

## Suede and Leather

### Suede and Leather Facts

Leather and suede continues to be a popular choice for consumers because of its unique feel and smell. Leather and suede can be defined as a fashion item having the unique qualities of being elegant, eternally chic and worn by rich and poor alike. Suede is produced from the inside of a hide or skin and is enhanced through buffing with high speed abrasive covered wheels. Leather is the outside of a hide, with the hair or wool removed. It exhibits a smooth appearance. Suede and leather can be made from a number of skins including sheep skin, shearling, pig skin, cowhide and lamb skin. The skins can be coated with a pigment or dyed directly into the skin with aniline dye. Smooth soft aniline dyed leather is referred to as naked skins or Cuir Savage. NuBuck leather is normally smooth leather which is buffed to produce a light nap. Suede and leather can be dyed or coated with any color including metallic. The skin dyes can be applied uniformly or antiqued with a mottled or erratic color pattern. Leather and suede is used for all types of women's, men's and children's wear. The price can vary depending on the quality of the skin and styling.

### Suede and Leather Problems

Suede and leather garments are subject to numerous problems depending on the tanning process used and the weakness of the skins.

- Mismatched Skins: Color on suede and leather garments may vary due to the different skins used to make up a garment.
  - Fading: Suede and leather has poor resistance to fading from exposure to light and atmosphere gases. This condition can rarely be corrected by the professional leather cleaner.
  - Color Loss: Due to poor tanning and application of color in manufacture, some garments can lose excessive color during wear and cleaning. Professional suede and leather cleaners can refinish garments but can not complete restoration to its original state. Antique and metallic finishes can rarely be duplicated.
  - Shrinkage: Skins are stretched to create a uniform and smooth surface. During wear and cleaning, skins can relax resulting in shrinkage and puckering.
  - Sears Skin: Injury occurring during the life of the animal. This may appear as light areas that do not accept dye well.
  - Belly Wrinkles: Poor skin quality, producing wrinkles and uneven texture. Glue Improper gluing of seams can result in transfer and staining during cleaning.
  - Thin Skins: Skins are cut to obtain a uniform thickness. This is referred to as scything. Improperly cut skins will result in weak and thin skins. Weak and thin skins can develop into separations and holes.
  - Improper Cleaning: Suede and leather improperly cleaned by a non professional cleaner may be permanently damaged.
  - Customer Abuse: Suede and leather can be damaged from extensive wear causing dye crocking, fading and abrasions of the skin.
  - Single Items: When part of a suit is cleaned without the other part, a color difference can never be avoided or corrected.
  - Dye Bleeding: Suede and leather trimming can bleed and transfer to cloth portions of garment due to poor dyeing.
- Inspection Most cleaners receiving suede and leather garments send them to a professional suede and leather cleaning specialist. These garments must be carefully inspected at the counter. A large amount of customer claims result from lack of inspection and discussion of the problems with the customer. The professional suede and leather cleaner does not have this customer contact and can not assume this liability. The garment received for cleaning should be hung on a hanger and inspected for potential problems (see Suede and Leather Problems.) When in doubt of the cleaning results, ask the professional suede and leather cleaner's advice.

Drycleaning and Wetcleaning Professional suede and leather cleaners use a specially balanced soap and oil additive to remove the soil and prevent color loss and dry skins. The additives necessary depend on the skins and type of garment cleaned.

Prespotting Note stains on suede and leather so they can be prespotted. Avoid using sticky tapes to mark stain location since finish may be removed.

Refinishing A process to restore color to the suede and leather. Leathers that are more difficult to refinish are: (1) Metallic dyes. (2) Antique finishes. (3) Naked skins or Cuir Savage.

Finishing Pressing suede and leather is necessary to restore a proper look to the garment. Stretch all skins that may have relaxed or shrunk. This requires the right amount of stretching, heat and pressure.

Summary Potentially, suedes and leather garments may have numerous problems since the skins are not uniform and are subject to different tanning and dyeing processes in manufacture. It is necessary that the cleaner receiving these garments inform the customer of potential problems. The customer should be made aware that it is the job of the cleaner to restore a used and soiled garment to wearability. There is no guarantee and unlikely that the garment can be restored to its new and original condition.