



Leather Training

FurnCity
Exclusive Furnishers

What is Leather?

THE DEFINITION OF "LEATHER" IN THE DICTIONARY IS AS FOLLOWS a material consisting of animal skin prepared for use by removing hair and tanned,

OR

The dressed or tanned hide of an animal, usually with hair removed.



Why is Leather Tanned?



A hide is tanned so that it does not decompose or putrefy over time.

Tanning is a process whereby the hide is put through a chemical and mechanical process to convert it into a finished and long-lasting useable product, i.e., for upholstery leather.

In the general daily discussions of leather, the TYPE OF GRAIN vs the TYPE OF FINISH ON THE GRAIN is often confused.

To clarify this, we have set the two out and explained the correct terms for each:



Main Types of Surface Grains

FULL GRAIN LEATHER

- The ORIGINAL GRAIN is visible on the top. It has NOT been altered in any way.
- As nothing has been done to the surface to enhance it, it usually has a beautiful soft touch to it. It has a natural grain which generally has a “pebble” look to it unless it is upholstered tight in which case it smooths out a little.
- Some natural scars and tick bites are usually visible. This depends on the finish that has been applied.

SEMI CORRECTED LEATHER

- The original grain is lightly buffed off to remove some imperfections, e.g., scars, tick bites etc.
- This is done to improve the cuttable area on the hide and to reduce visible imperfections. Some imperfections will however always be present.
- A pigment and dye mix is then sprayed onto the surface to give the leather its colour.



Types of Surface Grains

CORRECTED GRAIN

- The original grain is buffed off to remove imperfections, e.g., scars, tick bites, etc.
- A pigment (paint) is then sprayed onto the surface to colour the leather.
- As the natural grain has been removed in the buffing process, a texture needs to be added to make it look authentic again. This is done by embossing a selected design onto the hide so that it looks like a leather grain. The advantage here is, because most of the blemishes have been removed and a grain has been embossed, you get a “cleaner” leather.
- Because of the mechanical and technical processes, this leather tends to be a little firmer than full grain and semi corrected leathers.

BUFFED / SEMI BUFFED GRAIN FOR EFFECT

- The original leather surface has either been buffed lightly or with a heavy buffing process
- In most cases this is done to create an effect on the surface (examples are Woodland which is lightly buffed or Serengeti which is fully buffed)



Main Types of Finishes to colour the leather

ANILINE

- I. This is when the leather has been coloured up with a tinted liquid dye. The finish is very natural and has transparency which means that it has "depth" to it. Aniline leathers normally have a soft silky touch.
- II. As the surface has a transparent look, colour variation is a strong possibility.
- III. Coverage of imperfections is minimal
- IV. Aniline dyed leather is very sensitive to the sun and strong lighting.

SEMI - ANILINE

- I. This is when a pigment is mixed with a liquid dye. The pigment part of the mixture provides more 'coverage' of the imperfections on the hide as well as colour uniformity. The dye part of the mixture helps to retain some of the natural grain and depth in colour on the leather .

PIGMENTED

- I. This is when a pigment is applied to the surface of the leather to give it its required colour. In layman's terms, a pigment is like paint. This helps to even the colour out on the leather and covers a lot of the imperfections on the leather.



Note

** DYES and PIGMENTS are very similar in concept to VARNISH and PAINT that is commonly used on wood. If one takes a piece of wood with a beautiful grain on it and applies a coat of tinted varnish to it, it will darken but the natural grain of the wood will still be visible through the transparent varnish.

Alternatively, if you take the same piece of wood but paint it with an enamel paint, all the blemishes and natural grain in the wood will be covered by the paint and it will have a monotone look to it.

The SAME varnish & paint principals apply to dyes and pigments.



LEATHER – THE BEAUTY OF IT

The market trends have moved to more natural leathers. Customers want to experience the beauty of natural leathers. These have both good points for the customer as well as challenges for the tannery and the furniture manufacturer.

The consumer finally experiences the beauty of natural leather. With a little extra care, they will see how their leather sofa changes into a beautiful piece of furniture over time.

Each piece will develop its own unique characters and patina.



Challenges

Due to the fact that the more the leather is required to look as natural as possible, there are certain limitations that require the person to understand.

