



HOW TO CLEAN LEATHER

Leather is made by treating animal hides or skins with chemicals known as tanning agents. The tanning agent displaces the water in between the protein fibers, cementing them together. This makes the hide or skin strong and durable, rendering years of service and beauty. Leather is usually dyed and a finish may be applied.

Leather has many properties that make it desirable to many consumers. It is a natural product. Each piece has an individual uniqueness with its own characteristics. Leather breathes like natural fibers, absorbs moisture, like sweat, then releases it. Leather is comfortable. It easily warms up or cools down to your body temperature. Furniture made from leather is usually stronger and more elastic than other fabrics. As good as leather is, it still needs care and regular cleaning. Cleaning, improperly performed, can irreversibly damage leather.

Leather can be finished in several ways. For cleaning purposes, leather is divided into three major classifications:

TOP COATED or PROTECTED LEATHER

These leathers have a durable protective finish on the surface. These are the easiest to clean and care for. They are also known as pigmented, painted, or finished leathers.

ANILINE LEATHER

These are colored with aniline dyes. You can still see the natural variations or grain markings, but there is little or no finish on the surface of the leather. These are much more difficult to clean than protected leather. They are also known as unprotected, pure, natural or naked leathers.

NUBUCK or SUEDE LEATHER

Nubuck is top grain aniline leather which has been mechanically brushed to texturize the surface. This creates a nap and a velvet like texture. Suede is the opposite flesh side of the hide which has also been mechanically brushed to create a nap on the surface. The brushing and resulting nap greatly increases the total surface area, making nubuck and suede much more absorbent and likely to soil. These are the most difficult to clean and the easiest to damage.

CLEANING PROCEDURES

INSPECTION

Pre-inspection and qualifying each item is extremely important when cleaning leather. You will need to inspect for preexisting problems as you would with any upholstered furniture, plus give extra attention to the following items:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Fading: | Some leathers fade quite easily. Cleaning will not correct this. |
| Body oils and hair oils: | Some leathers will absorb oil that actually will become part of the leather, permanently staining it. |
| Natural markings: | This is part of the natural beauty of leather, much like knots in wood grain. Make sure that the customer understands this and does not expect that cleaning will "fix" it. |
| Dried or cracked leather: | Most cleaning agents will damage leather. Alkaline solutions can damage both the leather finish and the leather itself. Leather will also dry out if a leather conditioner is not applied to replenish natural oils. |

See "Leather Cleaning Checklist" and "Pre-Test Results" on pages 7 and 8.

TESTING

You may already know the type of leather because of its appearance or manufacturer's label, but actual testing is highly recommended. Find an inconspicuous area, like the cushion zipper border, and perform the following tests:

- Water bead up test: Put a few drops of water on the surface and wait three minutes. If the water does not penetrate, spreading and darkening the leather, it is a top coated or protected leather. Aniline leather may bead up some, but it will darken as the water is absorbed, or rubbed into the leather. It will lighten up to its original shade as it dries, however. Nubuck and suede will absorb the water and darken but it will also dry a shade darker.
- Leather Cleaner test: Apply the cleaning product to a white cotton test cloth. Then, apply the cloth to the leather surface, rubbing the cleaner into the leather. Check for color loss, crocking, darkening, ringing, texture change or any other unsuitable change. Allow leather to air dry before testing and observation is complete.
- Leather Conditioner test: Apply conditioner and rub into leather. Check for darkening, wrinkling or texture change. Top coated, protected leather will not change. Aniline nubuck and suede will most likely change, precluding its use.
- Additional product testing: All other products must be tested as above, before you can determine if they are suitable for using on each individual piece of leather goods. This includes all stain treatment products as you will find that most will adversely affect the leather and therefore cannot be used. Be sure to test leather protector as well, before use.

Now that testing has identified what type of leather you are working on, and which products are suitable for use, you can start cleaning.

PROTECTED LEATHER

This is the easiest to clean and care for. For that reason, you will find that you have a few options in your cleaning procedure.

Dry Soil Removal (Required)

As with all upholstery cleaning, dry particle soil must be removed first, before the introduction of any cleaning products. Use a vacuum crevice tool to get into areas around the seating platform, piping, creases, buttons, crevices, and other hard to get to areas. Next, use a dry chemical sponge to remove surface dust and soils. Also dry vacuum fabric covered areas, if any.

