

Welcome!

- Products
- Product Uses
- Free Samples
- Tech Facts Brochures
- Product Label Instructions
- Product Application Manuals
- FAQs - Frequently Asked Questions
- News Articles
- In the Spotlight
- Testimonials
- International Information
- Fleet and Commercial
- Pricing
- MSDS's
- Free Factory Support
- Press Releases

### Main Site Links

- Main Home Page
- Where to Buy
- Purchase On-Line
- My Account
- Tech Info Home
- Questions? - Contact?
- Site Map
- Search
- Recommended By
- About 303
- What's New



### AUTOMOTIVE LEATHER

***"Most of the leather upholstery in domestic cars of recent vintage is plastic coated."***

- What's this?
- My car's leather interior might be plastic coated?
- How can I tell for sure?
- And why haven't I heard about this before?

If this is all NEWS to you, you're not alone.

As you might imagine, the manufacturer of 303 Aerospace Protectant™ fields lots of questions about this subject. "What do you mean by 'finished' and 'unfinished' leather?", is a common question (referring to 303 Protectant's label). Another, "Can I use 303 Aerospace Protectant for *both* vinyl and my leather upholstery?" and, "Is 303 as good as other brand-name leather conditioners for my leather interior?"

So, for this newsletter we first searched the web on the subjects of "coated" and "finished" automotive leather. Guess what? We discovered that your getting the straight scoop on this subject is somewhere between very difficult and impossible. So we decided to supply our customers and curious visitors with the facts, as is appropriate for a 303 Products Newsletter release and for a permanent place in TECH INFO.

All the quotations in this newsletter are from the article entitled "Caring for Leather Upholstery" in the trade publication, "Professional Carwashing & Detailing." Dr. Herndon Jenkins, an industry authority and Technical Director of the Lexol Division of Summit Industries, is the author.

### ***"A Plastic Coating"***

*"Most of the leather upholstery in domestic cars of recent vintage is plastic coated. The upper surface of such leather is 'vinyl'."*

*"Leather upholstery in most European cars is 'naked' leather which has no protective finish. The surface is that of the original hide. This leather 'breathes' and accepts conditioners applied to its surface."*

### Automotive Leather



### Cross Section of Coated Leather



Dr. Jenkins explains how to tell the difference between "coated" and "naked" leather. Referring to coated leather he states, "**Such leather can be identified by the failure of a drop of water applied to its surface to be absorbed into the leather after a few minutes.**"

Contrasting the ability of naked leather to absorb conditioners (and water) with coated leather, Dr. Jenkins states: "*While vinyl-coated leather is care free by virtue of its protective plastic surface, it is also inaccessible for purposes of maintenance.*" Meaning, of course, there is absolutely no point to using leather conditioners on plastic coated leather.

So, how should plastic coated leather be maintained? According to Dr. Jenkins, "**Such leather should be maintained exactly like vinyl upholstery.**"

You are probably asking yourself, "If this is the case, what else do I need to know?"



Cleverly anticipating your questions, we wanted to make sure this information is still current. So, we contacted Dr. Jenkins at his office in Atlanta. In our conversation Dr. Jenkins told us that in the years since the article was published coated leather has become more common than ever. That now virtually 100% of leather upholstery in American and Asian-made cars is plastic coated. Among European car makers naked leather upholstery is still much more common than with U.S. makes, but coated leather is becoming more prevalent there as well.

Trying to make sense of all this you might ask, "Where does that leave *me* on my car?"

Well, you now know about vinyl coated leather. And you know how to tell if your car's leather is "coated" or "naked", by testing with Dr. Jenkins' water-drop absorbency trick.

What we can't help you with is your one question, "Why didn't I know about this before?" But we can take it from here on the subject of proper care for leather upholstery and interiors.

**For "coated" or "finished" leather upholstery.** There is no better product for vinyl and other plastics than [303 Aerospace Protectant](#). We quote from the article: You care for coated leather "*exactly like vinyl upholstery.*" Here's more information on that subject from 303's vinyl care pamphlet: "[What You Need to Know About Vinyl.](#)"

**For "naked" or "unfinished" leather upholstery:** 303 would be remiss if we did not direct you for this information to Lexol and quote from their website, "*Lexol - The most trusted name in leather care.*" [www.lexol.com](http://www.lexol.com)

We at 303 Products, Inc. work hard to provide our customers and website visitors with accurate and useful information. We hope you've found this information interesting and helpful. Thank you for your business.

### A Little More...

This final tidbit is about leathers which are not used in auto upholstery, specifically the suede, deerskin and other absorbent leather used in fine garments. These are materials for which standard leather cleaners and conditioners are not appropriate. These leathers **CANNOT** be cleaned with water and must be sent to the dry cleaners. An excellent choice to protect leathers such as these is [303 High Tech Fabric Guard](#).

303 High Tech Fabric Guard<sup>TM</sup> is the world's most manufacturer-recommended fabric protector and bonds with any natural or synthetic



absorbent fiber. Absorbent leather treated with 303 HT Fabric Guard resists soiling so it stays cleaner longer. In addition, 303 HT Fabric Guard protects such leathers against both water-based and oil-based stains. 303 HT Fabric Guard does this without affecting the appearance, texture or breathability of the material. Here's more: [http://www.303products.com/tech/index.cfm?fuseaction=product.display&Product\\_ID=320](http://www.303products.com/tech/index.cfm?fuseaction=product.display&Product_ID=320)

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