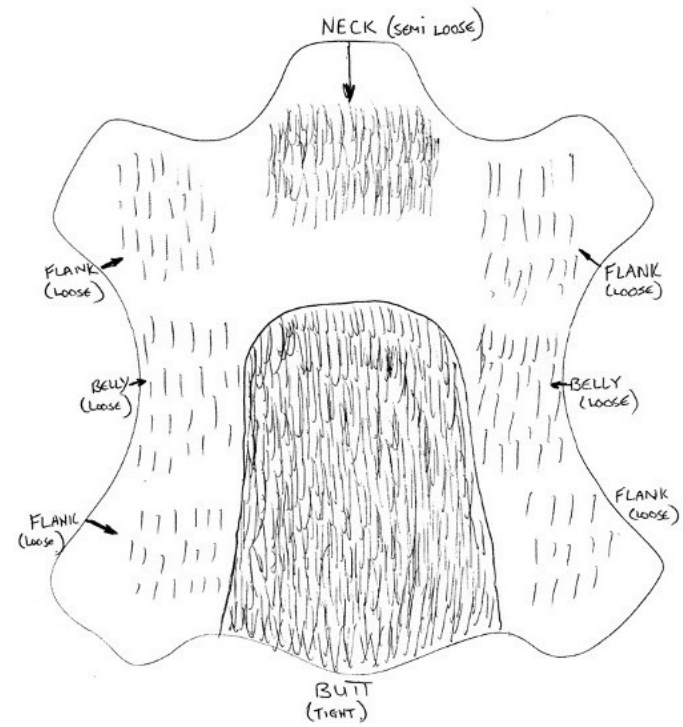
Natural leathers are given their colour by using tinted liquid dyes. These are transparent and add to the 'depth' of the look on the leather. However, because each hide is different and even WITHIN the hide, the fibre structure varies in areas of the hide from a very tight fibre to a very loose fibre (in areas of the animals movement, i.e. under its legs or in the neck areas), the dye penetration varies substantially. The loose fibre structured areas absorb more liquid dye, making it slightly lighter - refer diagram following about FIBRE

STRUCTURE

The tannery will try to give the final colour some uniformity by spraying a tinted liquid dye evenly over the hide but because dyes are transparent, the darker areas still remain darker and the lighter areas still remain lighter. This application does, however, equalize the colour substantially and the uniformity improves.

The furniture manufacturer will then try to 'marry up' the hides that match in shades. However, this remains a difficult operation because as mentioned, there are shade variations even WITHIN one hide .

NOTHING WILL EVER
MATCH THE BEAUTY,
TOUCH, FEEL, LOOK
AND LONGEVITY OF
GENUINE LEATHER



Now that we have explained the difference between the **GRAIN** and the **FINISH** on leather, let's explain the various natural scars and imperfections on leather.

Leather Scars and imperfections (Natural)

SCARS & IMPERFECTIONS, or as we like to call them in the leather industry, **NATURE'S SIGNATURES** are part and parcel of leather. These markings are what differentiates leather between **AUTHENTIC LEATHER WITH CHARACTER** and **MECHANICALLY ENHANCED LEATHER** like CG leather, or even synthetic materials which cannot be referred to as leather!

Both **NATURAL & MECHANICALLY ENHANCED** leathers have their place in the market...

- Natural leather is for those that love leather with **NATURE'S SIGNATURES**.
- Mechanically Enhanced leather is for those that love the more modern clean look with no imperfections visible and are needing easy care and practical leather.

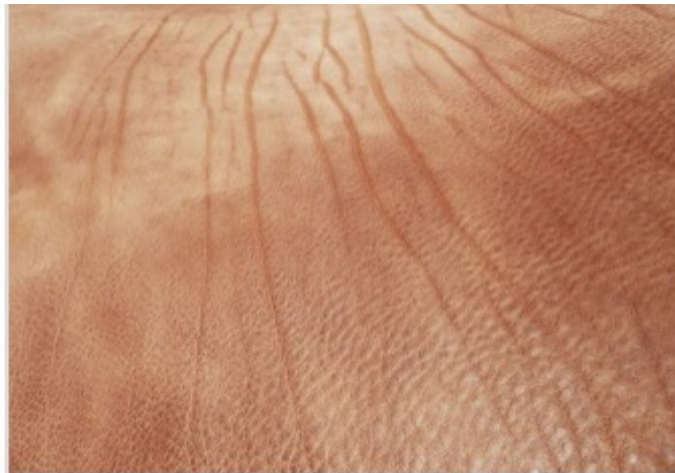


Leather Scars and imperfections (Natural)

