



Complete Guide: Upholstery and Leather

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COMPLETE GUIDE: Upholstery and Leather

When it comes to purchasing furniture, don't just buy based on style. Function is super important!

You might really want an all white 100% cotton sofa. But if you have a young family or pets, it's not the most practical option.

Perhaps, you want to purchase a full grain leather sofa — your only option is to place it by a radiator or a window in direct sunlight. Again, not the best choice considering your room configuration.



When purchasing a living room set, sofa, loveseat and/or chair, looks and style is important, but so is function.

Your household, lifestyle and budget will help you determine which fabric (upholstery or leather) is ideal for your family.

Outside of a home or a car, the next biggest investment you'll make is in your furniture.

TIP:

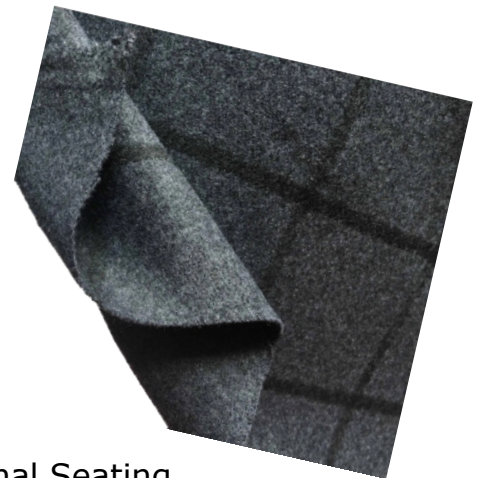
Since furniture is a big ticket item, you should consider financing as a payment option. Financing provides you with favorable terms that will work within your budget and schedule.



What is Rub Count?

Rub count / double rub refers to how durable a fabric is. Fabrics go through abrasion testing to see how long they will last.

Use	Rub Count	Applications
Delicate	Less than 9000	Pillows & Curtains
Light	9000 - 11,000	Living Room / Occasional Seating
Medium/Heavy	12,000 - 15,000	Family Room & Pet Friendly Homes
Heavy Duty	15,000 - 30,000	Hotel Lobby, Restaurant Dining Areas, etc.
Extra Heavy	30,000+	Airport Terminals, Public Spaces, etc.



Upholstery Choices: Natural Fibers

Plant Based

Linen

Linen is made from the flax plant and it's very durable. It doesn't pill or shed which is great as an investment piece. It also resists moisture, which helps wick away any spills that occur. However, linen is wrinkly in nature.



Cotton

Cotton is one of the softest and durable fabrics when it comes to upholstery. It's beautiful to the touch and it wears well over time.

However, the disadvantages with cotton is that it wrinkles and soils easily.



Animal Based

Silk

Silk is often used in high quality velvet. It's soft and luxurious to the touch. However, it's not the best choice of fabric, if you plan on using your furniture daily. It stains easily and requires a professional to clean it.



Mohair/Wool

Wools is made with animal hair. It's very durable. It naturally resists stains and it's good for long term use. However, for people with allergies it's not the best option. Most often, wool is mixed with synthetic fibers to blend down the costs.



Semi-Synthetic Fibers:

Viscose

Viscose Rayon is made from plant cellulose such as wood pulp, bamboo grass, etc. It's a man-made fiber. It looks like silk and feels like cotton. It's versatile and it blends well with other fabrics.

The disadvantage: it's delicate, it absorbs body oils and water easily. This can result in staining and weakening of the fabric.



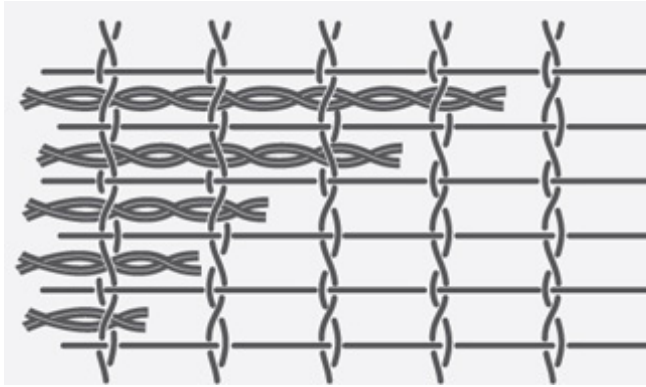
Synthetic Fibers:

It's extremely durable and it resists fading and stains better than natural fibers. It's an ideal fabric for households that plan on using their sofa, loveseat or chair regularly.