All Leather Cleaner (Required)

Lightly apply undiluted All Leather Cleaner to cleaning mitt or white cotton towel (not wet, only damp). Cleaning one section at a time, wipe leather with mitt or towel, turning and changing as it becomes soiled. Always work from the bottom to the top to prevent cleaner from “running” on dry leather. Use sparingly. Do not saturate leather. Never spray or otherwise apply all leather cleaner directly onto the leather.

LST Cleaner (Highly recommend)

Immediately following All Leather Cleaner, cleaning one section at a time, apply LST Cleaner as follows: Dilute LST at 16 to 1 or 1oz. per 8 oz. of warm water. Using a sponge, squeeze out liquid and apply LST foam to leather. Wipe leather with mitt or towel, turning and changing as it becomes soiled. Always work from the bottom to the top to prevent cleaner from “running” on dry leather. Use sparingly. Do not saturate leather. Towel dry each section as it is completed.

Option: Upholstery dry foam machines, like Von Schrader, can be utilized for this phase of cleaning. They are impressive leather cleaning tools, and can be useful for other types of upholstery fabrics. While they are somewhat expensive (about \$2500.00) they are indispensable on large jobs.

Leather Conditioner (Required)

Application of Leather Conditioner is required on all protected or top coated leather as this will prevent the leather from drying out and cracking, flaking or splitting. Apply conditioner to mitt or white cotton towel, then apply to leather. Use sparingly. Do not saturate leather. Lightly buff with clean, dry mitts or white cotton towels. Towel dry entire piece.

Option: Some cleaners have found that using a rotary “speed pad” tool not only improves results but also speeds up cleaning times. Extra mechanical action means extra caution. Use only on protected leather.

Leather Protector (Optional and at extra cost)

Apply undiluted leather protector to mitt or white cotton towel, then apply to leather. Use sparingly. Do not saturate leather. Lightly buff with clean dry mitts or white cotton towels until dry. You may accelerate drying with a fan or air mover. Avoid high heat as heat and over drying can cause brittleness, cracking and splitting.

ANILINE LEATHER

This leather may or may not have a protective treatment. If it does have some, it will be limited protection. Your cleaning choices will be limited also.

Dry Soil Removal (Required)

As with all upholstery cleaning, dry particle soil must be removed first, before the introduction of any cleaning products. Use a vacuum crevice tool to get into areas around the seating platform, piping, creases, buttons, crevices, and other hard to get to areas. Next use a dry chemical sponge to remove surface dust and soils. Also dry vacuum fabric covered areas, if any.

All Leather Cleaner (Required)

Lightly apply undiluted all leather cleaner to cleaning mitt or white cotton towel (not wet, only damp). Cleaning one section at a time, wipe leather with mitt or towel, turning and changing as it becomes soiled. Always work from the bottom to the top to prevent cleaner from “running” on dry leather. Use sparingly. Do not saturate leather. Never spray or otherwise apply all leather cleaner directly onto the leather.

LST Cleaner (Not recommended)

Do not use LST on aniline leather as it will most likely darken the leather, as will all other water based products.

Leather Conditioner (Optional)

This product will help prevent the leather from drying out and cracking, flaking or splitting. **However it may darken the leather and/or cause an uneven appearance.** Your pretesting will show if the conditioner dries clear or not. If it dries clear, you should apply it. If it dries darker, you must get the owner’s **signed, expressed written consent** to apply it with full knowledge of any possible color, appearance, or texture change. Apply Leather Conditioner to mitt or white cotton towel, then apply to leather. Use sparingly. Do not saturate leather. Lightly buff with clean, dry mitts or white cotton towels. Towel dry entire piece. You may accelerate drying with a fan or air mover. Avoid high heat as heat and overdrying can cause brittleness, cracking or splitting.

Leather Protector (Not recommended)

Do not use Leather Protector on aniline leather.

Nubuck and Suede Protector (Optional and at extra cost)

Testing will show whether nubuck and suede protector is a safe and effective treatment. Application is recommended for aniline leathers which pass testing. Apply with a fine light spray. Do not saturate leather. As this product contains a fast drying solvent, use only sprayers with viton or fluorocarbon seals and clean out with dry cleaning solvent right after each use.

NUBUCK AND SUEDE

These leathers are the most difficult to clean, however the results are often dramatic. These items should be cleaned often, at least once a year.

