

LEATHER TERMINOLOGY

LEATHER



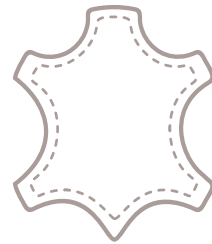
NATURALLY

LEATHER TERMINOLOGY

A GUIDE TO COMMON LEATHER TERMINOLOGY AND DESCRIPTIONS.

What is aniline leather? What is the difference between full grain leather and nubuck? **This guide explains the most commonly used leather descriptions and terminology.**

If we're missing one that you'd like adding to the list please contact us: info@leathernaturally.org



A AMERICAN STYLE LEATHER

A generic description for leathers that have a natural, rugged and often oily look and feel.

ANILINE LEATHER

Leather with a minimal surface finish and that has the original natural grain surface clearly visible. These leathers usually come from the best quality hides and skins and are used for luxury items. Aniline leather has a beautiful surface feel but is less well protected from soiling compared to semi-aniline or pigmented leathers.

B BIODEGRADABLE LEATHER

Leather is made to last and wear well, but has the ability to degrade biologically in 10-50 years.

BONDED LEATHER

A material that has been made from leather dust, clippings and leather shavings bonded together with a base substance - usually synthetic. Sometimes also known as leather board.

BOX CALF LEATHER

A firm leather, mostly made from calf skins.

BUFFED LEATHER

A leather that has had the top surface buffed to produce a soft velvet-like touch. Depending on the depth of the buffing there will often be a clearly visible nap. This term is also sometimes used for nubuck leather.

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BYCAST® LEATHER

Split leather that has been finished to a smooth surface with a PU coating.

C

CHROME LEATHER

Leather that has been tanned using chrome- most of the world's leather is tanned this way as it is a proven process that produces a stable end-product that makes up well into a wide range of items from footwear to furniture, bags, gloves and apparel.

CHROME FREE LEATHER

Leather tanned using alternative methods to chrome - usually aldehydes.

CRUST LEATHER

Part-processed leather that has been retanned and dyed but not been through its final finish.

E

EMBOSSED LEATHER

Leather that has a print or surface pattern created through the application of pressure.

F

FINISHED LEATHER

Leather that has its final characteristics added, being ready for manufacture into the final product, (shoes, bags, furniture etc.)

FULL GRAIN LEATHER

Leather made from the top layer of the hide or skin. For a more detailed explanation of the full grain and split layers created during the manufacturing process see our fact sheet 'How is Leather Made?'.

G

GENUINE LEATHER

A term is used to emphasise that a product is made from natural, real leather, not a synthetic alternative.

H

HIDE

Hides are skins from bigger animals- mainly cattle or buffalo, they are a by-product of the food production.

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L

LEATHER

The official and recognised definition of leather is: ‘hide or skin with its original fibrous structure more or less intact, tanned to be imputrescible, where the hair or wool may or may not have been removed.’

LEATHER BOARD

Also called bonded leather (see before). This material is often used in shoes (in-between soles) or to give body to a bag.

N

NUBUCK

A leather that has had the top surface buffed to produce a soft velvet-like touch. Depending on the depth of the buffing there will often be a clearly visible nap. Also known as buffed leather.

P

PIGMENTED LEATHER

Leather that has been finished with a special coating to protect it for heavy duty applications or to cover natural defects. Unlike aniline leather, the natural grain structure will not be visible.

PULL-UP LEATHER

Oil or wax is added to the top surface, when the leather is ‘pulled’ these move creating a unique effect.

R

REAL LEATHER

As with the term ‘genuine leather’ this is used to emphasise that a product is made from natural, real leather, not a synthetic alternative.

S

SEMI-ANILINE LEATHER

Leather that has a light finish applied, usually with pigments. The natural grain surface can still be seen but it less susceptible to soiling and easier to care for than aniline leather.

SKIN

Skins come from smaller animals, mainly sheep, goats or pigs. They are a by-product of the food industry.

SOLE LEATHER

A thick firm leather used in footwear, which is produced by vegetable tanning.

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SNUFFED GRAIN LEATHER

Similar to buffed or nubuck leather, where the grain is very lightly buffed.

SPLIT LEATHER

The underneath section of the leather after it has been split - the top layer is what creates full grain leather, the split is the second layer and is mostly used to make suede, (see below). For a more detailed explanation of the full grain and split layers created during the manufacturing process see our fact sheet [How is Leather Made?](#)

SUEDE

The flesh side of the final leather or also used to refer to split leather. The fibers tend to be longer giving it a 'hairy' appearance.

V

VEGAN LEATHER

Misleading marketing term used to refer to synthetic material made to look like leather. For more information, see the Leather Naturally fact sheet '[Leather and Alternatives - a Guide to Labelling](#)'.

VEGETABLE LEATHER

A hide or skin that has been tanned using vegetable tannins, it is characterised by a yellow-ish colour when wet.

W

WET BLUE

A hide or skin once it has been tanned with chrome and is still wet, before it is dyed. It is characterised by a light blue colour.

WET-WHITE

A hide or skin once it has been tanned with Aldehydes, but before it is dyed. It is characterised by a white colour.

LEARN MORE WITH LEATHER NATURALLY

Leather Naturally promotes the use of globally-manufactured sustainable leather.

Its website www.leathernaturally.org is a key resource for information about modern leather manufacturing and the part it plays in a more sustainable society.

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