

Advice and Tips / Automotive Leather

What is the difference between automotive leather and furniture leather?

Apart from the price, the difference is quite significant, especially in the manufacturing technology, which results in different parameters and properties of the finished leathers. For this reason, furniture leather in any form is clearly unsuitable for use in automobiles. Its application in cars can be compared to wearing summer shoes in winter.

The properties of furniture leather—particularly its resistance to abrasion, insufficient lightfastness, and excessively high fat content—do not allow it to fulfill the essential functions required of materials used in the interiors of cars and airplanes, or on motorcycles and boats. Although furniture leather feels softer and more pleasant to the touch, its less durable surface absorbs and releases too much moisture, which is unacceptable in a car, especially in damp and cold seasons. In hot summers it dries out excessively, and in winter it “soaks up” moisture. The greater stretchability of furniture leather also leads, over time, to creasing of the seating surfaces and sagging of the upholstery.

During fluctuations in humidity and temperature, as well as under extreme light conditions—particularly in the summer heat, when car windows act partly like magnifying glasses and “burn” the interior—the different characteristics of automotive and furniture leathers become fully apparent. Naturally, the greatest differences in these materials can be observed in extreme situations, such as an accident or fire, when automotive leather, thanks to its impregnation and different production technology, demonstrates its reserves and qualities in the form of incomparably higher resistance and strength in terms of safety.

Therefore, when deciding on any modification of leather upholstery, always make sure the right material is used, preferably from a certified manufacturer. The consequences of a wrong decision are usually borne entirely by the end user, who thereby unnecessarily endangers their own safety and health.

In residential interiors with stable temperature and relatively constant humidity, one can fully enjoy the softness and luxury of furniture leather. In cars, however, its use is more of a risk than an alternative. The apparent economic savings ultimately result in long-term deterioration of the overall utility properties of the upholstery, and thus of the entire vehicle.

In conclusion, automotive leathers, which are on average more expensive due to the demanding technology of their production and the costly protective agents and pigments used, find their justified application in the demanding conditions of automotive interiors. Furniture leathers should remain true to their name—*furniture*—and be used exclusively for seating furniture in residential and office interiors.

A good sign of proper materials and finishing techniques being used is the upholsterer’s willingness to provide the customer with an appropriate warranty.

Is it possible to use automotive leather for furniture upholstery?

Yes. In more demanding usage conditions, it can sometimes be an ideal solution. Offices, retail or public spaces that require the use of noble materials for the sake of exclusivity, but where careful handling and perfect maintenance cannot be guaranteed, are places where the qualities of automotive leather can be truly appreciated.

Is it necessary to care for leather regularly?

Yes, leather requires a minimum level of regular maintenance. In automobiles, it is advisable, when washing the car, to wipe the leather with a damp—but not wet—cloth to remove visible dirt residues. This prevents these particles from rubbing against the leather surface and thus reduces wear. With frequent use, it is recommended to treat the leather in the vehicle no more than once per quarter with a thin layer of leather care cream, which is commonly available at better petrol stations. The investment in such a product, sometimes amounting to several hundred crowns, will certainly pay off in the long term. Leather should never be cleaned with abrasive pastes, soaps with a non-neutral pH, or technical cleaners (such as thinners).

Is it possible to wash leather?

In principle, no. It can, of course, be cleaned with a damp cloth, but not a wet one. Otherwise, the leather may become “soaked through,” which can temporarily alter its elasticity and significantly increase the likelihood of mechanical damage.

Does leather retain heat in summer or cold in winter?

No. On the contrary, leather is characterized by its ability to adapt its temperature to the human body. The common belief that leather feels cold in winter is merely a very short-term subjective impression experienced by a person sitting in a cold car interior. At that moment, the leather has the same temperature as the surrounding environment, but very quickly it assumes the temperature of the human body. In fact, leather cools down or warms up on average very rapidly—faster even than most materials used in the automotive sector.

Furniture Leather

Care of Furniture Leather

Leather, as a unique natural and still irreplaceable material, deserves proper care in terms of maintenance—though not excessive care. Enjoying its pleasant properties and exceptional qualities in any form, whether on seating sets in a home environment or in offices and hotels, requires at least minimal maintenance and adherence to a few basic rules:

- In interiors, try to maintain humidity at a reasonable and optimal level for the human body (min. 50–60%). In the case of automobiles, this issue has already been addressed by the manufacturer using special technology.
- Do not expose leather furniture to direct heat radiation. Place it at least 20–30 cm away from heating or warming devices.
- Protect leather from prolonged intense sunlight.
- Do not use aggressive cleaning agents on leather surfaces, such as stain removers, degreasers, solvents, turpentine, shoe creams, etc. This rule applies to all types of leathers, though aniline, semi-aniline, and nubuck leathers require even greater attention in this regard.
- Avoid rough brushing or scrubbing of the leather furniture surface.

