



whitepapers
by Beacon®

Leather

DIFFERENT GRADES OF LEATHER



When it comes to leather products, you hear a lot of different terms describing the leather and see a lot of different price points. So why is that? We will walk you through the different leather types so you have a better understanding of the differences and the quality of the different leather types. Understanding the various leather types will also help in understanding the price variations.

What are the different grades of leathers that are available?

Answers given starting with lowest quality to the highest.

Bonded Leather

It is made of bits and scraps of leather that are then “bonded” together with polyurethane binders into a single piece of leather. In the manufacturing process, it is made to look like a single piece of leather, but it lacks the strength of a single piece of hide. The varying degree of organic leather in the mix affects the smell and texture of each product.

Split Grain Leather

Manufacturers typically split hide into the outer layer and inner layer. The outer layer is top grain and the inner layer of the hide is called split grain leather. Because it is a single piece of hide, instead of multiple pieces bonded together, split grain offers more strength and better life than bonded leather. Something labeled “genuine leather” is usually a split grain material.

Top Grain Leather

This is the most common type used in high-end leather products. These products are made from the outer layer of the hide; sanded, buffed, stamped or sprayed to hide imperfections in the leather. Top grain leather is stronger than split grain leather because this outer layer of the hide is the most durable. It typically is less expensive than full grain leather and has greater resistance to stains, as long as the finish remains unbroken.

Full Grain Leather

Leather that is made from the outer layer of the hide and has NOT been sanded, buffed or snuffed to remove imperfections. The beauty of the natural markings is left untouched. Full grain leather is the highest quality leather because it offers strength, durability and appearance. The natural state of the full grain leather with its imperfections and blemishes can be deceiving, since it is the most expensive. It's important to keep in mind that full grain leathers are different in that what looks to be an imperfection or defect is considered character that adds to the beauty of the leather.



Which leather grade is the best quality and why?

Answer: Full grain leather is the outer layer of the hide and offers strength, durability and appearance.

Why is leather so popular?

Answer: Leather is popular because it always looks good, feels good and most importantly, it out performs any man-made material. Most top quality leather goods will last for years, if not a lifetime with proper care.

Why does leather smell like . . . leather?

Answer: Leather is organic and is treated in many different ways. All the dyes, treatments, leather bathes and chemicals have their own smell. These liquids soak into the hide, mixing with the leather smell. Some leather smells stronger than others, depending on how it was treated. Leather breathes and is always letting out a little bit of the animal hide smell. Leather should have a mild, easy on the nose smell or none at all.

Case Study

A manufacturing plant had several retirements of long-term employees. The HR Director selected the D307 Romeo Canyon Rolling Carry-On as the thank you gift for their many years of dedicated service. She felt it was the perfect gift as the employees expressed their desire to do more traveling in retirement. She also felt the quality product and craftsmanship would match their long-term commitment to the company.



LEATHER COLOR & TEXTURE



How does the leather get its color?

Answer: The leather hides are stripped of all colors and then drum dyed with color and pigment to ensure color consistency. The pigment ensures fade resistance and helps the leather wear over time. You can expect color variation from hide to hide; due to the fact leather is a natural product and will absorb dye differently.

What is drum dyeing?

Answer: Leather is soaked in a large drum to allow the dye to penetrate all the way through the hide. The advantage here is if the top layer of the leather product gets scratched, the layer underneath is the same color, so it is not as visible.

How is leather made soft and pliable?

Answer: This is part of the finishing process. A variety of coatings are placed on the leather to protect the leather and produce effects pleasing to the eye and hand. The end use of the leather determines the type of finish process to be applied. Each type requires different physical properties in the finish. Flexibility and resistance to water and wear are a few of the required properties in the finish.

How should leather products be cleaned?

Answer: Use a reputable wax-free leather conditioner to clean most types of leather. Test the conditioner in a hidden area with a soft, clean cloth to ensure the conditioner is compatible with the leather. Once you have determined the leather conditioner is compatible with your leather item, follow the instructions on the leather conditioner.