

LEATHER

Leather is one of the toughest and most hardwearing natural substances known. It is made from the skin of animals, prepared and treated in such a manner that it does not decompose, and becomes supple (flexible) and resilient (resuming its original shape after compression). Large skins are called 'Hide' and are derived from oxen and horses. Smaller skins are derived from goat, sheep, etc.

MAKING

- The skin is first washed with water to soften
- Then it is treated with lime to remove hair and loose skin
- They are often then treated to remove lime and then tanned
- Tanning process is carried out by the means of tannin from the bark of oak and other substances. It is very slow and takes several weeks
- After tanning leather is finished and dressed according to the kind of leather required and the purpose it is required for.

METHODS OF DRESSING

1. Currying – In this leather is smoothened and pared down on the flesh side, or is split if thick, into several layers. It is rendered soft and pliable and made waterproof. Waterproofing is done by allowing a mixture of tallow (animal fat) and cod liver oil (large sealfish) to penetrate the leather gradually.
2. Tawing – This is the treatment of skin by mineral salts and is employed for glove leather and soft leather for boots and shoes.
3. Shamoying – It is the process of making the leather very soft and pliable by soaking it with oil, and was originally used from deer and chamois skin. Most leather of this nature is obtained from split sheep and also known as wash leather.

MOROCCO LEATHER

Originally derived from goatskin, dyed and richly grained, this name is now applied to any leather (chiefly split calf and sheep skin) finished to resemble Morocco leather.

RUSSIAN LEATHER

This similarly is any leather with a smooth finish and treated with aromatic oils which gives it its characteristic odor.

SYNTHETIC LEATHER

These are very tough and durable. Imitation leather was originally made by spreading a mixture of various substances, such as linseed oil, dyes and pigments on a canvas or other backing and finished to resemble leather.

CARE AND CLEANING

1. Leather upholstered furniture should be kept free from dust especially in folds or round buttons.
2. Good furniture creams help to keep it in good condition.
3. Oil and waxes make it supple and prevents cracking.
4. Dirty leather maybe wiped clean with damp cloth and liquid wax.

Polishes – This consists principally of a waxy substance or an oil, turpentine, a colouring matter and a preservative. For black polishes carbon is used in finely divided condition. For brown polish yellow ochre (earth used as yellow, brown and red pigments) and other pigments are used.

PATENT LEATHER

This requires grease of some kind to prevent cracking and hardening while not in use. Rub with vaselene or olive oil. Before using, all traces should be removed by rubbing with a soft cloth. Polish with commercial cream sold for this purpose.

SUEDE

Remove mud by brushing well with soft rubber brush. Clean with either a liquid suede cleaner or a cleaning block, which is rubbed on the leather to remove dirt and restore the nap (raised pile). If suede is shiny use old fine emery paper.

WHITE AND PALE COLOURED LEATHER

Sponge off marks with a damp soapy cloth. Apply cream, wipe with a clean damp cloth and polish with a soft duster.



IHM NOTES