

leather

YOUR COMPLETE RESOURCE ON LEATHER UPHOLSTERY



The purpose of this leather education booklet is to:

- Equip the retail sales associate / marketing specialist with overall leather knowledge and education in order to correctly sell upholstered leather furniture.
- To assist retail leather customers in making informed buying decisions



This book contains:

- Glossary of Leather Terms
- Leather Tanning Process
- Understanding Natural Markings of Leather
- Advantages of Buying Leather
- Leather Care Tips
- How to Sell Leather Upholstered Furniture
- Leather Classification



*the world class
furniture company*



glossary of terms

the basics

ANILINE DYED Leather that has been dyed throughout by immersion in a dye-bath and has not received any coating of pigmented finish. This form of transparent dye penetrates the hide with color.

BUFFING Leather which has been smoothed by mechanical abrasion to minimize surface blemishes, such as healed scars.

CHROMIUM TANNING Upholstery leather which has been tanned with chromium salts. This method makes the hide flexible and supple.

CORRECTED GRAIN LEATHER Leather from which the grain layer has been partially removed by buffing and upon which a new surface has been created by various finishes (e.g. embossing).

CROCKING The rubbing off of surface substances or color onto another material.

CRUST Leather that has been tanned, dyed, and dried – but not finished.

DISTRESSED Process used to create an effect resembling a worn look or an aged appearance. Techniques used to create this effect include tumbling the hides with abrasive items in order to scratch the leather's surface.

DRUM DYED Leather is immersed in a drum with dyes and tumbled to insure complete color absorption.

EMBOSSING Process of printing leather with a raised pattern either imitating or resembling an animal grain pattern. A unique pattern may be embossed on the leather that is unrelated to the natural grain pattern. Leathers are pressed with an embossing plate under heat and pressure to either lay out the grain as smoothly as possible or to impart a textured effect. Embossing may also be done to disguise defects or blemishes.

FAT LIQUORING Process of replacing oils that have been depleted from the hide during the tanning process.

FAT WRINKLE Natural wrinkles in the leather's grain that are unique to each hide. Normally visible only in full grain leathers. Common around the neck, belly, and shoulder areas of the hide.

FINISHING Any process performed after the initial dyeing stage such as buffing, embossing, milling, spraying, etc. These leathers are treated with a topcoat substance to help provide abrasion and stain resistance. These substances can be lacquers, varnishes, polymers, or enamels. The finishing substance may also include additional pigments and/or dyes.



glossary of terms

it's all about the details

FULL GRAIN Leather which has not been buffed or abraded retaining all natural markings and characteristics.

GLAZED Leather treated with a top coat containing not only gloss, but also protection.

GLOSS FINISH Higher shine/sheen level finish usually with enhanced texture added.

GRAIN Pattern characterized by the pores and peculiar to the animal concerned, visible on the outer surface of a hide after the hair has been removed.

HAND Term describing the leather's degree of softness and feel as well as the reaction of the sense of touch when leather is held in the hand.

HAND ANTIQUED Hand application of a darker color over a lighter color creating a dramatic highlight.

HIDE The whole or entire skin of a larger animal, usually cattle, for upholstery leather.

LEATHER A hide or skin that has been tanned into a non-perishable material.

MATTE FINISH

Low gloss finish usually with enhanced texture added.

MICROPIGMENT

Coloring of the hide by using a coating which contains clear, transparent pigments. This coating can also be accompanied by a thin layer of opaque pigmentation creating a more uniform shade.

MILLING/TUMBLING Process in which tanned hides are placed in drums with heat and water and tumbled to create a desired softness or effect.



NAKED LEATHER Tanned, aniline dyed leather that has no protective top coat. Commonly referred to as pure aniline.

NATURAL GRAIN Leather whose grain has not been altered in any way. The natural appearance of the grain is predominant showing visibly healed scars, fat wrinkles, insect bites, etc.

NUBUCK Top grain, aniline dyed leather that has been buffed to create a "suede like" nap effect.

PATINA Surface luster that develops on Pure Aniline Leathers and Nubuck Leathers which grows more beautiful with use and the passing of time.

PIGMENT FINISH Coloring of the hide by using a coating which contains pigments and other opaque materials. This finish creates a more uniform shade and an increased resistance to fading.

PULL-UP Leather that derives its look and some colorations from dyes, waxes, and/or oils. When the leather is pulled during upholstery, the oils in the leather cause the color to migrate and become lighter.



PURE ANILINE Leather that is aniline dyed and exhibits natural markings and characteristics because the grain has not been altered in any way.

SAUVAGE / KELA Two-toned effect in which a darker color is applied over a lighter color. This effect can be created during the finishing process either with a roller or spray equipment, or by hand. Similar to faux finishes on walls.

SEMI-ANILINE Leather that has been aniline dyed throughout then protected by a clear or pigmented finish coating thus creating a more consistent color than pure aniline leathers. Natural markings may be visible with semi-aniline leathers.

