

LEATHER TACK CARE GUIDE

Step-by-Step Cleaning, Conditioning & Best Maintenance Practices

STEP-BY-STEP CLEANING PROCESS

STEP 1 Dismantle Hardware and Straps

Allows access to hidden stress points and buckle folds

Unbuckle straps, remove bits, and unfasten cheek pieces or reins. Taking pieces apart prevents salt, sweat, and dirt from building up under metal hardware and allows you to inspect high-stress areas for cracked grain or failing stitches.

STEP 2 Wipe Away Surface Dirt and Sweat

Use a barely damp cloth or dry soft brush

Wipe down all surfaces to remove surface dust and dried sweat. Use a soft-bristle brush inside stamped patterns, tooling, or stitching lines to lift embedded dirt without turning it into mud when moisture is added.

STEP 3 Clean with Saddle Soap

Work up a light lather using a damp sponge

Dampen your tack sponge—wring it out completely so it is damp, never dripping wet. Work the cleaner into a fine lather and apply in small circular motions. Pay extra attention to the flesh side and undersides of straps where horse sweat penetrates deepest. Wipe away dirty suds immediately with a clean, dry cloth before they dry back into the pores.

STEP 4 Condition and Replenish Moisture

Apply oil or balm once leather is dry

Allow the leather to air-dry completely at room temperature (never near direct heat or harsh sunlight). Apply a light, even coat of conditioner or oil using a clean rag, focusing on high-flex points. Avoid over-saturating around stitch holes or buckle tongue holes, as excess oil can stretch or weaken the fibers.

STEP 5 Buff and Reassemble

Final polish and safety check

Let the conditioner absorb for 15–30 minutes, then buff the grain with a dry microfiber towel to produce a clean, non-tacky finish. Reassemble hardware, making sure all Chicago screws, buckle tongues, and lace ties are secure.

BEST PRACTICES

Daily Wipe-Down: A quick pass with a barely damp sponge after every ride removes fresh sweat before salt crystallizes and draws moisture out of the leather.

Tooled & Stamped Leather: Avoid heavy paste soaps that dry into white residue in detailed tooling. Use liquid cleaners and soft-bristle brushes instead.

Storage: Store tack in a well-ventilated area around 45%–55% humidity to prevent mold and mildew growth.