FOR STIFF LEATHER AT HOME

Leather Softening Guide

Leather is soft because oils sit between its fibres. At home you can put some back and help the fibres move again. Go slowly: thin coats and patience beat any quick fix.

1. The 5-step method

1. **Clean**: brush off dust, wipe with a barely damp cloth.
2. **Spot test** the conditioner on a hidden spot.
3. **Condition thinly**: rub in, wait 15–20 min, buff off.
4. **Flex by hand**: bend, roll and squeeze stiff areas.
5. **Use it**, and repeat steps 3–4 after a day if needed.

2. What to use

Safe	Careful	Avoid
Leather conditioner Leather cream Wearing and flexing	Mink oil (darkens) Neatsfoot oil (heavy leather) Saddle soap (cleaner) Water (shaping only)	Hair dryer, heater, sun Vaseline, rubbing alcohol Coconut, olive, mustard oil Ghee, butter

3. By item

Shoes / boots	Condition the flex point, wear with thick socks
Jacket	Collar, cuffs, elbows; then wear
Bag	Stuff with a towel, flex the panels
Belt	Roll both ways, then wear
Gloves / straps	Tiny amount only
Suede / nubuck	No oil: brush only
Faux (PU)	Oils don't work; keep warm, wear

Full guide: How to Soften Leather.

4. Keep it soft

✓ Condition 2–4× a year (more in hot, dry weather)

✓ Keep away from direct sun, heaters, car dashboards

✓ Dry wet leather slowly at room temperature, then condition

✓ Store with air around it; check for mold in humid months

Stiff fast?

Clean, thin coat of conditioner, wrap in a plastic bag overnight, flex well, repeat once or twice. Cracked-through leather cannot be repaired.

SOFTNESS IS BUILT IN AT THE TANNERY

Leather Softness Spec Sheet

You can't add softness after production. Write it into your spec, approve a hand-feel sample, and check every shipment against it.

1. Pick the leather

Leather	Typical thickness	Best for	Hand-feel
Lambskin	0.6–0.9 mm	High-end jackets, designer gloves, luxury bags	Softest, buttery, drapes well
Goatskin	0.7–1.0 mm	Fine jackets, shoe uppers/linings, small goods	Soft but strong, pebbled
Cowhide (garment)	0.9–1.2 mm	Jackets	Firmer; needs extra fatliquor + long milling
Cowhide (heavy)	1.2–1.8 mm+	Biker jackets, bags, boots	Firm; softens with use

2. Your softness spec

Style / article no.	_____
Hide	☐ Lamb ☐ Goat ☐ Cow ☐ Other
Thickness (mm, ± tolerance)	_____
Hand-feel	☐ Buttery soft ☐ Soft ☐ Medium ☐ Firm
Milling	☐ Milled / tumbled grain ☐ Smooth (not milled) ☐ Ask tannery
Finish	☐ Aniline ☐ Semi-aniline ☐ Light pigment ☐ Pigmented
Reference sample	Approved hand-feel swatch no. _____ date _____

3. Check every shipment

- ☐ Compare 3 random pieces with the approved hand-feel swatch
- ☐ Bend a corner: no cracking or "boardy" feel
- ☐ Thickness within tolerance (measure 5 points)
- ☐ Stiff batch? Ask for re-conditioning (12–14% moisture) and re-milling before cutting

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