



HANCOCK & MOORE  
Glossary of Leather Terms

## Glossary of Leather Terms

### Altered Leather

Leather that has had the original surface of the skin or hide removed, (usually due to imperfections in the original grain surface), and a new grain embossed into the leather. This is also called corrected grain. Most top-grain leathers have altered or corrected grain.

### American Bison

American Bison Leather is stronger than traditional steer hide and is also supple and durable. They showcase marks of a range animal, the natural grain of bison hides is not corrected with artificial embossing or plating.

### Aniline

The name given to the particular transparent dye used to color dyed leather.

### Aniline Dyeing

The dyeing process by which transparent dyes penetrate the cell layers throughout the hide, producing deep, vibrant colors that preserve the hide's natural markings and characteristics.

### Aniline Leather

Leather that has been dyed through with aniline dyes. Pure aniline leathers represent approximately 5% of all upholstery leathers produced worldwide.

### Antiqued/Distressed Grain

A surface pattern of markings or creases, in which the hollows are given a contrasting color to produce a two-tone effect that emulates the natural signs of aging.

### Back

(1) The main portion of a hide, obtained by cutting off the two bellies.

(2) Leather made from (1) Bark Tanned Leather vegetable tanned, mainly by means of the tannins contained in the barks of trees.

### Base Coat

Color that is applied to a compatible crust color to achieve the final color of a semi-aniline dyed product.

### Belly

(1) Part of the hide covering the underside and the upper part of the legs of the animal.

(2) Leather made from this part.

### Belly Grain

The tanned outer (hair or grain) layer split from a belly.

### Blue, In The

The state of hides or animals being chrome tanned after they have been removed from the tanning solution. Chromium salts cause the tanned hides to be light blue before they are dyed.

### Blue Split

A hide or skin which has been split into two or more layers following the (chrome) tanning process.

### Boardy

An adjective applied to stiff, inflexible leather. This term is not to be confused with boarding, which is the process of softening leather.

### Bonded Leather

Reconstituted leather that is leather fibers bonded together with latex.

### Brushed Leather

The creation of a velvet-like nap on the grain surface through a process of controlled surface abrasion.

### Buffed Leather

Leather from which the top surface of the grain has been removed by an abrasive or bladed cylinder or, less generally, by hand. In the case of upholstery leather the buffing process is invariably carried out by machine, though it is sometimes incorrectly described as hand buffed.

### Buffed Top Grain

The process of sanding or buffing top grain leather to smooth the high spots of imperfection.

### Buffing

The process of more or less removing the grain by abrasion.

### Bycast Leather

Leather that is split with a layer of polyurethane applied to the surface and then embossed - originally made for the shoe industry.

### Cattle Hide

The outer covering of a fully grown bovine animal.

### Chamois Leather

Very soft, flexible leather made from sheep hides or lambskin; usually tanned with oils.

### Chrome Tanned

Leather tanned with chromium salts and/or chromium sulfate for a supple, pliable effect and to prevent discoloration and loss of shape when exposed to moisture.

### Combination Tanned

Leather that receives chrome and vegetable tannage to produce suppleness and body in the hide.

### Cordovan

Leather made from the tight, firm shell portion of horse butts. Cordovan has very fine pores and a characteristic finish, and is very durable.

**Corrected Grain Leather**

Leather from which the grain layer has been partially removed by buffing to a depth governed by the condition of the raw material and upon which a new surface has been built by various finishes.

**Cow Hide**

Hide from a mature female bovine that has produced a calf.

**Crock (noun)**

The coloring matter that rubs off of poorly dyed leather.

**Crock (verb)**

To transfer color of rubbing.

**Crockproof**

Leather, suede or fabric that has been treated to prevent color from rubbing off. With suede, this term means to treat to prevent shedding or rubbing off of fibers.

**Crust**

Leather which has been tanned but not finished. Such leathers referred to as being in the crust.

**Drum Dying**

The application of dye stuffs to leather by the immersion of the leather in a drum that is tumbled. This process allows full dye penetration into the fiber.

**Embossed Leather**

Usually corrected grain, in which a pattern is applied by extreme pressure in a press to give a unique design or imitation of full grain characteristics. Sometimes leathers are embossed to make them appear to be another leather, such as embossing an alligator pattern into a cowhide.

