



LEATHER DEFINITIONS

REAL LEATHER 101

Leather is the finest upholstery material you can find. It is a perfect fit for any room of your home or office or lodge. The strongest upholstery material known to man will withstand the rigors of daily life, including children, spills, and pets. Although the principal outlay of quality leather may be more than fabric upholstery, leather is actually your best deal over time.

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Faux leather is a substance that looks very similar to leather, with very different properties. Sometimes, this is known as pleather. Faux leather is typically made out of vinyl and fibers to make it look more realistic. Start the hottest trends create satchels and clutches and with the best for the less.

This Upholstery Weight, Flannel Backed Faux Leathers Have a soft hand and is Perfect for Upholstering

Important Definitions

When making a leather furniture choice, various materials may meet your requirements. This information is intended to help you determine what product you are being offered and to assist you in deciding what you want in your home based on your budget, needs and an informed understanding of various product types.

The following terms are often used to describe the differences in furniture leather and other upholstery products:

GreenGuard Certification: <http://www.greenguard.org/en/CertificationPrograms.aspx>

Top-grain leather:

This leather comes from the outermost upper layer of the cowhide, and is the only leather recommended for all high quality sofa leather. The best top-grain hides reflect that the animal has lived in an environment that resulted in limited scratches, insect bites or other damage. These hides can be minimally processed and used in their most natural form. Generally, less processing allows the hide to be softer and display a more natural character.

Corrected Leather:

Corrected leather has been significantly processed so that lower quality top-grain hides may be used. Corrected means the application of more chemicals and paint, the stamping of an artificial texture and other processes. This tends to produce leather that is not as soft as less-processed top-grain but has a more uniform look and finish, making the product very durable. Corrected leather allows for a lower price for the final product. It is often best suited for recreational rooms or other places that require exceptional durability.

Protected Leather:

This is simply another way of saying "corrected" leather, except it may not be limited to top-grain. It refers to the fact that enough paint or other finish was applied to make the surface more durable than a more natural and less-processed leather.



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Split Leather:

The process of tanning leather involves reducing the hide to the thickness required for upholstered products. The back of an animal has a thicker skin, so it is “split” to create a piece of leather out of this extra thickness. This is real leather but has no natural surface and lacks the strength of top-grain leather. Split leather is processed by correcting the leather, giving it a stamped and painted surface that approximates a top grain, and then used for the backs and sides of sofas to reduce the cost of the final product. This use is legitimate and appropriate but the consumer should be informed when split leather is used.

Leather-Match:

This term is used to describe an upholstered product where a portion of the product is real leather but the back, sides or less visible parts are constructed of an artificial material, usually vinyl. It is matched to look like leather. Leather-match is often used on motion furniture or recliners but can be used on any upholstered product. It is a method of creating a product that offers the sight and touch of real sofa leather but significantly reduces the final price.

Aniline Leather

Leather that has been dyed through with aniline dyes. Pure aniline leathers represent approximately 5% of all upholstery leathers produced worldwide. Sometimes topped with a protective coating; can also be waxed. Aniline leather will allow all natural characteristics of a hide to show through.

Antiqued

Leather that is dyed with one color over another (usually darker over lighter) so as to create rich highlights and an artificial aged appearance. Also called

Bovine

A cow, ox, or closely related animal.

Brahma

Brahma is one of the most popular breeds of cattle raised around the world. Due to its greater ability to withstand heat, parasites and insects, it is a preferable breed to be raised in warmer climates. As a result, Brahma hides are typically in good supply and provide a raw material source for entry-level leather hides. The Brahma has a distinct large hump over the top of its shoulder and neck. This hump leaves a narrow gap in the leather hide made from Brahma, but can be worked around, as long as one plans use of materials properly.

Breathability

An imperfection, characterized by a ridge or mark running in the crosswise or lengthwise directions of the fabric. The movement of water or water vapor from one side of the leather to the other, caused by capillary action, wicking, chemical, or electrostatic action. Also known as moisture transport.

Buffed

Leather which has been abraded or sueded. This can also be referred to as snuffed, nubuck leather, or grain-sueded leather.

Corrected Grain

Leather that has been buffed to remove blemishes, then covered with a new, artificial grain created using pigments and other finishes. The outside skin is sanded or abraded to minimize faults. It is then pigmented to cover the sanding and printed with an artificial grain. A spray sealer topcoat is then applied. Corrected grain material is usually called top grain leather.



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Cowhide

Hide from a mature cow that has produced a calf.

Embossed Grain

An artificial grain pressed into the surface of leather from which the original grain has been removed. This provides a consistent appearance throughout the hide, covering any natural defects.

Embossing

A calendering process in which fabrics, vinyls or leathers are engraved with the use of heated rollers under pressure to produce a raised design on the fabric surface.

Embossed Leather

Leather that has been "stamped" with a design or artificial texture under very high pressure. Used, for example, to create imitation alligator hide.

Finish

A surface application on the leather to color, protect, or mask imperfections. Any enhancing effect applied to leather after it has been tanned. Examples are dyeing, embossing, buffing, antiquing, waxing, waterproofing, and so on.

