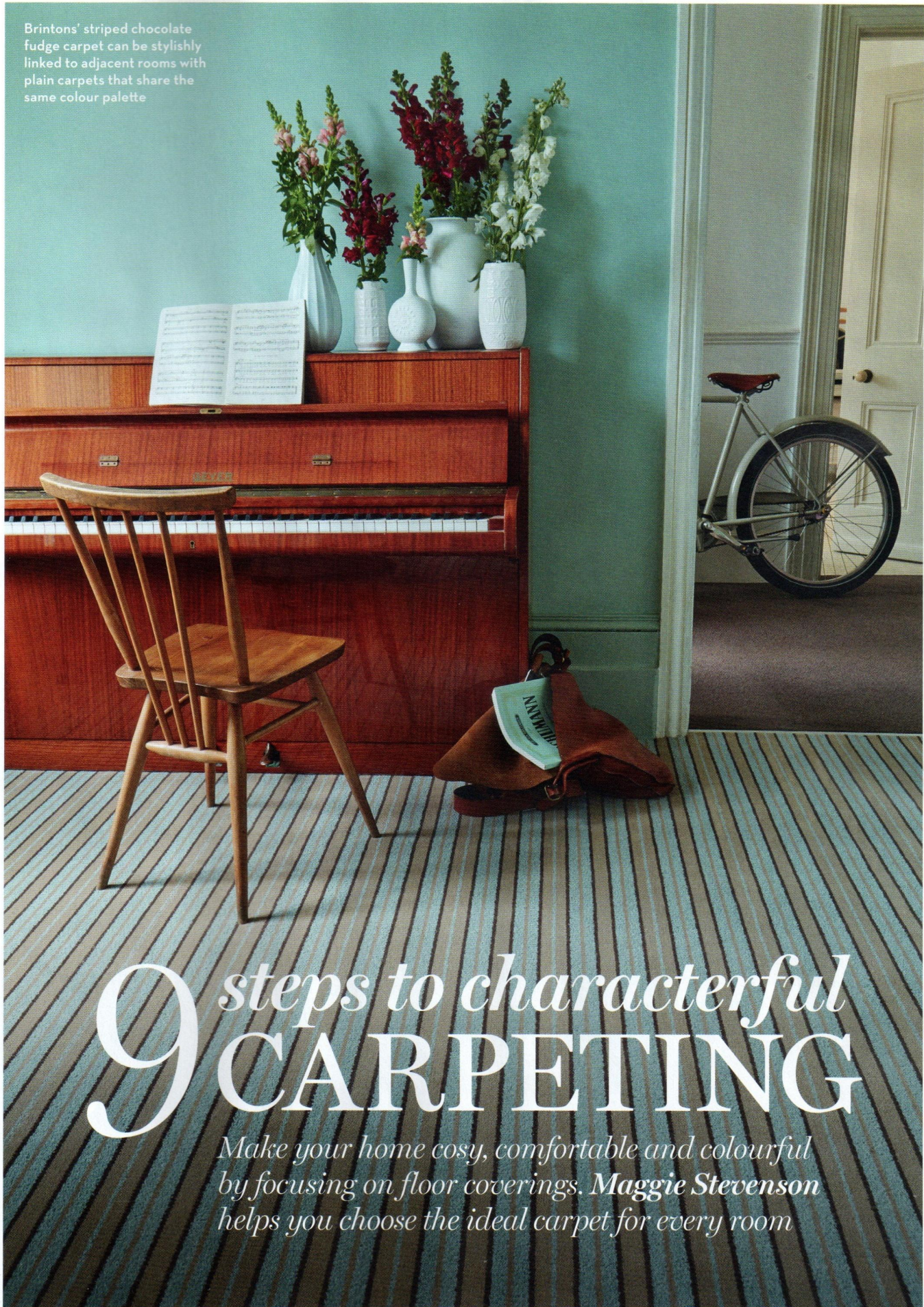


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Brintons' striped chocolate fudge carpet can be stylishly linked to adjacent rooms with plain carpets that share the same colour palette



9 steps to characterful CARPETING

Make your home cosy, comfortable and colourful by focusing on floor coverings. Maggie Stevenson helps you choose the ideal carpet for every room



3 MATERIAL CONCERNS

How a carpet looks, feels and performs depends on the fibre it's made from. Wool is the classic choice of natural fibre and polypropylene is one of the most-popular synthetic materials - both can be used alone or mixed with other materials. 'Wool is warm, hard-wearing and has the resilience to recover easily from the pressure of furniture or heavy foot traffic,' points out David McCormack of Cormar Carpets. 'Polypropylene is durable, stain-resistant, easy to clean and colourfast, as well as being an affordable choice.'

Cormar's polypropylene 'Sensation Twist' carpet, seen here in charcoal, combines a sumptuous feel with everyday practicality

4 STEPPING UP

Stair runners can be made from cut pile, loop or flatweave carpet and are a smart alternative to fitted carpet. They come in standard widths between 59cm and 70cm or can be made to order to leave at least 5cm of floor visible at either side. 'Where there's fitted carpet on the landing, it should go over the nosing of the top step to cover the upper edge of the runner,' advises Crucial Trading's Emma Hopkins. 'Generally, where the stairs connect wooden floors, the runner should start at the base of the bottom step and end under the nosing of the top step.'

5 BUDGET FOR THE BASICS

Underlay and professional fitting will extend the life of your carpet so don't be tempted to skimp on them. 'A decent underlay is about £8.50 per square metre,' explains Ian Powers, Assistant Buyer of Floor Coverings at John Lewis. 'Heavy paper to line the floor is around 50p per square metre and, in the London area, grippers and fitting will add a further £18.90 per square metre.' A good supplier will specify the right width of carpet to reduce wastage. You can cut costs further by clearing the room of furniture and disposing of old carpet before the fitters arrive.

Professional fitting cuts the carpet - in this case one of Ulster Carpets' Bohemian Collection - flush against walls, reducing wastage and overall costs

