

Leather Care 101 - Claw 2024

This is a brief introduction to caring for multiple different kinds of leather. Properly caring for leather is the best way to make it last many years, from high shine to oil-tan and many other materials and styles. Learn as The MessyLittleBootblack shares his knowledge and teaches you the bare basics of leather care and a bootblack's role in the leather community.

I. Products

Disclaimer: Every bootblack or person caring for leather has their own products that they like to use for their own personal reasons. While some may be....less wise...to use, this doesn't necessarily mean that one product is better than the other. These are the products that I prefer and I'll discuss why during the class.

A. Cleaners

1. Glycerin soap - melted down from cubes - can be found at any craft store in the soap making aisle or on Amazon
2. Tide Color Safe with Bleach Alternatives laundry detergent for stitching (especially colored stitching like Doc Martens)

B. Hard Wax Polishes

1. Lincoln Stain Wax Polish
2. Saphir Mirror Gloss
3. Kiwi Shoe Polish - black, brown, or neutral

C. Cream Polish

1. Saphir Creme Surfine
2. Tarrago Shoe Cream

D. Conditioners/Grease

1. Huberd's Shoe Grease
2. Obenauf's Heavy Duty LP
3. Obenauf's Leather Oil
4. Black Gold Leather Conditioner
5. Saphir Reptan
6. Angelus Reptile & Exotic Skin Cream & Conditioner
7. Leather honey

II. Step 1...CLEAN IT! You can't put polish/product over mud or dirt....it'll just come off and look gross!

III. Great...Now what types of leather are there and what do I do with it??

- A. "Hi-Shine" - Polish it
- B. Oil Tanned - Condition/grease it
- C. Suede vs Roughed Out - Treated the same using a suede brush kit or a hard bristle brush

1. Suede = buffed out/split away from the grain
 2. Roughed Out = the side that was connected to the animal
 3. Boots/shoes vs toys
 - a) Boots - see above
 - b) Toys - can usually be cleaned, dried, and then conditioned with a soft conditioner like Obenauf's...it feels amazing and smells amazing!
 - D. "Exotics" (snake skin, alligator, turtle, ostrich, kangaroo, etc) - use proper exotics products
 - E. "Vegan" leather/pleather - There's not much you can do with this...I recommend a vehicle cleaner like Armor All
- IV. How do I know the difference??
- A. Feel and look, mostly. Maybe even a product description/tag!
- V. Do I treat different colors differently??
- A. For garments, use a conditioner that doesn't change the color (like Obenauf's)
- B. Boots/shoes can also be taken care of with Obenauf's LP or a neutral color polish/cream if it's hi shine
- C. Remember that brown leather will darken with cleaning/conditioning...it's okay! It'll return to the lighter shade as the conditioner sets and dries.
- VI. Is there a difference between garment leather and boots/shoes?
- A. Coats, vests, bags, gloves, etc are bendy and usually can't be shined with wax polish. These are usually going to be oil tanned leather and can be taken care of with regular conditioner.
- VII. WHAT DO I DO IF I SCREW UP???
- A. Short of tearing it to pieces, there is nothing that you can do to a piece of leather that an experienced bootblack can't fix.
- B. When in doubt, find an experienced bootblack!
- VIII. Where can I learn more?
- A. Beyond Bootblackening by Daddy Wendell (around \$15.95 on Amazon)
- B. YouTube (Leather Archives & Museum has a Bootblack Series and IMBB'22 is on YouTube @alleatherhiraeth7735)
- C. TikTok (I recommend @buckharder)
- D. Bootblack socials online
- E. Come chat at events!
1. Bootblack social at CLAW'24 is Friday from 8-9pm

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