SPLIT GRAIN The underneath layer of a hide which has been "split" off when the top grain is separated. If finished, the split is heavily embossed and surfaced treated.

SUEDE Leather produced from the underneath layer/lower split of a hide possessing a velvet-like nap effect. Suedes do not have the same durable characteristics as top grain leathers.

TANNING Process using tanning agents to convert a raw hide into a stable, non-perishable material. Tanning strips the hide of indigenous color making it receptive to color dyes.

glossary of terms



TOP GRAIN Top part of the skin or hide. The grain may be either Full Grain or Embossed Grain. The Top Grain of the hide is stronger and more flexible.

VEGETABLE TANNING Leather which has been processed by using tannins obtained from bark, wood, or other parts of plants and trees. Although this tanning process adds to the toughness of leather, it also limits the stretching of the leather. Vegetable tanned leathers are used more commonly manufacturing shoes, bridles, handbags, etc.

WET BLUE Refers to the "blue" color and appearance created by the chromium tanning process.



leather's tanning process

how it works

- 1 CURING** The leather hide is cured by immersion in a salt solution to protect it from deterioration and to preserve it for future use.
- 2 SOAKING** The leather hide is soaked in water to remove the salt solution and re-hydrate the hide to its original flaccid condition.
- 3 DE-HAIRING** The soaked hides are treated with a lime solution for the de-hairing process. The lime solution not only removes the hair, but also fats and soluble proteins.
- 4 TANNING** Tanning involves drumming the hides in a mixture of chemicals. Two of the most common types of tanning include chromium tanning, which results in a wet blue appearance, and vegetable tanning.
- 5 SPLITTING** The average thickness of a cowhide is 5mm before splitting. The hides are split in a splitting machine which activates a fast running wirecutter. This operation divides the hide into two hides: top grain leather and split leather. The top grain hides are then shaved on the flesh side to create a uniform thickness. Standard top grain upholstery leather thickness can be 0.9mm-1.4mm. Split leathers are typically used on non-stress areas, such as outside backs and outside arms.
- 6 SORTING** The hides are then sorted or separated by differing levels of quality. This quality is based on the extent of natural markings which could include ticks bites, brands, barb wire scars, and/or stretch marks. This process is called selection. The highest quality of leather hides are normally termed "A" selection. "B" and "C" hides possess a higher number of natural markings, therefore reducing overall selection.

What is Tanning?

A process that uses tanning agents to convert a raw hide into a stable, non-perishable material. This is achieved by cleaning, drying, and preserving the hide.

- 7 DYEING** The leather hide is drum dyed. The dye concentration in the drum affects level of penetration in the hide, richness of shade, colorfastness to light, ease of dry cleaning, and resistance to rubbing, etc. The dyed leather is then treated with fat-liquors for softness and strength.
- 8 DRYING** After the dyeing process, the leather hide can retain 45-60% water. Most upholstery leather is tunnel dried where the temperature and humidity are controlled. After the leather is dried, it dries to a paler shade as the oils spread uniformly and the dyes penetrate deeply.
- 9 FINISHING** The finishing of a leather hide involves both mechanical and chemical treatments. The hide is first trimmed and conditioned with fat-liquors to obtain uniform moisture content. The hide is then softened with a massage machine and stretched. Some leathers are further processed by applying a top coat finish to the grain surface. The top coat adheres to the leather's surface while increasing the resistance to abrasion, cracking, peeling, rubbing, light, heat, etc.

A pigmented finish is sometimes applied which contains a variety of colorations, resins, lacquers, oils and/or waxes. Afterwards, the hide is milled in a dry drum to soften the leather. Note: leather can be finished a variety of ways depending on quality of hide, type of leather, and level of pigmentation.



understanding the natural markings

completely unique

GRAINING

The grain, similar to human fingerprints, is unique to each individual hide. It is the hallmark of full grain leather hides and can vary from hide to hide or even within one particular hide.



STRETCH MARKS

Stretch marks occur as a result of giving birth and become a permanent marking on the cow.



INSECT/TICK BITES

Scars caused by the abundance of insect and/or tick bites. Typically, these scars heal but leave visible markings.



HEALED SCARS

Scratch marks are the result of the cow's unsheltered life and evidence that the hide is indeed top grain. Hides with fewer scratch marks are usually more expensive, but the marks do not affect strength or durability. Typical healed scars include those caused by insect/tick bites and barbwire marks.



BRANDING MARKS Brand marks, or fire brands, are used as identification marks and are part of virtually every hide.



FAT WRINKLES

Wrinkles occur naturally in the loose skin around the neck and belly of all cows. The skin must be loose to allow the needed flexibility for grazing and overall growth.



advantages of buying leather

*keeping
it clean!*

COMFORT

- Leather is a natural material; making it an ideal choice for comfort.
- Leather has excellent temperature adaptation making it comfortable during the heat of the summer and cool of the winter.

