

## Leather care and maintenance

The first rule of leather care is to store your items dry. Moisture will kill your leather quicker than using it as it was intended. We'll look at more but I like to start with that, it'll save you lots of aggravation in the future.

Many leather items have specific care instructions so you'll want to try to follow the makers guidelines as best you can. However, there are lots of things about your leather gear that are pretty universal and that's what we'll cover here.

We mentioned dry which is a baseline but we want them clean too. Dirt and grime will abrade your gear and wear it prematurely. So at a minimum, we want to clean off dirt and let it dry. How?

At a bare minimum, use a soft-ish brush to get the dirt off. This is of particular concern for shoes. Belts, straps and armour birst are more likely to get sweaty than dirty.

For the sweaty bits, wipe them off to remove as much as you can and let them dry. Your armour bag stinks because it needs air. ☺

For the most basic first line of cleaning after a brush, a moist (not sopping wet) cloth is a good start after the brush. Wipe off mud dirt and sweat and let it dry. Old t-shirts are great, paper towels, not so much.

Just these steps alone will make your gear last longer. We'll move on to better and deeper methods to really keep your gear working for you for years to come.

If your item is moldy, time to break out the white vinegar. Wipe on and off for surfaces and use a brush on seams, heavy mold and for shoes where the upper meets the sole. If you don't get it all, it will come back when you store it. Be generous with the vinegar. Though it tends to dry out the leather, you're going to re add that moisture with one of the oils mentioned below. Move from vinegar to saddle soap to oil.

What products should I use on my stuff? Great question and a little hard to answer because there are so many products out there and lots of folks have favorites. I'm not here to be the absolute last word but I know that what I'm sharing works. If you have other products, go nuts. Storing gear wet kills it far quicker than any particular leather care product.

### Cleaning

Brush, soft cloth, moist cloth for initial basic cleaning.

For a more thorough cleaning, I am a fan of Saddle Soap. It's readily available from a variety of makers and usually requires application with a damp sponge or cloth and working into the leather and letting it dry and then is finished by buffing it off with a dry soft cloth. There are spray on varieties as well and they work similarly – spray, wipe, buff.

### Cleaning

There are a variety of glycerin based products that function similarly. I have one by Leather Coatings Inc and it's easy to apply. Just spray and wipe. Saddle soap from a tin works better but it takes a little more time and effort.

### Preserving

Lots of opinions on the topic but wet dry cycles, sweat and abuse all take their toll on leather gear. If you use it and clean it, it will degrade if you don't do something to preserve it. There are lots of products available and any is far better than none.

(cont'd)

## Preserving (cont'd)

Oil(s) are your first line of defense. Neatsfoot oil and mink oil are two of the most common and widely available. After cleaning and drying, simply wipe on and wipe off after it gets a chance to soak in a bit. I don't recommend olive oil. There are lots of varieties and I've seen them go bad (get stinky) after time. You're unlikely to hurt your leather it's just that there are better choices.

If you have gear with a fancier surface like a belt or exposed strap, any of the finishes leather belt makers use will be a good choice. Basic Tandy top coats work or Tokonole from Japan is a good choice. Either will provide a little water resistance and the Tokonole is great for burnishing belt and strap edges.

One caveat about any of the top dressing items I've mentioned. They are all likely to darken your leather a bit. It's unlikely to be a great concern but if the hue and color of your leather gear is a high priority, apply the products on a test piece or on an unobtrusive section of your item.

Feel free to reach out if you have a question about a product or process, happy to toss my coins into the mix.

For RUM, 11.9.24

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Referenced supplies. You can get these from a wide variety of sources, none are all that obscure or unusual. I'm using Amazon because it's ubiquitous.

### Saddle Soap

[https://www.amazon.com/Fiebings-Saddle-Soap-3-5-Oz/dp/B001CS6HH4/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?crid=D7ZQ6Q01IEAK&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.EmrGGsvdwnKO1DEGuSiEq6vc\\_fZP7nlfGCjMOksEzinTECegb-6xDhbaLfB3yYTeP2qkmj8LKyEkRVfkHWA\\_y281dI2z2i5EbxUFX8rR-gSovY-pBBFPh084KjgXO28TSXHCzxaJ5Suewhx\\_hfZ8ZsaVn2T1J3SapG1wsXn1cZXhRHPdfe7ClnIM3aZGQTnLpRG7n2xEIKGrrEdRqvESjEpnOA7jvH12jgunCPFcbQmHSCUARKSJB90vhxFfmSIn07teu\\_VcPEHAjAn9zruWa20\\_svA-ixBToDmdgTi4Y.yUIOzTSuE8W1YkhrHAKVY0D0JpCQ-j7F-QcObtwuDE&dib\\_tag=se&keywords=saddle+soap+for+leather&qid=1730926575&srefix=saddle+soa%2Caps%2C230&sr=8-5](https://www.amazon.com/Fiebings-Saddle-Soap-3-5-Oz/dp/B001CS6HH4/ref=sr_1_5?crid=D7ZQ6Q01IEAK&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.EmrGGsvdwnKO1DEGuSiEq6vc_fZP7nlfGCjMOksEzinTECegb-6xDhbaLfB3yYTeP2qkmj8LKyEkRVfkHWA_y281dI2z2i5EbxUFX8rR-gSovY-pBBFPh084KjgXO28TSXHCzxaJ5Suewhx_hfZ8ZsaVn2T1J3SapG1wsXn1cZXhRHPdfe7ClnIM3aZGQTnLpRG7n2xEIKGrrEdRqvESjEpnOA7jvH12jgunCPFcbQmHSCUARKSJB90vhxFfmSIn07teu_VcPEHAjAn9zruWa20_svA-ixBToDmdgTi4Y.yUIOzTSuE8W1YkhrHAKVY0D0JpCQ-j7F-QcObtwuDE&dib_tag=se&keywords=saddle+soap+for+leather&qid=1730926575&srefix=saddle+soa%2Caps%2C230&sr=8-5)