Microfiber/Microsuede

Microfiber mimics the feel of suede with added security of being stain resistant compared to natural suede. In addition to practicality, the fabric looks luxurious and it has a velvety quality.



Chenille

Chenille is a French word for caterpillar. It refers to the soft texture and touch of the fabric. The base layer is woven with many layers of yarn — loops are woven around the base layer. To create soft texture, the base layer is cut. This technique gives Chenille its luscious soft, fuzzy texture and sheen. Depending on the direction you look at it, the Chenille can look different from matte to shiny.



Deluxe Chenille

The difference between regular chenille and deluxe chenille is the composition. Regular chenille is made from polyester. Polyester is low maintenance and stain resistant.

Deluxe Chenille uses more natural fibers like cotton, cashmere and/or silk which gives it a more luxurious quality.

Natural fibers breathe better and adds durability. It can increase the fabric's rub count.

Deluxe Chenille is worth the investment, if you plan on keeping the furniture for the long haul, or if you have pets and/or young children.

Nylon

Nylon is an extremely durable fabric. Its made from polyamide which is created from a liquid and spun into a fiber. Nylon is extremely strong. It's used in applications such as seat belts, ropes for mountain climbing etc.

Because of its durability and resiliency (ability to contract back to it's natural state) the fabric is more expensive.

In furniture, it's rarely used on its own. For indoor furniture, nylon is generally blended with other materials, to increase the fabric's resiliency. In most cases, nylon is used for outdoor patio furniture. It repels water well.

The disadvantage: it may feel rough/scratchy.

How do the Fabrics Stack Up?

	Affordable	Durable	Easy to Clean	Resists Stains
Cotton	✓	✓	✓	
Linen		✓	✓	
Silk				
Mohair/Wool		✓	✓	
Microfiber	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chenille	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deluxe Chenille	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nylon		✓	✓	✓
Microfiber	✓	✓	✓	✓

De-mystifying Leather

Do you ever wonder why, a leather couch can be so different in price?
It's all the same leather, right?

Here's a breakdown of the different grades of leather and how it's made.

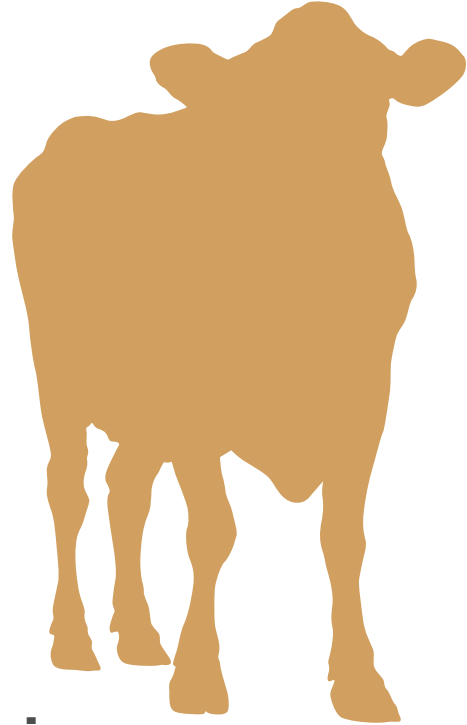


How is Leather Processed?

There are up to four stages in developing leather. This process may vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. But generally, it goes through preparation, tanning, crusting and surface coating / finishing.

1 Preparation

The skin is treated, preserved and cleaned. Then it goes through a *liming* process to remove the proteins, fats and hair. The hide is split into horizontal layers and different grades of leather are produced. The hide goes through additional *liming*, *de-liming* and *slicking* — removing the fat from inside the skin. Before the skin can be *tanned*, it goes through a *bleaching*, *pickling*, (sometimes *de-pickling*) which helps it absorb the tanning agents/color easier.



2 Tanning

Once the hide has been cleaned, it needs to go through a stabilizing process — converting the proteins from the raw hide into a stable material. PH levels are adjusted (*basification*) to ensure the tanning materials adhere to the leather.

3 Crusting

During this crusting process, the leather is dried, softened and colored. It is *thinned*, *re-tanned* and *lubricated*. Depending on the type of finish a manufacturer wants to achieve, the leather may go through a final stage of being *sanded*, *buffed* and *oiled*.

