

## Leather Care

I'd wipe the leather down with a damp cotton towel weekly or use Meguiar's Quik Interior Detailer on the towel. Every 3-6 months I'd re-clean and reapply the protection cream.

1. Woolite / water mix (1:10 ratio) wet a soft foam applicator with this mixture and squeeze to generate a foam. Gently rub the leather to loosen the oil and grime. Let this mix dwell for a minute or two but not dry, then remove with a soft white cotton towel that has been wet and wring out. Examine the towel to see if soil is still coming off and if so repeat the process. For very soiled steering wheels I'd use a soft bristle brush to agitate but not scrub the wheel.

2. Same as the first option but use Leather Masters Strong Leather Cleaner. This is a stronger detergent than the Woolite.

Once clean, I'd suggest applying Leather Masters Leather Protection Cream. This will help to keep the leather from getting soiled.

The technique is to squirt some cleaner on a soft sponge and squeeze it several times to generate a foam. Gently apply the foam to a small section of the leather in brisk, circular motions using little pressure. Just enough to agitate and work the detergent into the topcoat. Let it dwell for a minute or two and wipe up with a moist, white cotton towel. Examine the towel to see if it has removed any dirt and grime. Repeat if needed and move on to another small area. When finished wet another cotton towel and wring it out then wipe down the leather to be sure to remove all traces of the detergent.

Let the detergent do the work. Heavy rubbing is not desirable.

I'd suggest cleaning with Leather Master Strong Leather Cleaner for starters. If that fails to remove the stains, they make a stronger cleaner called Leather Master Super Remover.

With light colored leather, it is especially important to use a **leather protectant** to avoid these stains and dye transfers from jeans, belts, etc. that conditioners can't. The product I use and can recommend is Leather Masters Protection Cream.

I'd immediately clean and add a protector like Leather Masters Protection Cream. This will prevent dye transfer and stains from jeans, belts and other mishaps.

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For readers of this thread, if you are really interested in an **extensive** leather discussion, and have a lot of time on your hands, take a read of this thread: <http://www.autopia.org/forum/epic-th...recommend.html>  
There are over 200 responses there.

What does the manufacturer actually recommend for your leather care?

From the owners manual:

■ **Caring for leather areas**

- Lexus recommends cleaning the interior of the vehicle at least twice a year to maintain the quality of the vehicle's interior.

■ **Cleaning the leather areas**

- Remove dirt and dust using a vacuum cleaner.
- Wipe any excess dirt and dust with a soft cloth dampened with diluted detergent. Use a diluted water solution of approximately 5% neutral wool detergent.
- Wring out any excess water from the cloth and thoroughly wipe off all remaining traces of detergent.
- Wipe the surface with a dry, soft cloth to remove any remaining moisture. Allow the leather to dry in a shaded and ventilated area.

■ **Cleaning the synthetic leather areas**

- Remove loose dirt using a vacuum cleaner.
- Apply a mild soap solution to the synthetic leather using a sponge or soft cloth.
- Allow the solution to soak in for a few minutes. Remove the dirt and wipe off the solution with a clean, damp cloth.

So as you see, the manufacturer doesn't recommend anything, aside from cleaning using a Woolite like detergent, in their owners manual. OTOH, dealers will recommend anything that makes the dealership more money. Think extended warranty plans, paint protection plans, interior protection plans, etc., etc. Just because a Lexus dealership sells a product doesn't mean that Lexus corporate endorses or even recommends it.

The leather products sold by Lexus under their label are rebadged consumer products. Likely from the same source as those sold at Chevy, Ford, Chrysler and many other automotive dealerships under their respective badges. You most assuredly can buy these same products at an auto supply store under another, perhaps very familiar, label (for likely half the cost).

The reason I use particular, non-Lexus, branded products on my leather is that I have been caring for leather for several decades and have used countless scores of products and found those that work exceptionally well for me. In a nutshell, the products I use yield superior performance.

IME, Leather Masters Strong Leather Cleaner and Leather Masters Protection cream rise to the top. In fact, LM Protection cream is one of the few products available that will prevent dye transfer from jeans or belts.

