

# How to determine what type of leather your lounge is.

You will need to read this....

## NOTE:

This document is for the sole intention to provide you with information to educate you on how you can determine the type of leather that is on your Recliner or Lift Chair. This information is general advice and each person should seek professional council before taking any action. The author specifically disclaims any liability resulting from the content of this information.

Before I go into the different types of leather there are and highlight their characteristics I think it is important to understand firstly what leather actually is.

## **WHAT IS LEATHER?**

This definition has been sourced from the International Council of Tanners (ICT) and defines leather as follows:

“A general term for hide or skin with its original fibrous structure more or less intact, tanned to be imputrescible. The hair or wool may or may not have been removed. Leather is also made from a hide or skin which has been split into layers or segmented either before or after tanning. If the tanned hide or skin is disintegrated mechanically and or chemically into fibrous particles, small pieces or powders and then, with or without the combination of a binding agent, is made into sheets or other forms, such sheets or forms are not leather. If the leather has a surface coating, this surface layer, however applied must not be thicker than 0.15mm”. ICT 1999.

To put it simply leather is the skin of an animal that is still intact (in its original form), with or without the hair or wool being removed and if the leather has a coating on it (pigment and/or protective finish), it must not be thicker than 0.15mm.

The hide can also be split into layers or divided into sections before or after the “tanning process” takes place. There is also another method that is being used with fibrous particles. I will speak more about this area further on.

You ask yourself what is the “tanning process” – basically it is a hide or skin that goes through a chemical procedure to preserve the quality and its natural beauty. A piece of hide or skin which has been tanned produces strong, flexible leather which is able to resist decay and spoilage.

Now let’s look at the different types of leather available.

## **TYPES OF LEATHER**

There are mainly two categories of leather which can be broken down further into their types. The two categories of the leather are unprotected leather and protected leather.

**UNPROTECTED LEATHERS** are top quality natural leathers in which the actual surface grain markings of the hide are visible. They have very little or no protective treatments applied. These are the softest, most comfortable and most expensive leather available.

The types of unprotected leather include Full/Pure Aniline, Nubuck (Suede) & Pull Up Aniline.

I am going to explain to you each type in detail and include some of their characteristics.

### **Full/Pure Aniline:**

Leather that has been drum dyed without pigment applied to the surface. A light protective coating is sometimes added. It will exhibit all natural features such as scars, growth marks, fat wrinkles etc. Only the best raw hides are selected for this leather type.

### **Nubuck (Leather Suede):**

It is drum dyed aniline leather where the surface grain has been buffed, which may or may not have been treated with any protective coating.

### **Pull Up Aniline:**

It is drum dyed aniline leather with a top coat of oil and/or wax effects, designed to exhibit a 'distressed look'. Displays all the natural features such as scars, growth marks, fat wrinkles etc. When this leather is pulled the oil or wax separates creating a lighter colour. This method is used to give leather a weathered look.

**Characteristics:** Some of the common characteristics with unprotected leather are:

- Very high quality leather;
- Porous – water will darken the colour of the leather but will dry. At times it may also leave water stain marks;
- Very easy to scratch;
- Stains easily;
- Needs the use of specially designed cleaning products as well as specific application requirements; generally a milder cleaning process than protected leather due to its porous nature.
- Aniline leather is prone to sun fading;
- High degree of preventative maintenance.

The unprotected leathers will readily absorb moisture and become stained. Oils and perspiration will also soak into these leathers causing dye displacement. No matter what stain discolouration has occurred on the leather fibers it cannot be removed, even with the effort of the most skilled professional.

**PROTECTED LEATHERS** have a topcoat applied to the surface to make it more durable and easy to clean/maintain.

The types of protected leather include Semi-aniline, Pigmented, Corrected Grain, Full Grain Pigmented, Pigmented Top Coat Corrected Grain. All these leather types use top grain (full grain) hide, which is the top layer of the hide if or when split.

I will also include Splits, Bi-Cast and Reconstituted leather in this category for reference purposes only.

I now want to explain to you each type in detail and include some of their characteristics.

### **Semi-aniline:**

It is drum dyed leather incorporating a small amount of pigment and protective finish however this finish does not conceal all the natural characteristics of the hide.

### **Pigmented Leather:**

It is drum dyed with thicker layer of pigment and protective finish applied. These finishes will conceal natural markings such as scars, growth marks, fat wrinkles etc. Lower grade hides are selected for this type of leather.

### **Corrected Grain Leather:**

It is drum dyed with the natural grain removed and a heavy layer of pigment and protective finish applied. The leather is then embossed with an artificial patterned grain. This will provide a uniform appearance for example, no natural markings such as scars, growth marks, fat wrinkles etc. Lower grade hides are selected for this type of leather.

**Characteristics:** Some of the common characteristics with protected leather are:

- Uses a lower grade of leather (excluding Semi Aniline);
- it has uniform colour and grain patterns;
- it will not scratch easily;

- Not porous due to a top coat (pigment) being added. If water drops onto the surface it will not seep through immediately and will not change the colour of the pigment or leave a permanent stain;
- A damp cloth for frequent care is all that is generally needed, but for long term maintenance to prolong the life of the leather, you will need a proper clean & condition at least twice a year.

\*\* I want to also add even though Semi Aniline technically falls into this category, keep in mind only a small amount of pigment and protective finish has been applied and you may need to take precautions against sun fading and stains as the surface is more porous than heavily pigmented leather. Also the natural markings are not all covered/removed.

### **Sauvage:**

This can be a semi aniline or pigmented leather with multiple layers of colour or tones applied. This is often used to create hand wiped, distressed, antique and multicoloured appearances (often has a two tone effect that gives a marbled or creased appearance). The colour layers may be very subtle or have a drastic colour change.

### **Splits:**

Re-coated embossed leather made from the under layers of hide.

### **Laminated Splits:**

Lower layers of hide laminated to a surface coat.

Splits are the lower layer of the hide that holds no natural grain. It is then embossed with an artificial grain pattern, which provides a uniform appearance and have a top coat applied. The tissue structure of this lower layer is not as strong as top-grain.

### **Bi Cast (By Cast):**

Uses the lower layer of the split, and applies a film of coloured polyurethane (PU).

The look is mostly very glossy and the colours used are usually dark brown, black and cream with a regular grain pattern.

## **Reconstituted Leather (Bonded Leather):**

This is where the hide or skin has been broken down by either using chemicals or mechanically and as a result has formed into small particles (small pieces or powder like) and is then made into sheets or other forms of compressed fibrous particles. A surface coating, usually polyurethane is then applied.

**Characteristics:** The most common characteristics for these leather types are:

- Doesn't have the strength for every day wear and tear – will not last very long;
- Very susceptible to tearing;
- Once tearing has occurred it extends really quickly;
- The top coat (surface coat) can easily peel/crumble due to poor adhesion.

Thank you for reading this information and I hope you found it informative and helpful, I welcome any feedback or questions you may have.

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- Information on our professional 'early detection' maintenance program.
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