

PRESS RELEASE

Luxurious leather

There is nothing quite as luxurious as genuine leather upholstery. We speak to Claire Gibson, from leading furniture manufacturer, La-Z-Boy, about the many benefits of leather upholstery, and how to keep it looking in tip-top condition.

06 March 2019, Johannesburg: Buying a lounge suite is a sizeable investment, and so you will want to choose something that best fits your needs and your home. Aside from shape and size of the sofa, upholstery cover is the next most important consideration, and the one question that will most definitely come up is how leather differs from fabric. We turned to lounge suite expert, Claire Gibson from La-Z-Boy, to discuss the most common myths and misconceptions about leather furniture, and to get some information so that you can make your next seating purchase with confidence.

Types of leather

There is a lot of confusing information in the market regarding leather explains Claire: "Genuine leather upholstery is priced at the upper end of the spectrum, and so it is not affordable to everybody. If you want the look of genuine leather, but you don't have the budget, then there are a number of alternative options available to you." She says that when choosing your upholstery cover, it is of the utmost importance to know what you are buying, as not all "leather" is created equal: "Sofas are upholstered in a variety of products, ranging from genuine leather to fake leather (synthetics), and even synthetic products that claim to be leather." Here is an outline of the various types of leather upholstery currently on the market:

- **Full aniline leather:** The strongest type of leather is made from the uppermost part of the hide, therefore the natural markings, folds and scars, which make every hide, and ultimately your lounge seating manufactured in this top leather category, uniquely inviting and sensually appealing.
- **Semi- aniline leather:** This leather type is stylish, with a soft supple feel. It is also made from the top section of the hide, with the main difference being that some of the natural markings have been lightly corrected to give a more uniform look.
- **Corrected grain leather:** This leather type has most of the natural markings removed. Buffing, pigmenting, printing and tumbling is needed to get the desired look and feel and restore its appearance. Due to this technical process, this leather tends to be slightly firmer and colder than the others, yet strong and durable, requiring minimal care.

- **Semi-nu buck leather:** This leather type is a buffed aniline leather with all the natural markings giving it an authentic rugged appearance. Shade variations are normal and add to the character of the aged look. This leather type will take on natural skin oils from body contact and will have a tendency to go darker and shinier in these areas – this is a natural occurrence and will enhance the characteristic of the leather with time.
- **Pigmented or finished splits:** Manufactured from the underside of the hide (splits) – there is no grain on the surface, but it boasts a suede effect because the fibres inside the hide are visible. To bond all the fibres, a pigment is sprayed on, and a grain texture is embossed onto the surface. Split leather tears more easily than other types of leather, and is best used on the non-contact areas of a sofa.
- **By-cast leather:** Also made from the underside of the hide (splits), so strictly speaking, by-cast leather can be labelled leather, but it is not recommended for upholstery of soft furnishings, as it has a polyurethane (PU) coating that often peels and tears easily.
- **Bonded leather:** This is not genuine leather. It has a synthetic polyurethane (PU) or plastic top skin, coated onto a textile backing, then a “sprinkling” of leather shavings is applied to the underside to resemble genuine leather. It is not nearly as durable, soft, pliable and long-lasting as the real thing.

The benefits of genuine leather

Aside from its gorgeous good looks, Claire says that genuine leather upholstery boasts a number of enviable benefits including:

- **Stable temperature:** Since genuine leather is a natural material that breathes, it will warm to your body heat in winter and remain pleasantly cool in summer.
- **Easy care:** This is a big one, especially for families with kids and pets – leather is especially easy to care for and takes minimal effort. To clean, regular dry-cloth dusting and vacuum cleaning in crevices is recommended. (See under cleaning tips)
- **Long-lasting:** If you take proper care of your leather furniture, it will be something that could be handed down from generation to generation. In fact, as it ages, the natural patina of the leather just gets more beautiful over time. So, even though you might pay a little more in the beginning, its longevity makes leather furniture a sound investment.
- **Durability:** Genuine leather is an exceptionally strong natural material and will be able to endure everyday use with ease. If you would like extra peace of mind, you can get the leather treated with a special finish that gives it added protection and durability against spills and stains.

General leather cleaning tips

We all know that life happens and when it does it is always best to know the ideal way of dealing with the issue at hand. Claire provides her top tips for handling these occurrences like a pro:

1. Whichever cleaning method or product that you use, be sure to test it out on a hidden area first to make sure that it doesn't damage the upholstery in any way.
2. For minor spots and spills, wipe away any excess liquid immediately with a clean, absorbent cloth. If required, use a lightly dampened cloth and let the area in question air dry naturally.
3. Never use the following products on your leather upholstery: cleaning solvents, furniture polish, oils, varnish, abrasive cleaners or ammonia water.
4. For any stains caused by butter, oil or grease – simply wipe away any excess with a clean cloth, and then leave it alone as the spot should dissipate into the leather after a short period of time.
5. For minor or slight scratches on the surface of your leather upholstery, use a chamois to gently buff the scratch. If required, moisten lightly with distilled water to work the scratches out.
6. Condition your leather approximately every 9-12 months using a good quality hide food, which contains softening and nourishing agents.
7. Certain leather types e.g. Buffed leathers that absorb moisture can be treated with a leather protector, which can be applied before the leather is damaged to prevent liquids from being absorbed.
8. Most leathers, especially full aniline leathers are light sensitive and needs to be kept away from direct sunlight to avoid fading.

ENDS

Released on behalf of La-Z-Boy (www.la-z-boy.co.za) by The Line (www.theline.co.za).