**CASING LEATHER**

Crafting with leather is a long-established tradition and can be rewarding. As it turns out, you cannot only case leather but there are multiple methods you can use. For instance, oil tanning allows you to create soft, pliable leather that makes lovely products such as bags and purses.

On the other hand, veg tanning involves literally soaking the hide in a chemical solution to create an extremely stiff material suitable for furniture or items that need added strength and durability – even armor!

The process of casing takes advantage of the yet-to-be-hardened hide by stretching it with special knives called strops during the tanning procedure. Whatever your purpose, there’s no doubt that cased leather offers remarkable opportunities for aspiring artists and craftspeople!

**Why Should You Case Leather?**

Investing in a quality leather case can be an excellent choice for protecting valuable items. The unique properties of leather make it the perfect material for cases, offering protection from knocks, bumps, and scrapes.

Leather is also resistant to water, meaning any devices or items you put inside your case are less likely to get wet if you happen to drop your case into puddles or near running taps.

Furthermore, leather is aesthetically pleasing and adds an exclusive look to whatever you place in it–from phones and tablets to cameras and notebooks. With such wide-ranging benefits, it’s no surprise that leather cases are becoming increasingly popular these days!

**Steps to Follow on How to Case Leather**

**Step 1: Select the Right Type of Leather**

The first step in working with leather is selecting the right type for your project. There are two main categories of leather: full-grain and top-grain. Full-grain is considered to be the highest quality and is usually more expensive than top-grain.

It’s also often called “unfinished” because it has not been sanded or buffed down like top-grain leather. This means that it will retain its natural grain pattern, giving it a unique look and feel that makes it perfect for luxury items such as wallets and handbags.

**Step 2: Cut the leather**

Once you have selected your leather, you’ll need to prepare it for cutting by dampening it slightly with a sponge or cloth. This will help prevent cracking and make it easier to cut and shape. Once your leather is dampened, use scissors or an X-Acto knife to cut out the shapes you need for your item carefully.

If you are unsure of what size pieces you need, use a template or tracing paper as a guide. When cutting out small pieces such as pockets or straps, use a razor blade instead of scissors since this will give you more control over the shape and size of the piece.

**Step 3: Stitching Your Leather Together**

The next step is stitching your pieces together using an awl or needle and thread. Awls come in various sizes, so be sure to select one appropriate for the thickness of your material; too large an awl may cause unnecessary holes in your material, while too small an awl won’t be able to penetrate thick hides properly.

Use strong waxed thread when stitching so that it won’t break easily when pulled tight; a sinew is also a good option if available. Finally, use an edge slicker (also known as an edger) to smooth the edges down after stitching—this will help create a neat finish on your item and prevent any unraveling due to wear and tear over time.

**Step 4: Adding Decorations**

After stitching your item together, you can then add any decorations or embellishments to personalize it. This could include rivets, conchos, grommets, and more—it’s all up to how creative you want to be! For example, if adding rivets, use an awl to punch a hole in the leather first, making it easier to set the rivet afterward.

**Step 5: Sealing and Finishing**

Once you’ve finished decorating your item, you’ll need to seal and protect it. This is done by applying a coat of wax or oil to the leather. This helps to waterproof the material, preventing it from cracking or fading over time. You can also use a top coat such as mink oil for additional protection and shine.

**Step 6: Finishing Touches**

Finally, you’ll want to give your item good polishing with a soft cloth to make it look its best. This will help to remove any dust or dirt that may have been collected on the surface of your item during the construction process. And with that, your leather item is ready for years of use and enjoyment!

That’s it! You’ve now learned how to case leather in six easy steps. With a bit of practice, you can craft beautiful leather items confidently! Good luck!

## **Things You Need to Know Before Case Leather**

If you’re a leather crafting enthusiast, case leather is an incredibly satisfying material to work with and one that can create some truly stunning fashion accessories and furnishings. Before you begin working with case leather, however, there are a few essential things that you should know.

Case leather requires special tools to cut and part the hide, so make sure that you have the right implements before starting your project. In addition, when working with [colors on the leather](https://leatherek.com/how-to-match-leather-color/), it is important to prepare and oil the surface to ensure even coverage properly.

**5 Common Mistakes People Make When Trying to Case Leather**

**1. Not Using the Right Tools**

One of the most common mistakes people make when trying to case leather is not using the right tools. Casing leather requires a few specific tools, including a skiver, a beveled, and an edge slicker. Getting a clean, professional-looking result will be very difficult without these tools.

**2. Not Preparing the Leather Properly**

Another mistake people make is not preparing the leather properly before attempting to case it. The leather must be clean and free of dirt or debris before you start working with it. Additionally, the leather should be dampened slightly to be more pliable and easier to work with.

**3. Skiving the Leather Too Thin**

When skiving the leather, it is important to avoid making the mistake of skiving it too thin. If the leather is too thin, it will be difficult to work with and will not hold up well over time. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and skive a little bit thicker than you think you need to.

