

LEATHER

As car makers have elected to move cars upmarket (ie in a position where they make more profit) so leather has become much more common in the last two decades or so. This has been helped by cars becoming much more complicated so that the cost of leather is less significant in the final price.

to remove any grit from the stitching area. The worst thing for the leather is bringing the kids or grandkids home from the beach with sand on their bums, the sand or grit with movement over time cuts into the leather between the stiches and it all falls apart.

Step 1. Clean with a fine mist of neutral Ph leather wash using a soft brush to clean dirt out of the grain, polish dry with a soft towel as soon as possible after wetting, minimise the wetting as much as possible by only working on a small area at any moment say a square foot at a time (MAXIMUM).

Step 2 Using one or two cotton balls rub on the hide food or leather balm without leaving any thick enough to be visible. Remember to do in the pleats as well, leave as long as possible preferably overnight then polish off with another soft clean towel or cloth.

How often should it be done? A light application every year is much better than a heavy dose every few years

TECH TORQUE: LEATHER

The problem is that the first one or two owners see no need to maintain the leather unless they intend to be long term owners.

The above problem leads to the next issue, the leather dries out, this happens very slowly like the new car smell, the smell of leather is the chemicals and naturel oils leaching out. The Japanese do not like the “leather smell” but as a rough rule of thumb with any other leather, if you cannot smell it, it needs feeding.

With newish leather say under ten years old in good condition, first vacuum the seats forcing the pleats apart



and it stops the dirt becoming too ingrained. Sand and grit being the main problem, the next avoidable nasty is the sun, so if you drive to work a windscreen cover/shield or back of the car facing North. Note, you need to try and establish just what is leather, normally only the contact or wearing parts of the seats are leather, not the sides, front, back and under the headrests back although the squab pleats extend under the headrests. It does no harm to put the hide food on the vinyl but it will not soak in so is just wasted. Distressed or older leather with no splits can be saved with a fair bit of effort. If there is surface or cracks less than thirty percent deep then a much more disciplined approach needed. Using the special washing liquid use cotton balls or soft cloth just damp enough so that a gentle squeeze does not force washing liquid out of the cloth or cotton ball. Repeatedly wipe the surface until no discolouration appears on your cloth or

cotton ball, the aim is at all times to avoid getting water in any cracks. As the leather dries out it shrinks causing stitching to come apart and/or water weakened cracks to split. So if there are no splits, feeding (balm) every month (not wiping off excess) over 6 to 12 months should make the leather useable and soft enough to redo stitching that has come apart. If you can find a scrap seat the same colour, some trimmers can replace panels providing the leather is soft. There are people who redo furniture leather who might be able to help recolouring while shoe repairers sell spray cans to recolour your shoes that only give a good colour match with black. There are about 3 different brands of leather cleaner and balm so just follow their instructions.

Finally, do not use shoe polish, it just produces a shiny patch and contains very little pigment to aid recolouring. Russell.

NB The same rules apply to your leather lounge or jackets except they don't deteriorate as quickly.

