

# Best bets for buffing your hide

Keeping leather trim supple calls for regular care – we check out six cream and liquid conditioners

All natural materials dry out over time and the harsh environment of a car interior can wreak havoc on even the best quality hide. That gorgeous smell of real leather comes from natural oils evaporating from the hides so, to keep the cockpit in good shape, they need to be replenished from time to time.

You get a double benefit from looking after your car's trim. The seats and other high-wear surfaces stay more supple and in good shape for longer, protecting the value of your investment. There's the added 'wow' factor for passengers when they sit in the car and, above all, there is that sublime smell. Before the engine is fired up, it transports the car's occupants to a time when craftsmanship reigned and motor cars were constructed – often by hand – from real materials. So preserve the character of your car and treat your trim with one of these conditioners.

## TOUGH AS OLD BOOTS?

Tanning leather used to take two or three days and involved treating the hide to prevent deterioration and natural oil evaporation, using substances such as urine and oak bark. Today, it involves chromic acid – which is why tanneries have moved from the environmentally conscious West to poorer nations. Older leather is made from the hide of an animal and is not 'split' – sliced into two or three to create thinner leather and get more hide from one skin. The old method required perfect hides from unscarred animals. Today, leather is processed and rolled flat to conceal imperfections, then the 'grain' is embossed artificially. Hide used in car interiors is known as 'sealed leather' because the surface is treated with a protective top-sealant.



### GLIPTONE LIQUID LEATHER

£6.99 **17/20**

**Ease of use** 8/10 **End result** 9/10 **Size** 250ml **e-marked?** No **Price per 100ml** £2.79

**Availability** from manufacturer **Main stated ingredient** not stated **pH** neutral

This very pale, beige free-running liquid comes in a squeezable bottle without a spout and care is needed to avoid getting it everywhere. It's easy to overload the surface, but the leather devours it. It's easy to work Gliptone into the creases and the glossy surface seems to draw in the conditioner. Leather upholstery perks up almost instantly and the smell is heavenly, filling your car with a fantastic aroma that says 'quality'.



TOP CHOICE

### HALFORDS LEATHER CONDITIONER

£4.99 **11/20**

**Ease of use** 7/10 **End result** 4/10 **Size** 250ml **e-marked?** Yes **Price per 100 ml** £1.99

**Availability** all Halfords branches **Main stated ingredient** oils and waxes **pH** not stated

The trick-capped blue bottle contains a fairly runny, translucent white liquid which absorbs readily into the leather and works freely into the surface of the material. After the stated time, it buffs up easily but, unusually, leaves the leather with a markedly matt finish, making it the ideal conditioner for leather steering wheels and dashboards, where greater grip and less reflectivity are more important than gloss.



### AUTOGLYM LEATHER CARE CREAM

£4.99 **16/20**

**Ease of use** 9/10 **End result** 7/10 **Size** 325ml **e-marked?** Yes **Price per 100ml** £1.53

**Availability** all good motorists' shops

**Main stated ingredient** soap and natural oils **pH** not stated Autoglym's soft, pale and slightly creamy Leather Care can be squeezed straight from the bottle in a controlled manner. It's easy to wipe over the surface of the leather and then rub in harder to feed, before buffing off. It lifts dirt out effectively as you go and rewards with ease of use. The leather ends up with slightly increased flexibility and the conditioner is completely absorbed, leaving no residue.



### LORD SHERATON LEATHER BALSAM

£2.07 **15/20**

**Ease of use** 7/10 **End result** 8/10 **Size** 75ml **e-marked?** Yes **Price per 100ml** £2.76

**Availability** Sainsbury's, Dylon stockists **Main stated ingredient** refined beeswax **pH** not stated

The glass jar has a wide neck, making it easy to load a cloth with this white, waxy cream. It rubs in readily and it feels as if the leather is drinking in the beeswax, filling the car with a subtle, waxy smell that is upmarket without being too obvious. Once treated, the leather surfaces retain a durable, long-lasting quality sheen.



### CONNOLLY HIDE CARE

£5.99 **12/20**

**Ease of use** 5/10 **End result** 7/10 **Size** 284ml **e-marked?** Yes **Price per 100ml** £2.11

**Availability** from manufacturer **Main stated ingredient** lanolin **pH** not stated

Connolly has the best-looking packaging, but the product is unconvincing. The beige cream has a waxy consistency, but seems to sit on the surface of the leather for longer than other conditioners. It is not absorbed as quickly and the leather feels 'wetter' during the conditioning process. Vigorous buffing is required to bring up a good shine and reduce the moist effect left by the cream.



### SIMONIZ LEATHER CARE

£4.75 **15/20**

**Ease of use** 6/10 **End result** 9/10 **Size** 500ml **e-marked?** Yes **Price per 100ml** £0.95

**Availability** all good motorists' shops **Main stated ingredient** lanolin and wax **pH** neutral Simoniz is the cheapest product available per unit volume and scores for its ability to keep large areas of leather in shape at an affordable price – ideal if you have a big car. The screw-top bottle needs care, but the white cream lifts dirt out of the leather and is absorbed quickly. After buffing, the surface is left with a natural sheen, less glossy than with other products, but still adding increased suppleness to the surface.



BUDGET BUY

## THE FINAL VERDICT

★ **TOP CONDITIONER** GLIPTONE LIQUID LEATHER **WHY?** Easy to work into creases and smooth surfaces alike. Leaves leather reinvigorated, with a delicious 'quality' smell.

★ **BUDGET CHOICE** SIMONIZ LEATHER CARE **WHY?** Good-value product for cleaning and maintaining leather in big cars where larger areas are involved.