**Enhanced Grain**

Leather that is lightly buffed to improve the surface and embossed to simulate an attractive grain or to add decorative texture.

**Fat Wrinkle**

Wrinkles in the grain of leather caused by fat deposits in the animal that create beauty in the leather. Fat wrinkles are not visible in imitation grain leather.

**Finish**

A surface application on the leather to color, protect, or mask imperfections. More specifically, all processes administered to leather after it has been tanned.

**Finishing**

Any further steps taken after the dying treatment such as rolling, pigmented spraying, laquering, antiquing, tipping, waxing, buffing, embossing, glazing, waterproofing or flame proofing in order to provide more abrasion and stain resistance and/or a more even surface coloration.

**Full Grain**

The term used for the outside original skin or hide which has had the hair removed, but otherwise has not been corrected or altered. Full grain leather possesses the genuine original grain of the animal.

**Full Hand**

Leather which is full-bodied, such as some combination tanned leathers and fine vegetable-tanned upholstery leather. Also called round hand.

**Glazed Finish**

Similar to an aniline finish except that the leather surface is polished to a high luster by the action of glass on the steel rollers under tremendous pressure.

**Grain (Leather)**

The outside of the hide or skin consisting of the pores, wrinkles and other characteristics which constitute the organic texture of the leather.

**Grain Character**

The natural markings on the surface of the leather.

**Grain Embossed**

An artificial grain pressed into the surface of the top grain leather from which the original grain has been removed.

**Grain Split**

The outer (wool or hair) layer of a hide or skin that has been split into two or more layers.

**Grained Leather**

Any leather on which the original natural grain has been changed or altered by any method, process or manipulation; also top grain.

**Hand**

A term used in the leather industry to describe the feel, i.e., softness or fullness of upholstery leather.

**Hand Rubbing**

Tone-on-tone effect created by blending colors. Used to add depth and character to leather.

**Heifer**

A female bovine, under three years of age, that has not produced a calf.

**Hide**

(1) The outer covering of a mature or fully grown large mammal, e.g. cattle, horse, camel and elephant.

(2) Leather made from (1) which has not been split, or from the grain split of such hide; when used in this way the name of the animal e.g. cowhide or oxhide or the type of leather, e.g. bag hide or case hide may be added.

**Leather**

An animal skin which has been preserved and dressed for use.

**Liming**

This process includes removal of the hair, preparing the hides for the tanning process.

**Matte Finish**

A flat or dull finish.

**Metallized Leather**

Leather given a metallic lustre by the application of metallic foils or powders.

**Milling**

A process that produces suppleness in hides.

**Morocco**

(1) Vegetable tanned goat skin leather with characteristic grain pattern developed naturally or by hand boarding or graining only. The most common and most characteristic grain is hard grain.

(2) By long usage, especially in the fancy goods trade. Goatskin of any vegetable tannage that has been hand boarded in the damp condition, but in the strict sense it should be limited to goatskin tanned exclusively with sumac.

**Naked Leather**

A dyed leather that has received no topical application that may mask or alter the natural state of the leather.

**Nappa**

Soft full grain gloving or clothing leather made from unsplit sheep or lambskin or kid-skin. It is usually tanned with alum and chromium salts and dyed throughout its substance.

**Natural Grain**

A leather which retains the full original grain.

**Nubuck**

A brushed, grain-sueded leather.

**Patent Leather**

Leather, one surface of which is covered with an integral, flexible, waterproof film which has a lustrous mirror-like surface. The coating was formerly built up by the application of various daubs, varnishes and lacquers, pigmented or non-pigmented, based on linseed oil. Today these may include nitro-cellulose and/or synthetic resins. Laminates coated with a plastics film less than 0.15mm thick may also be classed as patent leather.

**Patina**

A luster or shine that develops with use over time. Usually associated with fine antiques and vintage furniture.

**Pearlized Leather**

Coloured leather with a pearl-like lustre. Pearlescent Leather Coloured leather with a pearl-like lustre.

**Perforated**

In leather, the process of die cutting small holes to form a pattern. The holes can vary in size, density and pattern.

**Pigmented**

Leather that is finished with a solid pigment coating for consistency of color and texture. Pigment may be used to cover imperfections, as well as add protection.