The LM Protector doesn't prevent cracking. Cracking is caused by improper hydration, temperature variability and stretching. Leather that is allowed to dry out, shrinks, turns hard and is then prone to cracking. Leather swells when hydrated and shrinks when it dries. When properly hydrated, the leather fibers plump up and the leather feels soft and supple. When dry, the fibers shrink and the leather is hard and unyielding.

Automotive leather is subject to extreme temperatures, easily reaching 160°F on a hot summer day in the sun to as low as -20° or -30°F in the coldest winter in some areas. Leather swells when it is heated and shrinks and hardens when it is cold, making it prone to cracking. The temperature also plays with the hydration levels of the leather.

Leather also undergoes stretching and creasing from body weight applied while sitting on it.

To minimize creasing and cracking, keep your leather properly hydrated. This will reduce the shrinking/swelling cycles. I'm often asked, "Since our leather is coated with a urethane paint to prevent it from absorbing stains and spills, how do I keep it properly hydrated?"

Coated leather absorbs moisture through a process of transpiration. When you wipe down the leather with a wrung out towel, the water film left on the leather surface raises the relative humidity around the leather and this is absorbed by the leather at a molecular level.

The best approach to take in keeping your leather looking good for as long as possible is to weekly vacuum and wipe it down with a wrung out towel. Every few months, do a careful deep cleaning with a leather detergent like LM Leather Cleaner or diluted Woolite (20 parts water to 1 part Woolite). Follow the cleaning with a wrung out towel wipedown to remove all traces of detergent and let dry. When dry, apply a water-based fluorocarbon protector to prevent dye transfer stains and to minimize wear of the topcoat. (I use LM Protection Cream)

Where possible minimize the leathers exposure to extreme temperature variations. Use a sunshade and/or park in a covered garage on the hottest summer days and keep your car in a garage at night during the coldest winter evenings.

Properly cared for, your leather should last 20-30 years, albeit, not without developing some character creases but no cracks should be evident.

I prefer the Leather Masters Strong Leather Cleaner. I mix it 50/50 with moderately hot water. I also use the Leather Master Protection Cream after cleaning. I clean and protect 3-4 times a year based on soiling. For weekly maintenance, I vacuum and then use a wrung out cotton towel to wipe down and hydrate the leather. Occasionally, I use Meguiar's Quik Interior Detailer in place of the water wipe-down. It has cleaning agents and UV protection. It is also a good cleaner for vinyl, gauges and Navigation screens.

Aside from the leather seats, most everything is either vinyl or plastic. I use Meguiar's Quik Interior Detailer for everything on the interior including LCD displays and gauges. It does have UV protection and yet leaves no gloss.

If I need a more aggressive cleaner (i.e. on door sills) I use Meguiar's M39 Heavy Duty Vinyl Cleaner. For the rubber trim I use Meguiar's M40 Vinyl and Rubber Cleaner/conditioner.

The single most important thing you can do for automotive leather to insure a long life and good looks is to keep it clean. This entails a regular vacuum and periodic deep cleaning

along with a wipe down with a wrung out cotton towel every week or two to maintain the proper hydration and hence the original softness.

If you want to return the leather to its natural appearance, I'd recommend a deep cleaning every 2-3 months. I personally use Leather Masters Strong Leather Cleaner mixed 50/50 with hot water but Original Woolite mixed 1 part to /10 parts hot water also works well. Read my posts for the detailed process.

If you want to protect your leather and maintain the original patina, I'd suggest using Leather Masters Protection Cream and skip the conditioners. This LM protection cream is one of the few leather products that can actually prevent dye transfer stains from jeans and belts.

The process is to mix it with mildly hot water and pour some on a foam pad. Squeeze the pad repeatedly to generate a thick foamy mix then apply to the area to be cleaned. The idea is that the foam will sit on the leather and the chemical will dissolve the grime while not overly wetting the leather.

After wiping up the residue with a clean white cotton towel, inspect it to see if it is picking up grime. If it is repeat. If not, the leather is as clean so now you want to remove any traces of the detergent. You do this by wiping down with a clean, wrung-out towel and finally buff dry with another clean towel.