CONFORMABILITY

- Leather conforms to your body shape and becomes more comfortable with use.
- Only leather ages so that it becomes more supple throughout the years.

UNIQUENESS

- Each leather hide is unique – No one hide is exactly like another.
- Leather comes with its own distinctive markings and characteristics; making each purchase truly unique.

DURABILITY

- Leather has legendary tear strength, making it one of the strongest upholstery materials known to man.
- Leather's strength and elasticity gives it high ripping resistance.

FLAME RESISTANCE

- Leather is naturally flame resistant and will not readily burn or melt.

CLEANABILITY

- Like our skin, leather has tight as well as strong fibers that prevent the penetration of dust, lint, animal hairs, or cigarette smoke.
- Leather is an ideal choice for those persons who are dust-sensitive or possess allergenic conditions.



leather care tips

- Avoid placing your furniture in direct sunlight (under windows or skylights). All materials will fade over time when placed in direct sunlight. Some leathers are especially sensitive to sunlight.
- Maintain at least two feet between your furniture and heating sources. Prolonged exposure to heat vents and radiators may cause your leather to dry out.
- Like all items in your house, leather can accumulate dust. You can fully remove dust particles from the surface with a soft cloth, making it ideal for dust sensitive people.
- Certain types of leathers perform better when preventative maintenance is practiced.
- Use of general household cleaning products, chemicals and abrasives are not recommended as they can break down the leather's protective surface and cause damage. Never use harsh chemicals or cleaning agents (such as furniture polish, ammonia, or detergent soaps) on your leather furniture. Avoid all products containing solvents, silicones, or oils, as they may negatively affect the leather's surface.

how to sell leather furniture

The most important thing to remember about selling leather furniture is – the more knowledgeable you are about leather, the more likely the customer is to purchase their new leather furniture from you.

IDENTIFYING THE “LEATHER CUSTOMER”

First and foremost, offer leather upholstery to all your customers – don't wait for them to ask for leather. You can normally determine the leather customer by those who touch the leather versus a fabric customer who visually scans the furniture for a color that catches their eye. Leather is viewed as a valuable purchase and normally is considered an upgrade. This idea must be supported by the sales person and accompanied by an upscale presentation on the floor.

THE “COVER” STORY

Leather is an excellent cover choice in today's consumer buying patterns. Nature has given us leather as one of the most popular upholstery materials. Leather comes in a rainbow of colors and a range of styles from timeless traditional to avant-garde contemporary. There is a style, unique look, or color of leather available that fits every consumer's needs.

“BE SEATED”

One of the most important aspects of selling leather upholstery is simply telling your customer to “Please take a seat”. Having your customer sit on the leather furniture will automatically distinguish which piece is suitable and perhaps the “one” for them. Feel and comfort is extremely important in the decision process but it can also vary on an individual basis.

As your customer shops, have them sit, bounce, and move around on the furniture to test the degree of softness and resiliency. Help them choose the feel and softness that pleases them along with the leather type that matches their everyday needs. Remember, assist your customer in finding the look they want accompanied by the comfort they desire, and that is compatible with their budget.

LEATHER – AN “ECONOMICAL CHOICE”

affordable luxury

Most customers are unaware that leather provides an economical approach to buying upholstered furniture. There are many types and styles of leathers that range in price. This allows each customer to experience the pleasure of owning leather furniture by offering affordable yet varying price ranges for all pocketbooks.



leather classifications

100% LEATHER

- Consists of Top Grain Leather in high use areas combined with split hides on the outside arms and backs.
- Top Grain Leather refers to the "top portion of the leather hide" that is the most supple, durable, and cleanable.
- Considered the premium in Leather Upholstered furniture
- Used primarily in Stationary Leather category.

Leather

this sofa features 100% leather



LEATHER MATCH*

- Consists of Top Grain Leather in high use areas combined with PVC (polyvinyl coating) on the outside arms and backs.
- Top Grain Leather refers to the "top portion of the leather hide" that is the most supple, durable, and cleanable.
- Leather Match* has the same "top grain" qualities as 100% Leather however the PVC versus Split Hides reduces the overall price point.
- Used primarily in Leather Motion category.

relax & recline



*Leather Match upholstery features top-grain leather in the seating areas with skillfully matched vinyl everywhere else.

leather classifications



DURABLEND®†

- DURABLEND®† is an exclusive trademarked brand for Ashley Furniture Industries.
- DURABLEND®† is a Bonded Leather – consists of blended leather or particles of leather adhered together with a coating of PU (polyurethane).
- Contents: 17% Leather, 57% Polyurethane, and 26% Poly/Cotton.
- DURABLEND®† provides the look and feel of 100% Leather or Leather Match* at an economical price.
- Used in all Leather categories: Stationary and Motion.

*exclusive to
Ashley Furniture*

DuraBlend
blended leather



†Blended Leather upholstery features a Polyurethane/Leather blend (57% Polyurethane, 26% Polycotton, 17% Leather) in the seating areas with skillfully matched Polyurethane everywhere else.