1. There are different types of imperfections found on leather hides: **NATURAL AND MECHANICAL:**

NATURAL IMPERFECTIONS – these imperfections are either caused during the life of the animal or by natural causes:

- Growth lines (or wrinkles) are normally found in the neck area of the hide and sometimes in the belly areas as well.



Leather Scars and imperfections (Natural)



Tick bites are found either in “clumps” normally in the neck or “armpit” or random all over the hide.



Open scars are when an animal injures itself possibly by a barbed wire fence or a thick thorn bush and gets slaughtered before the scar has healed.

Leather Scars and imperfections (Natural)



Healed Scars are as per the above but have had time to heal and close. Much like humans when we scratch ourselves and the wound heals.



Putrefaction occurs when the animal lies in dung. It gets entangled into the hair and over time, putrefies itself into the surface of the skin leaving a mark or scar.

Leather Scars and imperfections (Mechanical)

MECHANICAL IMPERFECTIONS – these imperfections are generally caused during or after the life of the animal by either man or machine (or both!):

- Brand Marks are unfortunately on most hides. These identify ownership by the farmer. Often there are 2 or 3 or even 4 brand marks on a hide, depending on how many times the animal has been sold onwards.




Leather Scars and imperfections (Mechanical)



Texture Variation - although this is caused by the natural fibre make up in the animal, it is further enhanced by the mechanical milling action to make the leather soft.



Colour Variation on ANILINE leather. Again, this is caused by many natural and external factors, but it is further enhanced by the dye process when the hides are converted into leather. Colour Variation can occur from one hide to another or even within the same hide as the absorption rate of the dye differs depending on the compactness of the fibre structure.

A close-up photograph of brown leather, likely from a couch, showing the texture and stitching. A semi-transparent purple rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing white text.

The **NATURAL MARKS** of the leather
are characteristics which set the
couch aside from synthetic materials.
This is natural and has character and
confirms to the client that it is 100%
GENUINE LEATHER.



Advantages of leather furniture

- Authenticthe older it gets the better it looks. It develops its own patina, character and look over time.
- Long lasting.....if proper care is applied, the piece will last a very long time.
- It's timelessleather will never go out of fashion
- Character.....only GENUINE leather can have this. A natural look, with depth and character. Each piece will "age" with its own unique look.



Care for Leather

CARE FOR LEATHER

- Leather should be wiped regularly with a dry soft cloth in order to prevent dust build up.
- NEVER use shoe polish or detergents to clean leather.
- Due to the nature of it, spills should be dabbed IMMEDIATELY with a soft dry absorbent cloth.
- Aniline finishes are sensitive to light. They must be kept away from windows and areas with direct sunlight.
- Leather will improve with age, but should still be fed with an approved “hide food “in order to maintain its suppleness.

LEATHER TREATED AS DESCRIBED ABOVE WILL ALWAYS MAINTAIN ITS NATURAL BEAUTY AND DEVELOP AN INDIVIDUAL PATINA OVER TIME.

LEATHER MARKING SPECIFICATIONS

CORRECTED GRAIN

- A areas - Clean panels
- B areas - Healed scars (Light)/Growth lines
- C areas - Healed scars/Tick bites/Brand marks (Light)