Sometimes too much emphasis is placed on cleaning leather. A leather sofa does not need to be cleaned more often than other types of furniture. Frequent wiping unnecessarily wears down its protective coating and thereby partly reduces its lifespan. On the other hand, neglecting leather and allowing it to become excessively soiled clogs its pores, causing it to harden, dry out, and crack. The best approach is to clean a leather sofa with a quality leather care product once or twice a year, and in the case of new furniture, for the first time only after six months of regular use.

In automotive interiors, foam cleaners are used; however, caution is needed with products containing silicone. While they may beautify leather in the short term, in the long run they damage it, making it sticky. To maintain elasticity and a pleasant tactile feel, it is advisable to use specialized products containing natural leather fats, which restore suppleness and flexibility.

Stain Removal

Liquids, food residues, alcohol, or greasy stains should be removed immediately with a cloth. Distilled water can be used, as it does not leave marks on the leather. When cleaning, apply the water over a larger area (e.g., the entire backrest) so that the dirt disperses evenly. Allow the area to dry and, if necessary, repeat the procedure. Never brush dirty leather!

If needed, for example with dried food residues, a lukewarm solution of non-alkaline soap may be used. After cleaning, rub the surface with a wool cloth. The leather can then be treated with a thin layer of protective product designed for leather furniture. Do not use other products or chemicals. However, this method must never be used on aniline leathers, which are very sensitive, as water and soap solution can permanently damage them.

In the case of more pronounced greasy stains, such as from butter, chocolate, or milk, do not be alarmed if you cannot remove them completely. After a few weeks of use, the leather will partially absorb and disperse the stain, making it barely or scarcely visible.

In some cases, professional assistance is irreplaceable. Therefore, if stain removal appears to be an insurmountable problem, contact a company experienced in leather cleaning. Stain removal can be

particularly difficult for dried sweat, blood, ink, ballpoint pen, ointments, or medicines. Professional help is also required for treating scratches. Your leather furniture retailer will certainly be able to advise you in this regard.

Do not overdo cleaning—natural leather maintains its attractive appearance for a very long time on its own. Do not use waxes, polishes, or pastes. Shoe care products do not work on furniture and automotive leathers the same way they do on footwear, and therefore must not be used. Avoid universal cleaners available on the market as well. Furniture products and waxes often contain silicone, which can temporarily create a nice optical effect. In the long term, however, it causes the leather to develop an unpleasant sticky feel, and its visual properties soon deteriorate.

Basic Types of Leather

Aniline Leather



This is natural full-grain leather, very soft to the touch, produced from the finest hides. It is dyed in wooden barrels, where it acquires its final color and exceptional optical qualities. A typical feature of aniline leather is its preserved original natural surface and slight color variations resulting from the barrel-dyeing process.

Compared to other types, aniline leather is less resistant to mechanical damage and, due to its open structure, more sensitive to external influences, making it more demanding in terms of maintenance. However, in terms of comfort, pleasant feel, optical characteristics, and exclusivity, it is without a doubt the best alternative for the discerning customer.

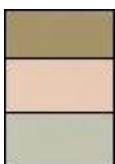
Semi-Aniline Leather



Semi-aniline finishing gives natural full-grain leather the appearance of aniline leather, but its surface is additionally pigmented. This pigmentation ensures a more even distribution of dye during the barrel-dyeing process, increases the leather's resistance to external influences, and thereby improves its properties for everyday use.

This treatment represents an effort to preserve the remarkable qualities of aniline leathers while enhancing durability and overall utility. Semi-aniline leather is very pleasant to the touch and optically attractive, though more homogeneous in appearance than aniline leather.

Corrected Grain Leather



Corrected finishing gives the surface of leather an elegance and uniformity that natural leather in its raw state does not achieve. A suitable embossing (grain pattern) ensures not only the desired appearance but also a pleasant feel to the touch, while eliminating optical defects. This type of leather is the most widely used, primarily due to its lower purchase price. Nevertheless, it meets all the requirements placed on natural leather and is available

in a very wide range of colors and grain patterns.

Nubuck



Nubuck is characterized by its matte and velvety surface. The grain side of the leather is lightly sanded (buffed), which gives it an elegant appearance. On the other hand, it is demanding in terms of maintenance and less resistant to soiling. The more complex production technology is reflected in its somewhat higher price.

Pull-Up Leather (Waxed/Oiled Leather)

This is a type of aniline leather (described above) whose surface is treated with oil and/or wax. It retains all the natural features of leather, such as scratches, scars, wrinkles, etc. Its properties are similar to those of pure aniline leather, with the difference that in areas of frequent use (for example, seating surfaces), the oil is pressed out, leaving lighter spots on the leather. These areas are also more prone to scratches. Pull-up leather requires regular maintenance to preserve its qualities.

