Nubuck leather is a soft, beautiful leather that displays a brushed appearance. Brush it one way and it's a lighter version of the color, brush it the other and it's a darker version of the color. The leather is made when a top-grain or full-grain hide of leather is sanded on top till the top till the fibers become a soft, nappy nubuck finish.

Though not many of my customers have this leather, those who do find beautiful but difficult to clean. Oils, dirt and normal wear tend to fill the loose fibers of nu-buck and give it a shiny, finished leather look. It may also cause you to lose the original brushed look and feel of the nubuck. So here are some tips on cleaning nubuck leather:

1. Don't use liquid leather cleaners or conditioners on nubuck leather. It is not strongly protected and liquids will darken and mash the leather fibers.
2. To restore the brushed nubuck look and feel you can use some simple household products. Because the leather is sanded when it is made, you can brush or sand the surface of the leather without harming it. Try a 600 grit sandpaper or a stiff nylon brush and brush back and forth over the surface of the nubuck in a brisk back and forth, seam to seam motion. The sanding will create a dirt and leather dust. Just use a soft dry, cloth to wipe off the dust. Repeat the process for each seat, arm, backrest seam to seam. Check out these examples:
4. If a specific spot on the nubuck is stained try a similar method. Use your fingernail first, then a folded piece of 600 grit sandpaper on the spot. It may be lighter and slightly scratched looking so rub firmly and briskly over the area with the same soft cloth. Like in this example:

5.

6. Sometimes a dark stain will not brush out of nubuck leather. Often it is because the stain has an oil base to it. In this case you need to try to draw the oil out of the leather asap after it is stained. First try placing a pinch of cornstarch on the stain. Let it sit overnight. The next morning if the cornstarch has yellowed than it has pulled out some of the oil. Brush it off and repeat the process until the stain can be brushed out. If this method doesn't work you can buy specific degreasing pastes which are more efficient at pulling oils from leather than cornstarch.

7. Before you even get any stains, nubuck leather will benefit from a spray protection being applied to its surface. But be sure that you or the pro you hire use a spray made for suede/nubuck/aniline leather so the finish is not compromised.

Over the years I have had some customers shy away from buying nubuck leather. I say it is soft, beautiful and cleans up well if you know how to clean it. And now you do.