**4. Not Using Enough Adhesive**

Another common mistake people make when casing leather is not using enough adhesive. Be sure to use enough adhesive to cover the entire leather surface. This will help ensure the leather stays in place and does not come loose over time.

**5. Not Letting the Adhesive Dry Completely**

Finally, one mistake people often make is not letting the adhesive dry completely before moving on to the next step. It is important to let the adhesive dry completely so that it has time to set and bond with the leather. Once it is dry, you can attach the lining material.

**Conclusion**

Leatherworking is both an art form and a craft that requires patience and skill to create beautiful items from raw hides.

Once finished, though, the durability of case leather makes it worth all of your effort – not only does it look beautiful, but depending on how well it’s been cared for, it can last for many years and become a treasured heirloom item.

By following these steps—selecting the right type of leather, preparing it correctly before cutting out shapes, sewing them together with strong thread, and finally edging them neatly—you can start crafting wonderful items from genuine leather today!

[**WetTing The Leather**](https://elktracksstudio.com/blogs/leathercraft-tips/how-to-wet-leather) **FOR Working**

The first thing to understand about stamping is that you aren't working with dry leather. You're also not working with soaking wet leather. There's actually an optimal moisture level to try to reach in order to get the best results, and having the patience to learn what that is can have a quicker impact on the quality of your tooling than you might imagine.

Getting the right amount of moisture in the leather is critically important. In leatherworking, we refer to the dampening process as ‘casing the leather.’

Quick Casing

The Quick Case method is what more craftsman are familiar with because of its speed and efficiency. This casing method that allows for the flexibility to start and finish a project in the shortest amount of time possible.

In this method, do not allow for the leather to saturate completely. For a belt for instance with a weight of around 9/10 oz leather for the top that will be tooled, simply use a spray bottle with clean water in it and spray the blank to get a good saturation.  On the first spray of the belt, really try and get a good saturation.  This step is for priming the leather. Allow the leather to sit and begin its drying process.  Since it was not submerge and over saturated, the leather will get to the perfect casing point much quicker.  Once it has reached this point, then you may begin your carving and tooling.  Throughout the tooling process monitor the moisture content of the leather.  As it begins to dry out, see how the leather is reacting to the tools and if it seems to be getting a little too dry for the tools being used then spray it lightly to get it back where it needs to be.  The beauty of this method is that you can regulate the moisture content at different stages of the tooling for different tools you are using.

Traditional Casing

To properly case leather you would completely submerge the piece of leather that you plan to carve, stamp or form.  This is usually done in a shop sink, bathtub or plastic bin filled with fresh clean water.  The piece of leather is allowed to stay in the water completely submerged until no more bubbles are seen coming from the leather.

At this point the water has penetrated completely throughout all the fibers of the leather and the piece is completely saturated.  The leather is then removed from the water allowing the excess water to drip off for a moment.  Next the leather is put into a plastic trash bag and the bag is tied shut with as much of the air removed as possible.

The leather is then allowed to set in the bag to sweat or “case” for a few hours or overnight.  If the leather is not needed for more than a day, then the bagged leather can be stored in the refrigerator for a week or so to prevent mold growth and maintain its case.

When the leather is ready to use, the leather piece is removed from the bag and allowed to air dry flat on a work surface.  This is where the judgment of the craftsman comes into play.  There is a point during the drying process when the leather has an optimal moisture content for carving and stamping.  Being able to recognize this window of opportunity is the tricky part sometimes.  As the leather begins to dry out it becomes lighter in color.  The perfect time to carve is somewhere near the point at which the leather is almost back to its dry color range but still wet.  Many craftsman have tricks for deciding when this time is, but the one that is used most often is called the thumbnail method.

When the color looks like it is getting closer to dry leather color, simply press the tip of your thumbnail into the grain side of the leather (in a spot that you will tool over or that won’t be seen).  You are looking for two things here.  First is “how does the leather take my impression?”  You can usually tell if it feels spongy or if it has a bit of “crust” to it or temper.  This crust tells you that when you carve with your swivel knife or strike a stamp on the grain of the leather, that the integrity of the fibers will support the impression, and your cuts will open up and stand firm.  This is important to ensure good impressions and contours during the tooling process.

The second thing to look for is the “color of the impression.”  Here you are looking to see if the deepest part of the impression turns a darker color than the rest of the leather.  This is the “burnish” that adds to the contrast of the final tooled piece.  A good quality veg tanned leather will turn nice and dark when a stamp is driven into it.  If the thumbnail impression doesn’t turn dark then the leather is probably still too wet and the dark contrast will not show in the final piece.  There are some lower grade veg tanned leathers on the market that just don’t have a good burnishing quality about them.  Take this into consideration if you are casing these leathers.

If your thumbprint has the feel of good crust and burnishes well enough, then you are ready to begin the tooling process after the few hours of traditional casing.  Did you notice the mentioned “hours” it took to get to this point using the traditional method?