



## Leather Maintenance - A Step-by-Step Guide

The most common mistake people make when taking care of leather is using too much conditioner. Leather comes with surfactants (protection) from the tannery. BMW leathers are all very well protected when new. If you apply too much leather chemicals and/or too often, you will strip off the protection the tannery applied. Your leather will begin to crack and wear prematurely. The best analogy for this is like the enamel on your teeth. Once the enamel is gone, your teeth have no defense. The best thing you can do for leather, to keep it soft, supple and preserve the matte-finish, is to wipe it down with a damp cloth whenever you think to. Wiping the leather with a damp cloth will pick up any loose dirt particles on the surface. Loose dirt, between you on the seat and the leather, will begin to work it's way into the surface of the leather. This action will begin to buff or polish the leather, making it shiny and the leather will begin to become thinner.

The following techniques are what we use when working with the chemical treatment.

We only use the Spinneybeck Finished Leather Maintenance Kit. Obviously, we have not tried all the leather care products on the market so we can not say if there is a better product out there. We also like Connolly Hide Food as an alternative to Spinneybeck and I have been impressed with the Griot's Garage Leather Treatment. We always use a 100% cotton diaper to apply and buff when using a leather chemical:



You should apply leather chemicals when the seats are warm. If you park with the windows rolled up, the seats will get warm. If you have a heated garage, the seats may already be warm. In a pinch, you can run the cars heater for a few minutes. The leather does not have to be hot, but the idea is that when the leather is warm, the pores will open and the leather will better absorb the chemicals. Too cold and the leather will not absorb the chemicals.

Before beginning, vacuum the leather area to pick up any loose particles of dirt. Clean the seats with a clean, damp cloth

This is JonM's driver's inboard bolster before any chemicals (12,500 miles):



I always work on one panel at a time. Do not spot clean a panel. If using chemicals for a small area, you want to clean the entire panel. We try to avoid getting leather chemicals on the stitching or in the seams. It can discolor some threads. If the chemical gets in between panels, it may be difficult to get it out. This may even weaken the backing at the seams. This amount of Spinneybeck is enough to clean the lower seat panel:

[www.LeanerZ.com](http://www.LeanerZ.com)



Apply in small circles. Press softly, but press enough to work the chemical into the leather. When fully applied, the panel will look a little wet but not soaked (note that the camera flash was on in this picture:



I generally apply chemical to one half of the car at a time. By the time I am done with application (approximately 15 minutes), it is time to start removing/buffing the excess chemicals. I use another clean, cotton diaper for this step. Again, small circles, inspecting closely for any excess amounts of chemical after passing with the buffer. The end result:



You should not have to buff much, if any--provided you did not apply too much chemical to begin with. It is exactly like waxing the paint. One thin coat is just as effective as one massively thick coat. It all has to be buffed off in the end, and the more you have to buff, the more likely you are to mess something up.

After the whole seat is done:



Pay special attention to high-wear areas like steering wheels or knee bolsters:



Even a garage queen like JonM's M Coupe, usually kept at a surgical level of cleanliness, conditioning will pick up dirt particles:



### Additional Tips and Guidelines

1. Clean the leather area(s) once every two weeks with a clean, cotton cloth that is damp (not wet). This is the most important thing you can do to keep your leather looking new.
2. For areas that need to be cleaned with a soap, we recommend Neutrogena facial soap (just soap, nothing with an exfoliate). If it is good enough for your face, it is good enough for your car.
3. Do not over condition your leather. You should not need to use a chemical more than 2 times per year. You can over condition leather will do more harm than you think. Too many chemicals on leather will remove surfactants applied at the tannery. This will dramatically decrease the life of your leather.
4. Apply chemicals when the leather is warm to the touch to get maximum penetration.
5. Wait a few minutes before buffing the chemicals. Do not leave on overnight!