

Making stiff leather clothing soft again

A leather jacket that feels like armour usually has one of three causes. This article shows what lies behind it and what helps.

Three causes, three solutions

1. Old leather or leather stored for a long time

When stored for a long time without use, leather becomes firmer over time. The fats and moisture introduced during manufacture dry out; the leather fibres “stick” together because the leather is no longer moved. Regular care and use therefore keep leather soft.

For dirty leather, first carry out a complete cleaning according to the [washing instructions](#) and then care for it. The wash concentrate replenishes the leather during washing, and together with subsequent care and kneading, the leather becomes significantly softer.

For clean leather without complete cleaning: care for pigmented smooth leather with [Colourlock Care & Waterproofing Oil](#), and open-pore smooth leather and suede leather with Aniline Protector. Then tumble the freshly cared-for leather in a dryer on cold air without heat for 30 minutes. Alternatively, knead it by hand; this is effective but more laborious.

Suede leather generally becomes significantly softer again with this treatment. However, some old military coats made from heavy cowhide were not particularly soft even when manufactured, and such leather will not become softer than it was when purchased, even after treatment.

Note:

“Buttery soft” like new lamb leather is usually no longer possible for old, hardened items. The result is a significant improvement, but not a return to the original condition.

2. Wet leather

Leather that has become wet through rain or prolonged immersion in water becomes very stiff as it dries without treatment.

Leather that is still wet: immediately pull it smooth on a hanger and allow it to dry by itself at room temperature. Never dry it with a hair dryer, heater or in the sun; this speeds up hardening and can cause shrinkage.

After drying: treat it as described for old leather – care for it and knead it. If the leather is also dirty, carry out complete cleaning followed by care and kneading.

3. New, stiff leather

If a new garment is already stiff when purchased, it should first be returned as a complaint; this is a quality defect.

Exception: horse leather. Its characteristic stiffness is a hallmark of horse leather and not a defect. This leather becomes somewhat softer with use and care, but always remains firmer than other types of leather. Only caring for and kneading it as described above helps.

Product recommendations

Note:

(Clicking on products adds them to the shopping basket, after which they can be ordered)

- Care & Waterproofing Oil
- Aniline Protector

