

# Leather Care for Squires

and their Knights, too...



Photo of Master Æiric ørvender (Chris Lemke), in his leather armor and squire's belt, courtesy of Mistress Keely the Tinker (Denise Lemke), photo used with permission of photographer and subject.



# Leather is EVERYWHERE

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History of Leather and Care

Basic Leather Care

Conditioning vs. Oiling

Deep Cleaning

Dealing with Sweat

Final tips & takeaways



# History of Leather Care



Image: Mendel Manuscript, 1425, Nuremberg, Public Domain

# Historical Leatherwork and Care

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- Leather is ubiquitous throughout history, but most records detail the tanning and dying processes, focusing on these to preserve leather, but there are a few references to be found!
- Hide goods predate *Homo sapiens*, and archeological evidence is widespread. Recorded history has leather care dating to Egyptian and Roman times similar to leather care today, cleaning with damp cloths, then conditioning with oils or fats, tallow, and wax. (Thomson, 2011)
- Phoenicians would scour leather by stomping it into clay dust on the ground, scrubbing the leather and allowing the clay dust to absorb any oily residue, then remove the remainder with a gum of boiled soap-weed (Knonkol and Rasmussen, 2015)





# Everyone teaches Leatherworking...

"MY KNIGHT HELPED ME MAKE THIS!!! CAN  
YOU FIX IT?"



Photo by self of donated, neglected armor



# No one teaches CARE

Leather care, preservation, and maintenance is a subject that is sorely undertaught, even in today's age in historical and restorational curricula (Thomson, 2011).

Leather can last a lifetime

Neglect is what kills leather goods

Leather care is simple, and easier than we think

If we all teach leather care when we teach leatherworking, our leather goods will last, our fighters will be safer, and our society will be prettier!!!

(dry rotted sample in kit)

The page features decorative leaf patterns in the corners. The top-left and top-right corners contain clusters of several pointed, oval-shaped leaves on thin stems. The bottom-left and bottom-right corners contain a single large, heart-shaped leaf with a central vein and two side veins, and a small cluster of two pointed leaves below it. All elements are rendered in a light, semi-transparent white color against a light gray background.

# Basic Care

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MAINTENANCE OF LEATHER GOODS

# Basic Care

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Use a Soft, Dry Brush to remove visible Debris

Wipe with a soft, damp cloth

Do not use commercial soaps, as these can alter the condition of the leather unless they are specially designed for this

Condition/Preserve

Mink Oil vs. 4 in 1 conditioner

Waterproofing

(muddy leather, dry leather, fingernail brush, soft cloth, oil/soap samples in kit)



Photo by self of donated, neglected armor



# Choosing your Conditioner: Mink Oil vs Conditioner

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- MINK OIL

- Solid Oil

- Better penetration

- Waterproofing

- May discolor/darken  
leather

- LEATHER CONDITIONER


- Liquid oil

- Easier Handling

- Sealing

- Will not discolor, but will not penetrate as  
well

(Dry leather with oil and conditioner samples in kit)



The page features decorative white leaf patterns in the corners. The top-left and top-right corners each contain a branch with several oval-shaped leaves. The bottom-left and bottom-right corners each contain a single heart-shaped leaf with a central vein and two side veins, and a small cluster of three oval leaves below it. The background is a solid light gray color.

# Deep Cleaning and Restoration

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HOW TO RESTORE YOUR LEATHER IF YOU CAN



Photo by self of donated, neglected armor

# Deep Cleaning/Conditioning

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Oil Based Soaps – Saddle soap, Murphy's

Vinegar and water – 50/50 blend

Oil and Vinegar - 2 parts Olive oil to 1 part vinegar

Toothpaste – Non-gel, best for lighter color leather, spot work

Soften leather per preference and leather condition

Always test your cleaner on a small, nondescript portion of your leather before use, so you know how your product will affect your leather goods!



