

# How to Fix Cracked Leather



by DA

## Introduction

Leather is of course, like flesh, but has no capacity to heal. But it can be strengthened, and the cracks smoothed to the point that belts, shoes, or leather chairs, look "vintage," but functional and handsome.

## Instructions

**Difficulty:** Moderately Easy

### Things You'll Need

- Glycerin saddle soap
- A shoe dauber
- A large, smooth spoon (preferably stainless steel)
- A leather restorative cream (e.g., Fiebings brand)
- Shoe cream that matches the item, OR
- Leather cream from, e.g., Tandy Leatherworks
- Mink oil (e.g., Kiwi brand)
- Optional: Silk or a used dryer sheet

### Steps

#### 1 Step One

Presuming the leather is dried - brush away all dirt and loose particles with a dry shoe brush.

#### 2 Step Two

Wash the leather with glycerin-based saddle soap, using a clean shoe dauber (or your hands).

NOTE: A tack shop, where saddles and saddle care goods are found, is the best place to find glycerin saddle soap. Barring that, use the Kiwi brand, available wherever shoeshine goods are sold (supermarkets, drug stores).

No need to soak the leather through - however, if it is an old belt or shoes, keep working in the saddle soap until the leather is flexible.

FOR SHOES: stuff the shoes with crumpled newspaper.

#### 3 Step Three

Allow the leather to dry - DO NOT USE HEAT. The leather should feel creamy, but not wet. The flexibility should remain.

#### 4 Step Four

Dawb the cracked leather with mink oil paste.

#### 5 Step Five

Using the back side of your spoon, rub the cracks, lightly. This should smooth the oiled leather to the point that the cracks appear far less deep and pronounced.

If the item is a belt, lay the belt on a hard surface.

For shoes, be certain they are stuffed with newspaper to the point that the leather is tight.

Any other items, attempt to lay them evenly on a hard surface.

#### 6 Step Six

Once the cracks are as minimal as you can get them, treat the entire item with the leather conditioner of your choice.

For upholstery or belts, you should use a Fiebings brand condition, which contain moisturizers like dimethicone, versus mink oil or neatsfoot oil.

For shoes, or for items on display which won't be touched, use mink oil paste.

Buff to a gloss.

#### 7 Step Seven

Use shoe cream - not shoe polish - to treat the leather item. This will color the cracks and smooth the color of the entire item, so the cracks will blend. (Note: higher-quality leather creams are available from, e.g., Tandy Leatherworks, if the item is particularly valuable, or an unusual color.)

#### 8 Step Eight

The item is, of course, not new as a new pair of shoes or chair - be certain to treat once a week with conditioner.

## 9

### Step Nine

IF THE ITEM IS CRACKED THROUGH:

You may be able to back it such that the item is usable.

For upholstery: cut a piece of silk, or a used dryer sheet, one-inch larger on all sides than the crack.

Using a small spatula (perhaps a popsicle stick or makeup spatula), apply leather glue, or Gorilla Glue, to the inside of the crack, extending an inch on all sides.

With the glue still wet, work the fabric into the cut, pushing it with your spatula, and spread it such that it makes contact with the glue. Press the leather, then push the sides of the crack together until they meet. Allow to dry overnight before smoothing the crack with mink oil.

## Overall Tips & Warnings

The item will be more delicate than a new item. Wear vintage shoes, coats, belts, on special occasions.

A few cracks add character to a vintage item. As long as the item does not look ramshackle, then a few cracks won't hurt the look at all (e.g., on an old pair of "Granny" boots, a WWI-era sword belt).

Do not use your spoon if the leather has a grain or pattern.

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