



Wallet edge by Mark Cambridge, The Hairy Leathercrafter



The Identity Store

Guide to edge finishing leathers



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for people that make,
mend or adapt things
out of leather

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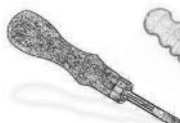
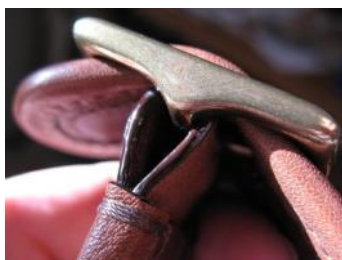
How to get a professional edge

Image source: Equus Leather (www.equusleather.co.uk)



This guide is designed to offer you advice on how to achieve professional results on your leather straps, collars, belts and handles and gives information based on using both vegetable tanned leather, and mineral tanned.

Creating a good edge to give a professional finish to any leather work takes time and patience. We have put together a few steps based on our experience, that of our colleagues and customers, and general good practice, with special thanks to Mark Cambridge for his input on the Identity Store Leading Edge system.



Edge finishing vegetable tanned leather

A well finished edge completes a project and marks out quality craftsmanship. There are several methods for slicking/burnishing and for applying the edging paint or finish. You might like to try and experiment to see which works best for you.



1. Clean Cut—when cutting always strop your blade or use a new blade to give as clean a cut to the leather as possible



Image: The making of Crockett & Jones shoes: The Rake. The knife shown is the [industrial knife 3595-00](#)

2. Bevelling Placing the leather down flat, and with the two prongs that make the V shape facing up, push along the edge of the leather at 45 degrees, holding the leather down firmly with your other hand. Turn the leather and repeat on the other side.

This will help to give the leather a rounded edge. You will see a thin curl of leather come away as you work.



The edge bevellers come in four different sizes, the smaller the number the less leather is removed. Generally smaller number bevellers are used on thinner leathers but there is not right or wrong answer here.



It is more a question of the aesthetic of having a more round or squared off edge. Bear in mind in places your leather will be in layers such as for bag/pouch making or knife sheaths. In this case edge the leather top and bottom of the sewn pieces.

A good starting beveller would be size 2 or 3, code [8076-**](#)



You may also hear mention of a '[keen edge' beveller](#). This has a more rounded surface underneath and is generally used to give a more rounded edge.

Bevellers can and should be sharpened on a strop before use. This can leave a small burr in the centre part of the tool, to remove this pull through a couple of times, a piece of rough string or leather lace that has been pulled through a block of jewellers rouge in the same way you would thread through beeswax.

For more advice on looking after your leathercraft tools see the wonderful Al Stohman book, [Leathercraft Tools 61960-00](#), a worthwhile investment.

Step 3.—Preparing the edge Edges can be prepared for slicking to help give a faster burnish and a more sealed finish. Originally this was done with water, dampening the top edge of the leather lightly. Rubbing along the edge with beeswax is another traditional method.

A favoured method by many of our professional leathercrafters is to use [gum tragacanth \(product code 2620-01\)](#) Apply this to the edge edge using a [small dauber](#), applicator or paint brush before slicking.



Step 4—Slicking or burnishing. This is essentially a way to polish up the edge to give a sealed shine. Use either a [traditional wood slicker](#) or a [bone folder](#) or horn creaser. Traditional wood slickers are commonly used by cobblers and saddle makers, the slicker is designed to fit comfortably in the hand and give a smooth run. Typically they have have different width grooves for different thicknesses of leather.



Nylon (8122-00) edge slicker wheels (8121-01) are also available which can be attached to drill bit to speed up the process, this can be particularly useful for belt and straps.



Source: www.smartyhands.com

Step 5—Edge Coating/Lacquer – finally add an edge lacquer to dye, bond and seal the edge. Fiebings Edge-Kote will give you a high gloss finish, while the Identity Store Leading Edge give a more matt finish, and are available in a wider range of colours.



There are several methods of application of these edge finishes— fine paint brushes, a small dauber (3443-00), a metal edge paddle, or edge roller.



The above is an example of an exceptionally beautiful edge— that has been sanded and edge painted then finished with a top gloss that has been highly burnished— the effect is contrasted by the matt finish of the top leather.



Edging Mineral Tanned Leathers

PREPARE THE LEATHER EDGE



In the past to prepare a leather edge for painting/dressing involved several steps to prepare the leather to accept the dye stuff, to smooth and round over the edge. The new generation of leather edge paints work in a different way.

As with the vegetable tanned leathers getting a good clean cut in the beginning will help to increase the quality of the edge, especially as many mineral (chrome) tannages **cannot** be slicked and burnished in the traditional way.

Our Leading Edge paints use nanotechnology and the paint itself is used to build the rounded edge. The most important thing is not to close the leather too much. During the physical preparation you have only to proceed to a slight flattening of the leather, in order to remove the imperfections that may come from the cutting phase of your leather projects.

Use The Identity Store Edge Foundation which will act not only as a smoothing agent but also as a primer giving a good surface for adhesion of the Leading Edge paints. Tip a small amount into a suitable container and apply with a roller pen or foam tip applicator always working in the same direction.

APPLYING EDGE PAINTS/DRESSINGS

Shake the bottle well and tip a small amount into a suitable container (tattoo ink pots work well). Let the product settle for a couple of minutes to remove any air bubbles.

As with all dyeing and painting it is recommended that you try out on scrap pieces first and find the applicator you like to use. For those using Identity Leading Edge products we suggest trying the Edge Roller Pen.

Apply one coat quite thinly and evenly and allow to dry, preferably with the item in an upright position.

Apply a second coat this time more generously allowing the product to 'bead' onto the edge.

Five minutes in an oven heated to 50 degrees can speed up the process and help fix the paints. They will be truly fixed after 48 hours, to give adhesion, rub fastness and flex resistance.



Final Coat

For a matt or satin finish use Identity Store Clear Matt Top Coat or a light rub of Veg Protec wax.

For a bright gloss use Fiebings Neutral Edge Kote.

Identity Store Leading Edge has been formulated for the bag making industry to give a sealed smooth matte finish. It can be used on mineral (chrome) tannages as well as vegetable tanned leather, and comes in a variety of colours.



Edge Kote— an edge finish to give a gloss shine to edges, to develop more of a gloss lightly burnish again to enhance the finish.

Identity Leathercraft - Fiebings Edge Kote



Application methods:



Use a small paintbrush, small dauber, edge paddle, edge roller pen, table edge roller or pad

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