### Tokonole

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B017X8GL6S/ref=ppx\\_yo\\_dt\\_b\\_search\\_asin\\_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B017X8GL6S/ref=ppx_yo_dt_b_search_asin_title?ie=UTF8&psc=1)

### Mink oil

[https://www.amazon.com/Fiebings-Mink-Oil-Paste-Oz/dp/B000HJBKU8/ref=sr\\_1\\_16?dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.zZSemz4ep5syCwKokk93w6FQ5WeUeqQt86Q\\_NCrk3JvUCEahnzFAF1WPXWSJv25pJFy6wNqe8jF8v7o0jFESWM5IylS8wL\\_OUffLPePjfm67GtCngBoLm1Cwn4d1tPnBwOVB4A3z9Mw8k\\_qa1MOygnPmq155P7Zpuk9ijtfnRwdKTK6xqs78a-qEotiilfo2zFiCKzPOFmzLXnjxtRgort9Mmnr3xELItUrDGQM-Dvg777FBHlbWuYZ8FLGe37W6QBAuvGLj2SUM7rrb4n3hUQF5Qo0NI4NZpY0z5oCqL.IjSn56wKMjjiO1uFTZGhfCIPKeLucibx5vdQRZxZwW\\_c&dib\\_tag=se&keywords=mink%2Boil&qid=1730925517&sr=8-16&th=1](https://www.amazon.com/Fiebings-Mink-Oil-Paste-Oz/dp/B000HJBKU8/ref=sr_1_16?dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.zZSemz4ep5syCwKokk93w6FQ5WeUeqQt86Q_NCrk3JvUCEahnzFAF1WPXWSJv25pJFy6wNqe8jF8v7o0jFESWM5IylS8wL_OUffLPePjfm67GtCngBoLm1Cwn4d1tPnBwOVB4A3z9Mw8k_qa1MOygnPmq155P7Zpuk9ijtfnRwdKTK6xqs78a-qEotiilfo2zFiCKzPOFmzLXnjxtRgort9Mmnr3xELItUrDGQM-Dvg777FBHlbWuYZ8FLGe37W6QBAuvGLj2SUM7rrb4n3hUQF5Qo0NI4NZpY0z5oCqL.IjSn56wKMjjiO1uFTZGhfCIPKeLucibx5vdQRZxZwW_c&dib_tag=se&keywords=mink%2Boil&qid=1730925517&sr=8-16&th=1)

### Neatsfoot Oil

[https://www.amazon.com/Fiebings-025784300603-Neatsfoot-Oil/dp/B0044ULDAS/ref=sr\\_1\\_5?crid=2WP0B65KQ5SII&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.zlcrwmlckWuxCryvOzzdq4pyjuAyXgD2eEnUdLYjvwRfOLTpbzFv4dyRO85gzEPo7mclIQ2gr8Fe3heOOMBewuKaz-au2aPbTjuyBL7zhqO499Nh\\_3tG\\_nR3YiAXXP8fr9nLzA\\_XITAG6J9QvNPDajJJ018veZd-pyMdGnPLiW6J73AeVTUqO71CLZrWMGYXqj4XnYGSK17fvZaUyhOBCF-gbe9FCkiFhYgW\\_XWSn-6xaRZB55yR9ZmrDirt8Bdtzprl5OAX6Qmf9T00pCzE7PHUtie-oyhdMqtKRIMcAKU.me26v5yzK5t7obyIVVzevgc5MZgE7vLkRhJs0lgExDY&dib\\_tag=se&keywords=neatsfoot+oil&qid=1730925571&srefix=neats%2Caps%2C234&sr=8-5](https://www.amazon.com/Fiebings-025784300603-Neatsfoot-Oil/dp/B0044ULDAS/ref=sr_1_5?crid=2WP0B65KQ5SII&dib=eyJ2IjoiMSJ9.zlcrwmlckWuxCryvOzzdq4pyjuAyXgD2eEnUdLYjvwRfOLTpbzFv4dyRO85gzEPo7mclIQ2gr8Fe3heOOMBewuKaz-au2aPbTjuyBL7zhqO499Nh_3tG_nR3YiAXXP8fr9nLzA_XITAG6J9QvNPDajJJ018veZd-pyMdGnPLiW6J73AeVTUqO71CLZrWMGYXqj4XnYGSK17fvZaUyhOBCF-gbe9FCkiFhYgW_XWSn-6xaRZB55yR9ZmrDirt8Bdtzprl5OAX6Qmf9T00pCzE7PHUtie-oyhdMqtKRIMcAKU.me26v5yzK5t7obyIVVzevgc5MZgE7vLkRhJs0lgExDY&dib_tag=se&keywords=neatsfoot+oil&qid=1730925571&srefix=neats%2Caps%2C234&sr=8-5)