Photo by self of donated, neglected armor

# Trouble Areas

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## Dark Stains

- Vinegar and Cream of Tartar – equal parts, rub the paste in and let it sit 10 minutes, apply another layer of paste, work it in, and use a damp sponge to remove

## Water Spots

- Dampen leather, allow to dry in a warm, dry area, do not use heat or dry in direct sunlight

## Oil

- Baking soda or cornstarch, sprinkle liberally on stain, allow to sit overnight, remove powder with soft brush or cloth



Photo by self of donated, neglected armor

# Trouble Areas (continued)

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## Mold and Mildew

- Rubbing alcohol and water – equal parts, dampen soft cloth or cotton swab with mixture, lightly wipe from surface and then wipe area with clean, damp cloth, allow to dry completely

## Ink or Dye spots

- Rubbing alcohol, Non-oil cuticle remover – apply with cotton swab, remove with damp cloth

The above methods are safe ways to deal with these issues, but they may not work. The only way to guarantee leather life is regular maintenance and care!

# Taking Care of Sweaty Leather

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## Soak

- Quickly dip your leather in a cool water bath, hang to dry in a cool, well-ventilated area, condition afterwards
  - *Warm water or long soaks/saturating leather may deform your leather, especially cuir bouilli*

## Water and White vinegar

- Equal parts, use a cloth dampened in mixture to blot salt away, wipe with damp cloth after, allow to dry completely. May take multiple attempts, condition when finished and dry



Photo by self of donated, neglected armor

# Restoration

## Prevention!!!!

- Keeping up with leather maintenance is key. Damage is permanent. Issues can be mitigated or minimized, but cannot be fully repaired

## Scratches

- Clean with equal parts vinegar and water, condition

## Cracks

- Hydrate/condition, Leather fillers or Repair Kits

## Fading

- Re-Dye leather, conditioning



Photo of Self during Pennsic 51, performing leather work, courtesy of Mistress Keely the Tinker (Denise Lemke), photo used with photographer's and subject's permission

# Final tips & takeaways

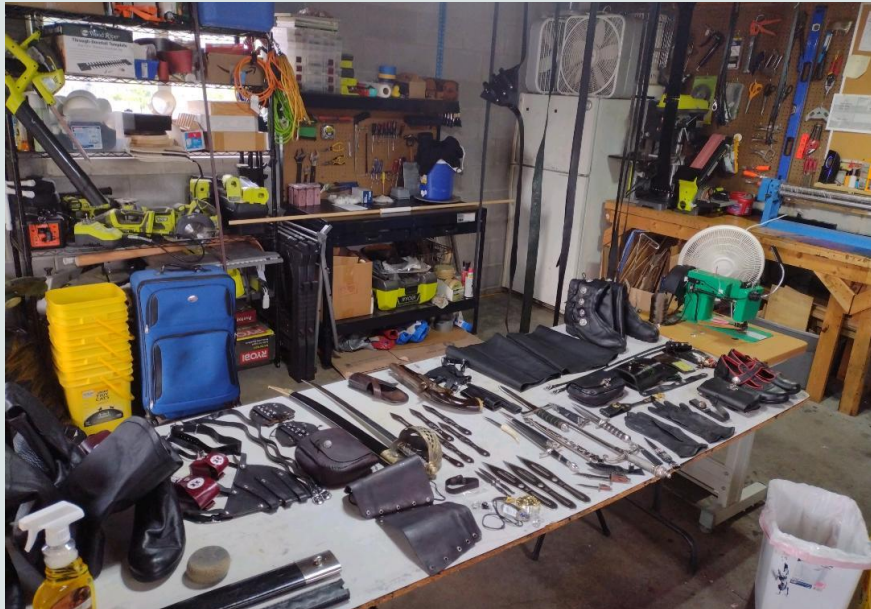


Photo by Self of Leather Shop during Leather maintenance

Keep it Clean

- *Dry brush, damp cloth, oil-based soaps*

Keep it Dry

- *Dry at room temp, waterproofing*

Keep it Soft

- *Oil or Condition Regularly*

Keep it up

- *Stay ahead of care, neglect destroys leather*

# Sources - Historical

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# Sources – Basic Care

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# Sources – Deep Cleaning and Restoration

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Photo of Self and Lady Isobel ignean Alexandair (Jessica Schmidt), courtesy of THL Tarmach ben Yehuda al-Khazari (Richard S. Mandel), used with permission of photographer and subjects

# Thank you

Lord Ulrich Michel Schmidt

“The Dread Pirate Schmidt”

“Schmidty”

“THAT guy...”

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