

Why, how and how often you should be conditioning your fine leather.

Written by Chris Repp

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Once you've researched, chosen, and paid good \$ for a great leather bag, i know you want it to look great for many years to come.

(Like i want for my beautiful bag at the right from * [Saddleback Leather](#) .)

Conditioning the leather is one practice that will help you keep your beautiful leather bag looking great.

But I want you to get it right when you condition your leather. Cheap conditioners, improperly applied can make the leather feel greasy or sticky, changing sheen or color when you don't want it to change and actually harming the leather over time.

So in this article, I'm going to share from my 20 years in the leather business to help you understand why you need to condition your leather bag, how you do it and what products you should use.

**This article deals mainly with aniline, semi-aniline and pull-up leathers which are more delicate, natural and effected by conditioning. Learn which kind of leather you own by [reading this aritcle](#).*

Why should you condition your fine leather goods?

So here are the 3 reasons I think you need to condition your leather bag to keep it looking great:

1. A good conditioner will lubricate the leather fibers.

Picture the cross-section of a tanned leather hide. The fibers are randomly criss-crossed, fit together and flex in harmony. This is what makes leather such a uniquely

strong and flexible material. When those fibers dry out the harmonious flex becomes more like a bunch of little saws grating on one another. Not good!

So when you apply a good leather conditioner to your leather bag, the fibers will soak it up. They absorb the lubricating oils and moisture which keep the fit and flex

moving like a glove (a leather glove).

But conditioning enough but not too often is also important. The leather fibers only need to absorb so much lubrication. At more than %25 moisture content the fibers will run out of room to absorb, swell up and can damage your leather.

2. A good conditioner will protect the surface of the leather from stains.

Many fine leather bags have very little finish protection on top of the leather. The beautiful feel, smell and look of natural leather comes from letting the natural beauty show

through without much surface color. The problem is that most exposed leather fibers are very absorbant. (Use a leather shammy to dry your car?)

So, adding a good leather conditioning product to the

surface will also create a barrier of protection for the absorbant leather fibers.

In fact, some beautiful leathers are made by spraying or rubbing a wax or oil (like in a good conditioner) to the surface of the leather. Such leathers, called pull-ups

need to be re-waxed/oiled over the years so the fibers remain protected.

In my years in the leather industry, it kills me to see a beautiful pull-up leather that has not been properly maintained. It could age so nicely except that the owner doesn't

know to condition it and eventually it gets destroyed!

3. The right conditioner can change the patina of your leather.

Finally, a good leather

conditioner or conditioning oil can deepen the color of your leather creating a beautiful patina.

Because there are many conditioning products you can use, your bag can have a look created uniquely by you. While

protecting the fibers
from damage.

So check out this video
where I test 5-6
different leather
products for you to
show how they patina
a leather bag. If you try

it with your bag I'd love
to see how it looks.

Send me your pix to
Chris@leatherhelp.co
m

How and how

often should you condition your fine leather goods? What kind of conditioner?

**I will explain 3
broad categories of
conditioning**

products you may use to condition your fine leather. They are conditioning cremes, conditioning oils and wax-based conditioners.

Conditioning
cremes will nourish
and moisturize your
leather with minimal
color change to the
leather fibers. (Yet
you should always

pre-test the color change by applying a little of the product and letting it sit for 1 hour to observe the changes in color) A good conditioning cream will both

condition your
leathers fibers and
provide a moderate
degree of protection
to the surface of
your leather bag.

Conditioning oils
will soften and
nourish many fine
leather goods.
They provide less
surface protection
for your leather.
The wrong oil can
make your leather

feel oily or slick and even become rancid in your leather fibers.

Therefore, I suggest you stay away from home-remedy type oils such as olive oil

or human skin oils.

Some time tested
conditioners used
for leather goods
are neadsfoot oil,
mink oil or lanolin.

While each of these oils has been used to nourish and soften leather over centuries, they all have unique properties. The smell, coloring effect and surface

qualities of each
are unique.

I buy each of these
leather conditioning
oils from

www.tandyleatherfactory.com Except for the lanolin which you can get at a sporting goods store in the baseball gloves section.

Wax conditioners
will not absorb as
deeply into your
leather but are
great at protecting
the fibers from
liquids and soil. As

earlier mentioned, some leathers are waxed in the factory and benefit greatly from re-waxing 1-2 times a year. Other leathers without wax can be given a unique patina by

waxing them
yourself.

**How should it
be applied?**

Keep a few things
in mind when
applying leather
conditioner:

- Place the
conditioner onto a
soft, lint free cloth

not directly onto
your leather .

- Use a circular
motion to rub the
conditioner evenly
over an entire
panel or section of
the leather.

- Follow the conditioning with a brisk buffing of the leather surface with a soft, dry cloth.

- Allow the

leather to air dry
for a few hours
before using the
bag.

**How often
should you**

condition it?

Normal leather conditioning needs done 2 times a year. There are a few important exceptions:

- Dry heat- If your bag is often in the sun, in a hot car or anywhere it is dry and hot you will need to condition it more often than normal.

3-4 times or more
as the leather
seems dry will
help keep the
moisture content
level and the bag
safe and supple
for many years

- Pull-Up

leather - The waxes and oils added to the surface of pull-up leather will wear off as you use your leather bag. Once they are

gone, the leather fibers are exposed to wear and soil. Therefore, using a good conditioner to re-wax the leather is imperative to keeping pull-up

leather protected
and looking great.

Thanks to
Saddleback for

providing me with
leather samples
for some of my
conditioner
testing. Check out
there [beautiful](#)
[bags here](#) .

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from the sale...

Thanks!!