

An Art of its Own – Leather Dyeing and Texturing for Design Binding
Coleen Curry

Leather Choice

- Vegetable tanned leather – undyed or fair.
- Choose lightest and brightest skins for best results, can overdye leather that isn't finished with a surface coating
- Pare leather before dyeing and covering - as dyeing can make leather brittle
- Start with a piece of leather larger than you need as shrinkage occurs in the dyeing process
- Test on scraps of the same skin you will be covering with to understand how it will change with dyes
- Best to apply to dampened (not wet) leather to prevent streaks. Dry suede side up to allow for deeper penetration
- When dry, buff the surface to remove excess surface dye to give brighter results, may want to finish with some form of protective wax polish.

Aniline Dyes

- Water based, I use Hewit aniline dyes
- Aniline dyes need to be with a sealant to bind the dye to the leather and prevent movement. I use (Hewit Dye-Fix)
- Softer colors, permeate deeper, and lightfast, need to let dry before applying another color
- Mix scant tsp with a little water to form a paste. Then add hot (not boiling) water to desired intensity. I usually mix dyes as needed. You may want to mix a concentrate and then decant and dilute as needed.
- If chrome/bronze effect appears, the dye is too concentrated.

Spirit Based Dyes

- Fiebing's leather dye (do not use oil based Pro-Dye)
- Wet-fast
- Intense, bold color, less lightfast
- Dilute dye with isopropyl alcohol 1:5 (or denatured alcohol)
- Spirit dyes can make leather brittle, manipulating while damp can help soften

Recommended Leather Suppliers:

Harmatan (leather and suede splits)

<https://www.harmatan.co.uk/>

J. Hewit & Sons Ltd. (leather and dyes)

<https://www.hewit.com>

Colophon Book Arts Supply (Pergamena leather)

<https://www.colophonbookarts.com/shophome>

<https://www.pergamena.net/store#/leather>

Talas (Harmatan and Hewit leather)

<https://www.talasonline.com/fabrics-and-leather/leather>

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Preferred Product Brands:

Hewit Aniline Dyes and Dye Fix
Fiebings Leather Dyes (do not use the oil base pro-dyes)
Jacquard Alcohol Inks
Goldens Matte Medium
Chartpak Blender Pens

Suggested Reading:

Skin Deep Volume 30
http://www.hewit.com/skin_deep/?volume=30

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