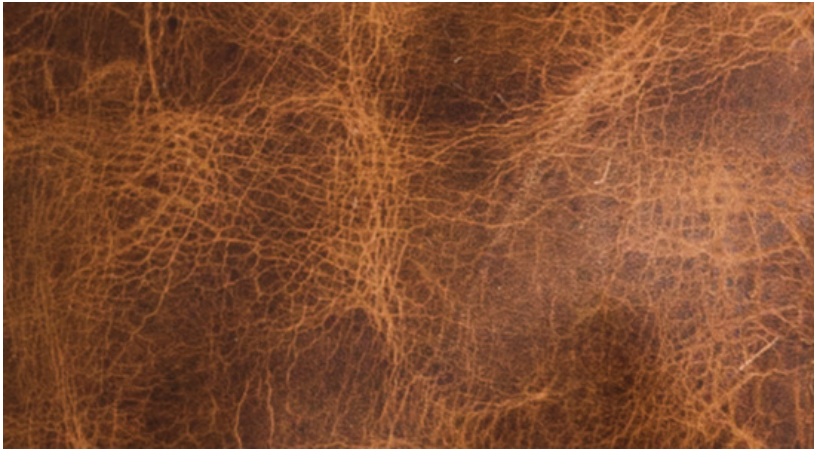
4 Surface Coating

For leathers outside of the Full Grain spectrum, there is an additional step of *resurfacing* which can include *embossing*, *glazing*, etc.

Different Grades of **Leather**

Full Grain Leather

If money was no object, then go for Full Grain Leather. It's the highest-grade leather. It comes from the top layer of the hide and it includes all its natural grain. The grain may include scars, marks and even some unevenness in color. Even with visual imperfections, this grade of leather is the strongest.



Each piece of Full Grain Leather is unique. The uniqueness wears better over time. The leather becomes softer and the patina develops special characteristics specific to that hide. It's natural, durable and extremely breathable.

The disadvantages: it stains easily, and it's higher maintenance. Because Full Grain is more difficult to work with as a material, you'll pay top dollar for it. Outside of the cost of labor, the hide itself is priced at a premium.

Top Grain Leather

The second-best grade of leather is Top Grain Leather. The leather is thinner than Full Grain because the outer layer has been removed. The Top Grain is sanded and buffed to take away imperfections.

When it comes to furniture, most people prefer the look of Top Grain leather. Top Grain is produced with even coloring, grain consistency and smoothness. The leather is also treated with a protectant to help prevent stains.

As a material, Top Grain is easier to work with (which is reflected in the price). Top Grain can also be referred to as Corrected or Embossed Leather.

Split Suede/ Finished Split

The Split leather is made from splitting the top layer of leather from the inner layer of the hide. The inner (bottom) hide is used and leather grain is embossed to produce a beautiful finish. Split leather is also known as Genuine Leather.

Bel-Aire Leather

It's usually made with a Finished Split hide and/or left-over leather during the manufacturing process. It's mixed with other properties which may include natural fibers, polyurethane, etc. Graining is embossed onto the leather. It's treated with a protectant to help prevent stains from soaking into the leather. The leather is soft and supple, with a smooth even finish.





Suede

Suede is Top Grain Leather that has been sanded down to expose its soft texture.

Regular Suede uses the inner layer of the skin and it is sanded.

Nubuck Suede uses the outer layer of the skin and sanded.

Suede is very beautiful, but it stains and fades easily. Real Suede is rarely used in furniture.



Reconstituted Bonded Fiber Leather

It uses the remains of leather which otherwise would be thrown out, during a manufacturing process. The remains are ground up and recycled with other materials such as polyurethane (PU) to give it a leather-look.

How do the Leathers Stack Up?

	Affordable	Durable	Easy to Clean	Resists Stains
Full Grain		✓	✓	
Top Grain		✓	✓	
Split/Finished	✓	✓	✓	
Bel-Aire Leather	✓	✓	✓	✓
Suede				
Reconstituted	✓		✓	✓

Buying furniture for your home is a big investment. It's important to choose a piece that's made of quality craftsmanship and one you'll love for many years.

MDG offers affordable quality furniture and financing options to help their customers. Regardless of credit history, MDG will do what they can to help you purchase furniture for your home.

Get pre-approved for credit. It's fast and easy. You'll know right away how much you're approved for.

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