



INK REMOVAL

Because there are so many different types of ink and each one may react differently on the vast array of finishes applied to leather these days it is impossible to write the definitive article about removing ink. There is a step by step process which needs to be followed and this may prove successful at any stage. Ultimately the area would need to be re-coloured if the ink removal has not been successful.

Also you need to be aware that the problem may have already been tampered with by someone 'having a go'. So there are always unknown factors to take into account!

By way of example:

Telephone call enquiring about ink on white leather. Someone had tried to wash it off with no success.

Examination revealed that the leather was white Bi-cast leather. The 'washing off' had consisted of vigorous rubbing with neat Fairy Liquid.

The result was that the Fairy Liquid had taken the ink residue that had not already soaked into the surface and spread it into a halo effect around the remaining ink line. But, the Fairy... had also removed the gloss coating from the leather laminate surface. So the 'ink problem' was really ' a dull patch surrounding a blue shadow surrounding a faded ink line on a glossy plastic coated leather.' !!!!!!!!!!!!!

REMOVAL METHODS

Always check the type of leather you have before beginning any Ink removal process

1. CLEANING

This simple process has been known to remove certain inks from certain leathers, so it is always a good first step as it is unlikely to do any damage and it will remove any loose ink residue from the surface. Try LTT Strong <http://www.leatherclinic.co.uk/subcategory.asp?category=2> followed by LTT Maxi Cleaner <http://www.leatherclinic.co.uk/subcategory.asp?category=2> always as a foam (foaming bottle is very convenient here).

Recommended for all protected leather, some more resistant aniline/absorbent styles, but with great care on delicate aniline styles because of diluting and spreading the ink residues, and not at all on nubuck. (Ink on nubuck is a very difficult/impossible problem as nearly all repair product has a high risk of leaving water marks or stains. A nubuck cloth is a good first step and may remove some ink without doing any damage)

2. INK REMOVER/LIFTER/STICK <http://www.leatherclinic.co.uk/subcategory.asp?category=28>

It comes under many names and is considered to be a consumer product. Beware, because it is not always the same product, even though it may look the same, the strength and effectiveness of the products can vary.

To use, apply a liberal amount on to the ink mark and massage gently into the surface. If the product starts to turn blue it is dissolving or drawing the ink from the surface. Do not allow this blue mixture to remain on the leather too long as it can have a tendency to stain, especially on pale or lightly coated leather. Remove residues with a paper towel (do not be tempted to use this operation to try to remove more ink, paper can be quite abrasive and may damage the slightly softened surface. Let the product do the work), examine the results and reapply if required. It is best to use several times gently and quickly, than once very aggressively. Once the ink has ceased to fade between applications, remove any residue and gently clean the area. Cleaning is an important stage as any product left on the surface will continue to soften the finish and attract dirt.

This method can be used on protected/pigmented leathers, some lightly coated aniline styles and pull-up styles, not on pure aniline or sensitive types (the product soaks into and stains the leather) and not on nubuck.

Things to watch out for: -

Darkening of the area indicates product is soaking in. Remove immediately, clean and dry, re-assess your approach.

Any peeling or flaking maybe an indication of a wider finish problem. Clean and reassess.

Loss of colour especially on antique and two tone leathers, it is often easier to colour out an ink line then blend in a bare patch on these leathers.

Removal of gloss finish, make sure you have the right product to re-gloss the surface before continuing.

3. SOLVENT REMOVERS

From the LTT Range this would include: -

LTT Alcohol Cleaner <http://www.leatherclinic.co.uk/product.asp?product=ALCOHOL%20CLEANER>

LTT Remover 1 [http://www.leatherclinic.co.uk/product.asp?product=REMOVER% 201](http://www.leatherclinic.co.uk/product.asp?product=REMOVER%201)

LTT Remover 3 [http://www.leatherclinic.co.uk/product.asp?product=REMOVER% 203](http://www.leatherclinic.co.uk/product.asp?product=REMOVER%203)

There are several different ways of using these products, but they all have the potential for damaging the surface, so make sure you know exactly what you are doing and have the correct products to repair any damage you may create before you start.

Method 1

Wiping over

Using Alcohol Cleaner or Remover 1, pour product on to a white cloth and gently wipe and dab the ink mark and the surrounding area. The idea is to soften the finish and draw the ink out. It is important not to let the cloth go dry as this will cause friction which can start to 'grab' the softened finish and pull it up. You can continue the wiping and dabbing action until the mark stops fading (or disappears) or pigment colour starts appearing on the cloth (which is why white cloth is recommended).

You could continue removing pigment and ink until the mark is gone then touch up and refinish. The danger of this process is that once the pigment and finish have started to break down there is a possibility that it will start to spread as the product seeps under the finish and you can end up with a bigger job than you expected. It would be much better to stop at the earlier stage, clean and dry the area, then touch out the remaining ink and refinish.

The above method can be employed using LTT Remover 3 but it will almost certainly remove finish and pigment. It has its use in certain areas.

Method 2

Brush and Absorb (For want of a better title)

This method is usually used when strong solvents are going to be used (eg LTT Remover 3) and you are trying to keep the area worked on as small as possible so that later colour touch up will be kept to a minimum.

Prepare your self with a fine good quality paint brush (no. 3 or 4) some white paper towel (folded into a flat pad.....a crumpled ball does not work.) and some solvent in a cup/bottle.

The object is to paint a line of solvent exactly over the ink line (no wider), allow it to sit for a number of seconds (experience will tell you how many), then blot firmly with the paper pad. It is best to tackle no more than 6-12mm as the solvent will evaporate quickly or worse still soak into the leather.

The results of your efforts will be shown on the paper pad. Continue with the rest of the line, but be careful not to transfer the ink blots on the paper back onto the leather.

This method can be continued until all of the ink is gone if you need to take it that far. The benefit is that although you will be damaging the finish, the repair area is kept small so touch up is minimal.

This is a useful method on two tone and antique style finishes where colour and pattern matching may be time consuming. The smaller the area, the less perfect the colour has to be (always worth considering). It can be used in all circumstances on pigments as long as you are aware of the consequences, but it is tricky on any leather that absorbs the solvent as it will dilute the ink and spread it very quickly outwards.

For a slower acting version of the same process you could use LTT Alcohol Cleaner, or LTT Remover 1

4. COLOUR TOUCH UP

Although not a damaging process in its self, colour touch up badly done will look worse than the ink damage was in the first place and be more difficult to rectify.

Before attempting touch up always use one or more of the removal techniques above. The object is to reduce the contrast between the ink and the leather colour, this will reduce the amount of colour required to colour out. It is also important to remove as much of the ink as possible to reduce the possibility of it coming back through your touch up.

Once ink reduction processes have been carried out, mix colour (easier to say than do!) and prepare to colour out.

Always start by reducing the ink/leather contrast before trying to blend in. To do this use a fine (no. 3 or 4) paint brush to put tiny dots of paint onto the ink line, dry and repeat as required. Do not worry too much that the line of touch up may still be visible; once the ink has been changed to the colour of the leather it will then be relatively easy to blend the two together.

This blending process can be done either with a cloth or an airbrush.

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