Dry Soil Removal (Required)

As with all upholstery cleaning, dry particle soil must be removed first, before the introduction of any cleaning products. Use a vacuum crevice tool to get into areas around the seating platform, piping, creases, buttons, crevices, and other hard to get to areas. Next use a dry chemical sponge to remove surface dust and soils. Also dry vacuum fabric covered areas, if any.

As these leathers have a nap texture, you will also need to brush the nap with a metal wire “velvet” or suede brush during this phase. Often you will find flat, dark and shiny areas. These need to be brushed up with the rest of the nap to return it to its original look and feel. On difficult areas, you may use fine sandpaper to revive the nap. Be careful around threads or other weaker materials.

All Leather Cleaner (Required)

Lightly apply undiluted all leather cleaner to cleaning mitt or white cotton towel (not wet, only damp). Cleaning one section at a time, wipe leather with mitt or towel, turning and changing as it becomes soiled. Always work from the bottom to the top to prevent cleaner from “running” on dry leather. Use sparingly. Do not saturate leather. Never spray or otherwise apply all leather cleaner directly onto the leather.

LST Cleaner (Not recommended)

Do not use LST on aniline leather as it will most likely darken the leather, as will all other water based products.

Leather Conditioner (Not recommended)

Do not use on nubuck or suede as this will cause color change and texture change.

Leather Protector (Not recommended)

Do not use on nubuck or suede as with will cause color change and texture change.

Final Brushing (Required)

Brush out entire piece with metal wire velvet or suede brush to remove cleaning or swirl marks and to enhance the look and texture of the leather.

Nubuck and Suede Protector (Optional and at extra cost)

Testing will show whether nubuck and suede protector is a safe and effective treatment. Application is recommended for both nubuck and suede leathers which pass testing. Apply with a fine light spray. Do not saturate leather. As this product contains a fast drying solvent, use only sprayers with viton or fluorocarbon seals and clean out with dry cleaning solvent right after each use.

(SAMPLE)

LEATHER CLEANING CHECKLIST

Customer Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone (Day): _____ (Night): _____

Type of Leather: _____

Manufacturer's Cleaning Code: _____

PRE-CLEANING INSPECTION

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tears or cracks | <input type="checkbox"/> Rings or Water Marks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fading | <input type="checkbox"/> Cushion Breakdown |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seam Slippage | <input type="checkbox"/> Worn Piping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shrinkage or Distortion | <input type="checkbox"/> Texture Change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Body Oils | <input type="checkbox"/> Urine Contamination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hair Oils | <input type="checkbox"/> Mildew |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rusty, Loose or Missing Buttons | <input type="checkbox"/> Dry Rot or Red Rot |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discoloration | <input type="checkbox"/> Scratches |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neglect or Misuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Shoe Polish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Damage | <input type="checkbox"/> Nicks or Scratches in Wood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ink or Markers | <input type="checkbox"/> Exposed Metal Tarnish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loose or Missing Legs | <input type="checkbox"/> Spots or Stains |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy Soil | |

This form may be duplicated for your use.

(SAMPLE)

PRE-TEST RESULTS

1. Water Bead Up
(3 minutes)
 - No absorption_____
 - Little absorption, dries clear_____
 - Absorbs with shade change_____
 - Texture change_____
 - Rings or staining_____

2. All Leather Cleaner
 - No color change_____
 - Slight shade change_____
 - Color change_____
 - Texture change_____
 - Rings or staining_____

3. LST Cleaner
 - No color change_____
 - Slight shade change_____
 - Color change_____
 - Texture change_____
 - Rings or staining_____

4. Conditioner
 - No color change_____
 - Slight shade change_____
 - Color change_____
 - Texture change_____
 - Rings or staining_____

5. Leather Protector
 - No color change_____
 - Slight shade change_____
 - Color change_____
 - Texture change_____
 - Rings or staining_____

6. Nubuck and Suede Protector
 - No color change_____
 - Slight shade change_____
 - Color change_____
 - Texture change_____
 - Rings or staining_____

7. Ink Remover Pen
 - No color change_____
 - Slight shade change_____
 - Color change_____
 - Texture change_____
 - Rings or staining_____

8. Other
 - No color change_____
 - Slight shade change_____
 - Color change_____
 - Texture change_____
 - Rings or staining_____