



# CTL LEATHER

A Garrett Leather Company

**Leather 101 - How to Identify  
Various Types of Leathers**



# ANILINE LEATHERS

The finest leather available always made from premium quality full top grain hides. Aniline is any leather which receives its entire color solely from aniline dyes and whose grain retains its original state. Natural markings and characteristics are exhibited. No topical treatments or pigments are used in determining the color of the leathers.

## Ways To Identify:

1. Lightly scratch the surface to see if it leaves a light color mark. If it scratches to a light color it is Aniline
2. This is not the only test because some Nubuck leathers will also do this.
3. Wet your finger and lightly rub it into the leather to see if it darkens. It should only darken lightly, but dry invisible.

## Characteristics & Expectations

- Soft & buttery hand
- A rich patina develops with time enhancing the leather's appearance
- Healed scars, wrinkles, stretch marks, brands and scratches are more visible.
- More likely to fade or stain
- Color variation and shading difference from hide-to-hide and even with hide





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# PULL-UP LEATHERS

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Pull-Up Leathers are impregnated with natural oils and waxes vs. coated with paints and pigments. The “Pull- Up” is enhanced as the leather is stretched and pulled during the upholstery process and provides even more beautiful shading and unique, subtle coloration. This process allows the scars, scratches and wrinkles that occur naturally on the leather hides to show through the finish.

### Ways To Identify:

1. Lightly scratch the surface to see if it leaves a light color mark.
2. Lightly rub your finger/hand over the scratch mark. The heat generated should help to bring oils/waxes back to the surface and soften/remove the scratch mark in the best made pull-ups.
3. Holding a piece of the leather, push your finger from behind. There should be a burst of color.

### Characteristics & Expectations

- Color burst when the leather is stretched.
- Greatly desired patina.
- Color variation throughout the hide
- Fading if exposed to direct sunlight



# PROTECTED LEATHERS

Also called finished, full finished, semi-aniline, pigmented, corrected, everyday or painted leathers. Protected leathers are more uniform in appearance and color due to pigments that are applied to the surface, and are the most common leathers and for most consumers, the most practical. Unlike aniline leathers, the pigments actually create a film on top of the leather covering up the actual surface.

## Ways To Identify:

1. Lightly scratch the surface to see if it leaves a light color mark. If it does not scratch to a lighter color it is Protected leather.
2. The surface may have some sort of sheen to it (like looking at wood that has a lacquer applied to it).
3. If you wet the leather, the water should stay on top of the finish and not darken the leather.

## Characteristics & Expectations

- Consistent coloration throughout hide.
- Due to pigment topcoat, servicability, durability and clean ability are very good.
- Protected leathers will wear consistently with time.
- Healed scars and scratches should be hidden.





# SEMI-ANILINE LEATHERS

Semi-Aniline dyed leathers have been both dyed through and have a thin finishing layer and/or pigment finish on the surface. Semi-Aniline leather is Full Grain displaying the leathers full range of natural markings.

They offer a combination of the softness and feel of full aniline leather with the protective benefits of a surface finish. By dyeing the leather through before the final thin top coating is applied, a very even coloration is achieved with only a thin layer of finish. Thus the leather remains softer because it is not necessary to apply a thick top coating. Semi-Anilines have a higher resistance to UV, Water and Soil over Pure Aniline.



## Ways To Identify:

1. Lightly scratch the surface to see if it leaves a light color mark. If it scratches slightly to a light color it is Semi Aniline (this may or may not happen, depending on the depth of the pigment)
2. This is not the only test because some Nubuck leathers will also do this.
3. Wet your finger and lightly rub it into the leather to see if it darkens. It should only darken lightly, but dry invisible.

## Characteristics & Expectations

- Soft and supple hand
- Pigment offers better consistency than a full aniline leather
- Hides wear well in time and use. Servicable leather and easy to clean.
- Healed scars and scratches are slightly visible within hides.





# NUBUCK LEATHERS

These are Aniline leathers that the surface has been brushed or sanded, and have created a texture similar to velvet on leather. Brushing or Sanding breaks the surface and opens up the leather making it incredibly soft. The brushing also makes the leather even more absorbent than aniline leathers. This leather has the softest hand. Suede is the “flesh” side of a piece of leather and Nubuck is an affect that is done to the grain side. These leathers are also known as Chaps, Distressed, Reverse Suede and Bomber.

## Ways To Identify:

1. Should have a velvet texture. When moving your hand across the surface, it should leave shading traces similar to the effect when you vacuum a carpet.
2. Wet your finger, and lightly rub the surface. The surface will dark and also dry to a slightly darker shade.
3. For waxed surfaces, rub an area of the leather

with a sponge several times. This will remove the wax and let you see if the leather meets Test 1 or 2 above.

## Characteristics & Expectations

- Coloration will vary throughout the hide.
- A luxurious hand along with a slight nap is to be expected.
- More likely to stain



# BICAST LEATHERS

Bicast leather (also known as bycast leather, split leather or PU leather) is a split leather with a layer of polyurethane applied to the surface and then embossed.

Bycast was originally made for the shoe industry and recently adopted by the furniture industry. The resulting product is cheaper than top grain leather and has an artificially consistent texture that is easier to clean and maintain.

## Ways To Identify:

1. A very hard feel
2. Usually have a high sheen
3. If you wet the leather, the water should stay on top of the finish and not darken the leather.



## Characteristics & Expectations

- Have a very hard feel
- Extremely high resistance
- Water cannot penetrate the polyurethane film.
- Staining is almost impossible.
- A patina or suppleness will not develop or improve with age.
- Constant use may cause polyurethane layer to crack and split free of its backing.

The Downside of these products is they need to be made with ‘non sustainable’ materials. PVC/PU isn’t made from animal products – the production of these “man made” materials releases toxic chemicals, which can’t be recycled and will take hundreds of years to biodegrade. The production of these “man made materials” made with PVC/PU release toxic chemical compounds into the environment, these impacts should be considered and you should understand the production of these materials before purchasing any furniture.”





# BONDED OR MAN-MADE LEATHER

Bonded leather or Reconstituted leather is a material made of varying degrees of genuine leather combined with other substances to give the appearance of leather at a reduced cost. Bonded leather can be found in furniture, bookbinding and various fashion accessories. Examples of products that are most commonly constructed with different varieties of “bonded leather” are: Bibles, diaries, art books, desk accessories, hymnals, bags, chairs and sofas.

## **Ways To Identify:**

1. Many forms available, most of them will have a print and very consistent grain.
2. Usually have a high sheen
3. If you wet the leather, the water should stay on top of the finish and not darken the leather.

## **Characteristics & Expectations**

- Have a very plastic or unnatural feeling.
- Extremely high resistance
- Water cannot penetrate the polyurethane film.
- Staining is almost impossible.
- A patina or suppleness will not develop or improve with age.

- Constant use may cause polyurethane layer to crack and split free of its backing.

The Downside of these products is they need to be made with ‘non sustainable’ materials. PVC/PU isn’t made from animal products – the production of these “man made” materials releases toxic chemicals, which can’t be recycled and will take hundreds of years to biodegrade. The production of these “man made materials” made with PVC/PU release toxic chemical compounds into the environment, these impacts should be considered and you should understand the production of these materials before purchasing any furniture.”