

“how to clean tack” Tack cleaning tips from Amy Parsons & Sophie Wright

If it's gross (moldy, mildewed, salty and sweaty, just plain filthy), it's time for the Super Clean. If the leather is new, skip the cleaning and go directly to the oiling and glycerin stage. This will prevent sweat stains!

1. (super Clean) start with a bucket of Hot water, maybe with a glug (scientific, precise measurement) of Clorox, Ammonia (I like Parson's Lemon scented) or other industrial strength stuff in it. (wear rubber gloves) Dip a sponge or cloth in it, wring it out and then rub the saddle- get the really bad dirt out, then go to step 1a.

1a (regular clean) Bucket of hot water (no ammonia or clorox, just water), and a bar of Castile Soap (Usually available at Safeway). Dip sponge in hot water, rub bar of soap with sponge, get really soapy - Wash well. Don't be shy about lather. Use the toothbrush to get into the nooks. Really get it clean and don't worry about excess water on the leather- its ok . Rinse well (running water works well!). PS, Take the tack (Bridle) completely apart!! Take stirrups off of the leathers. The points of attachment are the most important!!

2. Condition. Let the leather dry for a bit before starting to condition. It should not be drippy wet, just damp. Then, I like good ol' Neatsfoot Oil Compound. It's cheap. It's easy. It works. Fill a container with oil. Dip leather into oil, or get a small foam brush, allowing it to get everywhere. For saddles coating the **UNDERSIDE** of the flap will allow the oil to absorb better because the top of the leather is smoother and doesn't absorb as easily. Hang bridles and reins to drip and soak up oil. If leather is dry any time soon, repeat the dipping. When it's still wet after an hour or two, let it sit overnight.

Billets need almost no oil. In fact I like to use a beeswax based conditioner like “saddle Food” on the billets. They will stretch if over-oiled. Bad. The top of the saddle seat likewise needs not to be over-oiled. Unless you like sitting in a puddle of grease....

3. Seal. Take a bucket of **HOT** water, a **DRY** sponge, and a bar of Glycerin soap (from the Tack shop, **NOT** the bath store). Dip the **SOAP** into the water, then rub it into the **DRY** sponge. Then apply a layer of soap to the leather. This will seal the oil **IN**, and the dirt **OUT**. What a concept! ☺ If you got enough oil into the leather, it will be soft and supple. If you got too much oil onto the leather, wipe off excess and allow it to sit a while longer before attempting to seal. There should be **NO** lather in this step. If it lathers, you have the sponge too wet. Try again. The sponge should be **DRY!**

Now, to just do routine cleaning, if you've done the sealing step well, all you need is a damp cloth the next several times your tack looks sort of dirty. Then, just to keep up with it, on a regular basis, do a quick clean with castile soap, then use Lexol to do a minor conditioning. I like to wet the sponge with the Lexol, then use it to apply some Glycerin. It's very effective for daily use. Remember: Glycerin is a sealer, **NOT** a cleaner!