



Leather | True or False

Animals are raised to make leather: False

The hide/skin is a by-product of the meat industry. Only a very small fraction of skins come from the exotic leather industry which is in an ethical grey area.

Leather is a sustainable product: True

Leather as a raw material is generated renewably because animal meat will always be required by consumers. The manufacturing processing if done with good environmental controls has minimal impact and leather's full life cycle has the lowest carbon and water footprint of any material when analyzing the durability of the product. During the end-of-life phase leather rapidly degrades through chemical and biological means.

Leathers contains toxic materials: False

Responsibly made leather avoids toxic materials. Best available leather technology does not require toxic chemistries and exists in all major global tannery operations. Sometimes unintentionally restricted substances are found due to impurities, but this is the reason we test leather, to ensure it is safe.

Leather is a renewable material: True

Hides and skins will always be produced as a by-product of meat manufacture. Animals form a part of many consumers diets, and thus will always be in demand. The hides/skins of animals raised for their meat will need to be utilized as new products or else they will become waste.

Leather degrades better than synthetic materials: True

Petrochemical based materials are relatively inert and are relatively poor in nutrients for bacteria and fungi. Leather is rich in carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen; three elements that bacteria and fungi like to eat. In the biosphere leather will break down much faster than synthetic materials.

Leather can only be made from animal skins or hides: True

The definition of leather in internationally agreed standards includes the insistence that leather cannot be disintegrated and reformed and must be a covering, largely intact, coming from an animal.

Leather can be recycled: True

Leather fibre board has been used for well over 70 years as a material in footwear and sound boarding. Leather composites have been around since the early 2000s and lots of work is being done to produce a wider diversity of recycled leathers.

Synthetic materials are made from natural fibres: False

To distinguish synthetic materials from natural, the term synthetic refers to materials constructed from sub-units that are derived using synthetic sources (e.g., petroleum chemicals), and natural generally implies grown in an animal. Leather alternatives are largely synthetic (petrochemical based), there are only a few new natural alternatives to leather.

Leathers can be made from other sources, besides animals: False

International standards and definitions, and in many cases national laws prohibit the use of the word leather UNLESS it comes from an animal. Labelling something as leather, not from an animal is illegal in many countries.

Leather is only made in underdeveloped countries: False

The best tanneries in the world come from both low-income countries and from high-income countries. Any company based anywhere in the world who is prepared to invest in state-of-the-art facilities and environmental protections is welcome in the leather industry.

Leather articles are not durable: False

New consumers quickly learn that there is a big difference between leather and leather alternatives when it comes to durability. Very few leather alternatives can match the durability and performance of high-quality leather.

Leather can be distinguished from other materials by the “leather smell”: False

Whilst some leathers do have a characteristic smell, many modern consumers require that their leather has a neutral smell. Tanners will then make the leather smell less. If a consumer wants it to smell like leather a tanner can use vegetable tanning agents and fish oil to give it the characteristic odour.

Leather is a natural product: True

What could be more natural than an animal hide or skin that is largely protein, moisture and air. Tanning substances include protection for its working life and then allow for the biosphere to degrade the leather in a rapid manner.

Suede or nubucks are not leathers: False

The top or bottom layer of the hide can be made into suede, and the top grain layer can be turned into nubuck. A nubuck can be called “genuine leather”, but in the case of the suede it has to be called “genuine suede leather.” as it has no finish.

Synthetic materials are being sold as leather: True

The reputation of leather is so good that deceitful people want to mislead consumers by labelling their products as leather. Unfortunate consumers then buy these synthetics, thinking they are real leather and are disappointed by the lack of performance.

Leather is a modern product: True

Modern leathers are highly technical, and have a range of features that can give the user attributes that most other materials cannot, these can include: water resistance, fire resistance, breathability, anti-bacterial, thermal-imaging protection, anti-abrasion, high grip, exceptional softness, laser etching, body sensory implants, UV colour change, heat colour change, and dimensional stability.

Leather is the best material for shoes: True

In terms of shoe comfort and strength, durability to scuffing and abrasion, ability to mould to the body, stretch around the foot, easy care, repairability, and breathability – very few materials can match its properties.

Leather has a big carbon footprint: False

After the European Commission's in-depth Product Environmental Footprint evaluation for bovine leather the environmental footprint carry-over from the animal's lifecycle has been restricted to 0.42%

Leather is not an eco-friendly product: False

Very few modern materials have the ability to degrade in the biosphere like leather does. Leather manufacturing improves continuously with many modern tanneries having minimal impact on their environment. As a renewable resource, leather will continue to be an eco-friendly material for all kinds of products.

Leather is a by-product: True

Yes, the hides and skins are a by-product of the meat industry.