SEMI CORRECTED

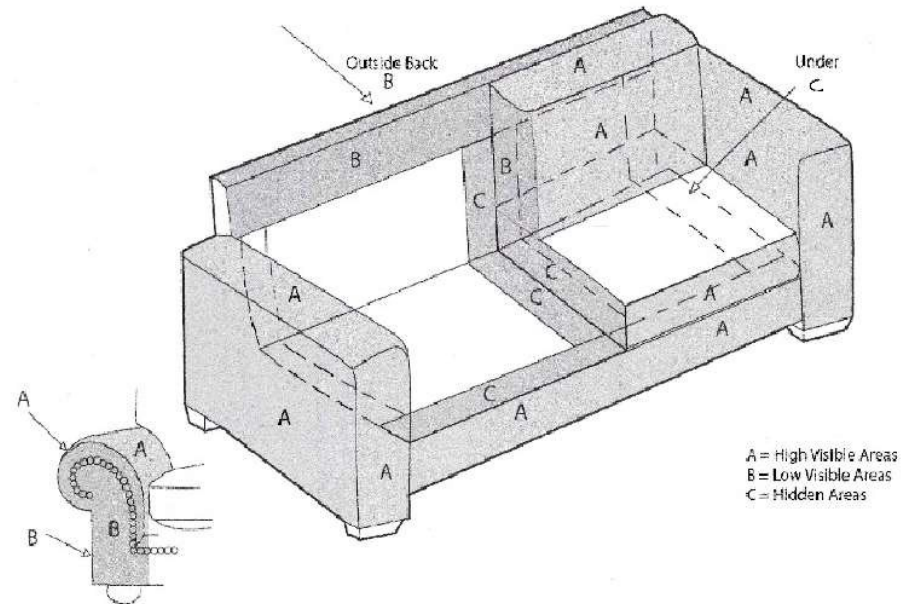
- A areas - Clean panels
- B areas - Healed scars (Light) / Tick bites (not clusters)/Growth lines
- C areas - Brand marks (Light)/Healed scars/Tick bites (small clusters)

FULL GRAIN

- A areas - Healed scars (Light)/Tick bites (Small)
- B areas - Healed scars/Tick bites (Small - no clusters)/Growth lines
- C areas - Brand marks / Healed scars / Open scars (Small)/Creases/Shade variation

"A" panels that are hidden by overlapping cushions may have healed scars and light tick bites in all cases above

Leather Marking Specification



What is PU Leather?

PU leather, or polyurethane leather, as it is also known, is a synthetic material made by applying a layer of polyurethane onto a fabric backing.

This creates the leather-like appearance and texture which is characteristic of PU leather.

The manufacturing method involves treating a base material, polyester or cotton for example, and applying a layer of polyurethane to enhance the material's resistance and durability.

In addition, PU leather's breathability is limited, and, in some cases, chemical odours may be a concern.



What is Hydropelle Leather?

The Hydropelle cover is made from Polycarbonate which provides commercial grade performance and the cover will resist peeling in any environment.



What is Air Leather?

Air Leather is a faux leather made of polyurethane material.

Using synthetic components has some benefits but does not make faux leather as sturdy as genuine leather. The latter material may show signs of wear and tear, rips and scratches, and stains earlier than real leather put to the same test.





LEATHER GUIDE

Type	Full Grain	Top Grain	Suede	Split	Vinyl	Bonded	Air Leather
Source	Top layer of the hide	Second layer of the hide	Flesh side of leather hide	Underneath top grain	Made of water-repellent polyvinyl chloride (PVC)	Leftover hide shavings	Made from a micro-perforated polyurethane material
Characteristics	Natural surface, original grain	Sanded surface, more uniform look	Soft, fuzzy texture	Embossed or corrected to look like natural grain	Plastic-feel texture	Mixed with synthetic materials	Smooth but comes with an artificial feel to it
Uses	High-end goods, footwear, belts	Jackets, handbags, furniture	Shoes, jackets, handbags	Lower-cost goods, laminated to other materials	Use in diverse sectors, including construction, automotive, fashion, and healthcare	Budget furniture, book bindings	Furniture, clothing, and accessories
Pros	Durable, ages well, breathability	More resistant to stains	Soft, aesthetic appeal	Affordable, uniform appearance	Robust and flexible, resists moisture and withstands wear and tear	Most affordable type of leather	Less prone to cracking, peeling, and fading over time.
Cons	More expensive, can show imperfections	Less durable, less breathable	Easily stained, requires more care	Not as durable or luxurious as top layers	Plastic-like feel and doesn't breathe well, making it sticky and hot to sit on	Least durable, can peel or deteriorate	May show signs of wear and tear, rips and scratches earlier than real leather