**Plating, Plated Leather**

Pressing leather with a heated metal plate under high pressure. Most furniture leather is usually sanded, pigmented and plated to cover imperfections.

**Printed Leather**

Leather, bearing a surface pattern, produced usually by embossing, but sometimes by other methods, e.g. by silkscreen printing.

**Protected Leather**

Leather in which certain special chemicals have been incorporated to render it less liable to deterioration through exposure to polluted atmospheres.

**Pull-Up**

Describes the behavior of leather that has been treated with oils, waxes, and dyes in such a way that when the leather is pulled or stretched (i.e. on upholstery), the finish becomes lighter in the stretched areas. Considered a mark of high quality.

**Pure Aniline**

Leather that is aniline dyed and receives no additional coloring. Also called full aniline, naked aniline or naked leather.

**Raw Hide**

A hide which has only been treated to preserve it prior to tanning.

**Retan**

A modifying secondary tannage applied after intermediate operations following the primary tanning.

**Round Hand**

A full-handed leather, usually slightly swelled as with vegetable tanning.

**Saddle Leather**

Vegetable-tanned cattlehide leather for harnesses and saddles, usually of a natural tan shade and rather flexible.

**Semi-Aniline**

A semi-aniline leather has been aniline dyed, then slightly pigmented. Because pigment is solid, this type of leather ensures color consistency while having stain and spill resistance.

**Shearling**

Wooled sheep and lambskins, tanned with the wool intact.

**Shrunken Grain Leather**

A full, natural-grain leather which is shrunken to enlarge and enhance the grain of the leather.

**Side Leather**

Grain leather which has been cut in half, forming two sides in order to better accommodate tannery equipment.

**Skive**

To slice or split into a thin layer, or to reduce leather to a specific thickness.

**Snuffed**

The grain surface is abraded with brushes, emery wheel or sandpaper. Leather is snuffed for the purpose of removing defective grain, or for sueding the surface of the leather.

**Split**

A single layer from a hide or skin that has been separated over its whole area into two or more layers. The layers thus obtained are termed: (a) top grain split (outer split); (b) flesh split (inner split); (c) in heavy hides there can also be middle split.

**Split Leather**

Skin sliced in layers to give uniform thickness to the piece (grainside). Split leather (inside) is trimmed and finished as suede. Cheap leathers are sometimes pigmented splits with embossed imitation grain.

**Splitting**

Cutting leather into two or more layers, or cutting leather into two sides preparatory to tanning.

**Steer Hide**

A castrated bull whose hide shows a tight grain structure, making it the ideal choice for leather upholstery.

**Suede**

Leathers that are finished by buffing the flesh side (opposite the grain side) to produce a nap.

**Sueding**

The process of raising fibers on the grain side of a hide or skin to give a velvet nap effect. This is generally called nubuck or grain suede.

**Suede Split**

Leather made from the flesh split of hide or skin and finished with a velvet-like nap normally on the split surface.

**Table Run**

Leathers which are not graded. Cheaper, ungraded leathers sold to manufacturers.

**Tanning**

Process whereby putrescible (perishable) raw hides and skins are converted into leather.

**Top Coat**

A transparent, protective coating applied to the leather surface. May also impart luster to the surface.

**Top Grain**

The term intended to define genuine grain leather, as opposed to split leather which has been pigmented and embossed with a new grain. In reality, top-grain leather usually has had the original grain removed and an imitation grain embossed into the surface.

**Unfinished Leather**

Normally defines aniline dyed, naked leathers with no additional application intended to finish, color or treat in any way that would alter the natural characteristics of the leather.

**Upholstery Leather**

A general term for leather processed for use in furniture, automobiles and airplanes.

**Unprotected Leather**

This leather does not have a protective coating. Unprotected leather features more natural characteristics of the leather, it is typically softer than treated or protected leather. They are more susceptible to fading, staining or soiling.

**Vegetable Tanning**

The conversion of rawhide into leather with a greater body and firmness than the more general method of chromium tanning.

**Weight**

The weight of leather is measured in ounces per square foot.

**Wet Blue Leather**

Leather which after chrome tanning has not been further processed and is sold in the wet condition.