

HELPFUL LEATHER TERMINOLOGY

ANILINE LEATHER— A leather dyed with pure aniline dyes rather than pigments. This transparent dye completely penetrates the hide with color, allowing the natural grain to show through while protecting the surface.

ANILINE DYE — Translucent dyes which do not camouflage marks, but color the hide and bring out the natural character of the leather, much like a stain on wood.

ANILINE PLUS LEATHER — Leather that has been aniline dyed and finished with a clear topcoat to ensure more protection against spills and stains. Also known as semi-aniline.

ANTIQUING — A method of aging the appearance of a hide by the application of a darker color over a lighter color, creating dramatic highlights.

BUFFING — A mechanical process that reduces the appearance of surface blemishes from leather hides. Leather that is not buffed is called “full grain” because the natural grain retains its markings and characteristics.

BYCAST — A split leather with a polyurethane protective coating. Like splits, bycast leather is inferior as it lacks the natural characteristics, elasticity and durability of top grain leather.

CORRECTED GRAIN — Leather on which the outer surface of the grain has been slightly removed by sanding. It is usually embossed with an artificial grain.

COWHIDE — The entire animal hide, which averages 45-50 square feet.

CRUST — Leather that has been tanned, dyed and dried, but not finished.

DRUM DYED — A dyeing process in which leather is immersed in dye and tumbled in a rotating drum, ensuring maximum dye penetration.

EMBOSSING — Impressing a pattern onto the surface of the hide to create a motif or texture. A very even and uniform pattern is created, possibly to disguise natural defects or blemishes, or to create visually exciting designs.

FAT WRINKLE — Natural wrinkles in the leather grain that are a part of its unique beauty. These are only visible in top grain leathers.

FINISHING — Any processing performed after the initial dyeing such as buffing, embossing, milling, spraying, waterproofing, waxing, etc.

FULL ANILINE — Leather receiving its color from aniline dyes.

FULL GRAIN — The outer layer taken from the hide's hair side with only the hair removed. The hide has not been buffed or sanded, leaving the grain and natural markings.

GRAIN — The pattern and texture of a hide's surface. This can be natural, as in full grain, or it can be a pattern embossed onto the hide.

HAND — A term that describes the leather's softness and feel.

HAND ANTIQUED — Also referred to as "hand rubbing." The process where skilled craftsmen rub a contrasting color onto the surface of the leather to accentuate the natural grain or embossing.

LEATHER — A hide, or skin, that has been tanned into a non-perishable material.

LIMING — The process of removing hair from a raw hide through the use of chemicals.

MILLING — Process in which tanned hides are tumbled in rotating drums using a combination of heat and a misting of water to soften the hand or enhance the grain.

NATURAL GRAIN — Leather whose grain has not been altered in any way, so the natural appearance of the grain is apparent.

NUBUCK ANILINE — A top grain aniline-dyed leather from which the top hair cell layer has been removed through buffing to create a soft nap effect.

PATINA — A lustrous glow on the surface of the leather that develops on full anilines and nubucks with time and use.

PROTECTED — Leather whose surface is coated with pigment or other opaque solution for uniform color and cleanability. The natural marks of the hide cannot be seen.

PULL-UP — When this leather is pulled during upholstering, oil or wax dyes dissipate and become lighted in some areas, creating a multi-tone effect.

PURE ANILINE — Leather which receives its only color from dyes and exhibits natural markings and characteristics.

SAUVAGE — Leather with a marbled appearance, created by blending two or more similar colors to add depth and character. Can be tone-on-tone or a contrasting effect.

SEMI-ANILINE — Also called Aniline Plus, this is leather dyed with pure aniline dyes with a light surface finish to enhance durability while maintaining a soft, natural hand.

SPLIT — The under portion of a hide or skin that has been split into two or more thicknesses. Splits may be finished and embossed to simulate a full top grain, but are not as high quality. Splits are often used for suede.

SUEDE — Leather produced from the flesh split, exhibiting a velvet-like nap. Sueded splits are not top grain leathers, and do not have the same strength and integrity.

TANNING — The process of converting a raw hide into a stable, non-perishable state.

TOPCOAT — Synthetic transparent resins applied as a protective coating from a high gloss to a matte finish.

TOP GRAIN — The top layer and highest quality part of the hide. When leather is split in processing, the top grain is the upper portion of the hide. Because of its strength and beauty, this supple layer is the standard of fine upholstery.