Alcantara



Alcantara is not a natural but a synthetic material. Due to its surface, which closely resembles nubuck, it is often mistakenly considered to be buffed leather. When maintaining this textile, regular vacuuming is necessary, and it is occasionally recommended to wipe its surface with a slightly damp cloth. In the case of stains, unlike genuine leather, it is possible to use cleaning agents intended for textiles—though always with moderation.

There are several materials on the market similar to Alcantara in both nature and quality. Alcantara itself is a trade name for a specific type of microfibre textile, produced worldwide by several manufacturers (in Italy, Spain, Poland), naturally in different color shades and quality levels.

When choosing this type of upholstery fabric, it is crucial to pay attention to the quality and specifications of the textile, which should be available from the retailer, most often as part of a sample collection. Trade names and prices, of course, may vary.

Eco-Leather

Today, the effort of merchants to place their products on the market is often so great that they misuse terms such as *ecology* or *eco* for their own benefit, attributing the label “eco” to products within marketing campaigns, even when there is no solid justification.

This term quickly established itself in the leather industry as well, and so-called *eco-leather* appeared on the market. However, its definition does not exist, nor is it recognized by the International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists. Its production is no more (or less) ecological than the production of genuine full-grain leathers or split leather, and its user properties can hardly be compared with real leather. In any case, under this term, every seller may mean something different. On the market, “eco-leather” may refer to split leather or even to certain types of artificial leathers. When choosing it, you should therefore carefully verify both quality and origin.

- Spilled liquids (water, wine, tea, beer, alcohol, etc.) should be removed immediately with an absorbent cloth to prevent serious and irreversible damage to the leather.
- For maintaining leather furniture, we recommend using high-quality products specifically intended for the given type of leather. Before using any general-purpose product, always test it first on a less visible spot.
- Do not expose leather to direct sunlight or other strong light sources. This helps keep the leather supple and prevents cracking, breakage, and color fading.
- Do not place leather furniture too close to radiators, fireplaces, or other heat sources. The minimum recommended distance between a radiator and leather furniture is 40–50 cm, and approximately 100 cm from a fireplace.
- Fresh stains and soiling should be removed immediately according to the instructions for the specific leather type. If you cannot clean the stain using an appropriate leather cleaner, do not rub excessively and do not use other household cleaners. Contact a specialist immediately or visit www.lederzentrum.cz.
- Protect your leather furniture from pets. Their claws, saliva, and bodily fluids can damage the leather surface.
- Avoid contact between leather and sharp objects such as belts or metal accessories on clothing.
- Leather sofas must not come into contact with newspapers or magazines, as their ink may penetrate and permanently discolor the leather.
- Use only designated seating areas! Make use of all seats regularly to prevent differences in appearance and firmness between individual sections.
- Ideal climate conditions for leather furniture are: air humidity 50–75% and air temperature 10–25°C. Regular leather furniture is not suitable for humid environments, such as pool areas.
- Regular maintenance significantly extends the lifespan of leather! Therefore, we recommend wiping dust with moist wipes once a week. Complete cleaning and impregnation of the sofa should be carried out (depending on usage intensity) 2–4 times per year.

Warranty Period

The warranty period of 24 months applies to defects that may occur within this timeframe even with proper placement, normal use, and adherence to correct maintenance procedures.

The warranty does not cover: excessive wear and tear, natural wear caused by regular use, or damage resulting from improper placement (e.g., exposure to direct sunlight leading to fading of upholstery), incorrect use, or unsuitable maintenance.

The warranty further does not apply to wear and damage (snags, abrasions, scratches, burns, discoloration, etc.) of upholstery leathers caused by sharp objects such as rivets on clothing, claws or teeth of animals, lit cigarettes, embers from fireplaces, nail polish, nail polish remover, various paints, adhesives, or other chemicals.

The warranty also excludes defects resulting from improper storage or transportation, or use in environments and under conditions other than those intended. It does not cover defects caused by violent intervention, non-manufacturing modifications, incorrect assembly or disassembly, or improper maintenance. Slight waviness of leather upholstery, which may occur due to overstretching of the covering material or the settling of filling materials after several months of use, is likewise excluded from the warranty.

Any claims should be made—preferably without delay—to the retailer (or manufacturer) from whom the upholstered product was purchased. Claims will be assessed and resolved in accordance with applicable legislation within 30 days of submission, unless the seller and consumer agree on a longer period.

If obvious defects are apparent at the time of product acceptance, the claim must be made immediately by written note on the delivery document.