Full Grain

The term used for the finest, strongest grade of leather. Leather made from 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.

Tipped

Leather that has had a coloring, glaze or other finish applied to the uppermost surface of its grain, affecting only the "peak" but not the "valleys". This can create an interesting dual-tone or high-low effect, enhancing the natural grain.

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.

Vegetable Tanning

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

Bi-cast Leather:

This product comes in roll form like a fabric rather than the shape of an animal hide. It is really a plastic product that contains leather but in a manner where the customer neither can see nor feel the leather. The product uses the lower-value and lower-cost split leather as the backing of the product and creates a finish by applying a sheet of plastic on the front surface, usually polyurethane (PU), to provide the color, texture and strength. This product tends to be fairly stiff and is usually produced in dark colors only.



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ReCast

It's difficult to tell the difference between real leather upholstery and ReCast® faux leather upholstery. Made with recycled leather particles adhered to the back of the fabric, ReCast contains about 18% recycled leather. ReCast faux leather upholstery's polyurethane surface gives it exceptional performance qualities and a true leather-like feel. Each pattern has tremendous physical properties, is easy to clean, and will easily exceed 100,000 Wyzenbeek abrasion cycles. Fabric faux leather upholstery can be used on any application where traditional leather would be used, such as sofas, love seats, sectionals, recliners, club chairs, occasional chairs, headboards, and even some light commercial applications for offices, hotel room chairs and lobby seating.

Fabric comes in a wide variety of colors ranging from rich earth tones (think deep browns, maroons and tans,) to metallic's, as well as bold, bright colors, pastels and white. So go ahead, revel in the exceptional design possibilities of ReCast® leather upholstery fabric. Re-cast or by-cast leather is sold by the running yard.

The face is 100% polyurethane, which is what Ultra leather is made of. The backing is 18 to 20% real leather which has been ground up and processed into a backing material. You really need to see what you're getting before you buy it. recast leather, also called Bycast, Bicast or PU leather, there are hundreds of different colors and grains available. It is fabric with a 100% polyurethane face (like Ultra leather) with a backing of recycled actual leather.

Historically, when faced with the choices for a synthetic substitute for leather, the design community has turned to polyurethane and pvc products. These leather alternatives have the advantage of being more affordable, but no one enjoys the feeling of their thighs peeling off of a vinyl couch cushion in the middle of summer. Recycled leather called "Recast." Not only is this product beautiful and affordable, it is also eco-friendly and sustainable. Recast is made by incorporating ground post-industrial leather onto the back of a 100% polyurethane base. Does that make Recast a type of "steer-veneer?"

This process creates a product so leather-like, it is difficult to tell the difference between genuine leather and Recast. Currently, it is available in 25 combinations of natural grains and designer colors. And with an abrasion rating of 100,000 double rubs, Recast is an ideal choice for any rough and tumble lifestyle project or the contract and hospitality market. Isn't modern technology a beautiful thing?!

Bonded Leather:

The term serves no purpose other than to permit the use of the word "leather" to be associated with the product. This is really a PU (polyurethane) product that has leather shavings sprayed onto the back. The top layer showing the outer color and texture is PU. The strength and carrier of the product is a thin fabric in the center. The leather shavings are applied on the back as described.

Bonded Leather Match:

This is a construction where some bonded leather is used on a product and the balance is normally the same product without leather shavings. The purpose of the match is to reduce cost, while the purpose of the bonded leather is to allow the term "leather" to be associated with what is essentially a plastic or PU product. The product may be attractive and appropriate for certain consumer applications but it is not leather.



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Polyurethane (PU):

This is a very effective form of plastic that can be applied to fabric or other products to create beautiful and durable surfaces. The product is considered safe if appropriate materials and dyes are used, and is recommended for applications that are price-sensitive and require a high degree of durability. PU is very versatile. It can be made to replicate leather, suede and any number of other surfaces.

Vinyl:

A product similar to PU but normally not as durable or versatile. It is normally lower in cost than PU so is used for “match” applications where strength is not an issue. It can be made to replicate leather, suede and any number of other surfaces.

PVC:

Polyvinyl Chloride is also manufactured in a similar manner but is normally placed on a cotton or polyester backing. Pattern can also be applied to the surface. PVC can be a more durable surface than PU, but does not feel like leather. Also referred to as Vinyl covering for Furniture use. It can be made to replicate leather, suede and any number of other surfaces.

Nubuck:

This is a term that has historically been associated with suede leather but is not a legal term. It is sometimes used for artificially produced forms of suede. If the price is exceptionally low, it is likely not real leather.

Proprietary Terms: Manufacturers of non-leather products and producers of finished upholstered product frequently develop their own proprietary terms to describe their product (i.e. using invented names, such as combining “new” and “hide” with creative spelling.) As you can imagine, a frequent characteristic of these names is the tendency to use terms that imply strength and durability, or are associated with leather. Typically none of these names apply to real leather. The product they describe is usually a bonded leather or a polyurethane product. The product itself may be appropriate but the consumer should seek clarity as to what the product really is constructed of.