

## Technical Features

# Leather Straps

### **How to give their good looks a long lease on life.**

#### Leather – a noble material

A traditional material acquired from animals, leather has been used for clothing since time immemorial. Processing leather has always involved a series of different craftsmen, most of whom are still needed today. While technical progress has helped in the transformation of animal skins into leather, the whole process has in fact changed very little over the centuries.

#### Protected species

Today, most of the skins that are used to produce leather come from traditional breeding methods and domestic animals. While certain types of leather have a different origin, they never come from endangered species or animals whose numbers are so low that the species may become endangered.

Like all the other companies within the Swatch Group, Longines is scrupulous in complying with the terms of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which Switzerland has signed. According to this convention, a certificate of origin and guarantee of compliance must be provided for certain types of skins. For example, skins from large snakes are obtained solely from legal and controlled breeders today, and never from illegal hunters or trappers.

#### From skin to leather

Whether they come from mammals, reptiles, birds or even fish, the skins are subjected to between 150 and 300 different processes and treatments aimed first of all at preserving them, then removing any superfluous matter, and finally transforming them, through tanning, into an organically stable material: leather. This will then be prepared according to the usage for which it is destined, its thickness will be halved and the two parts will be equalled out and then dyed. The resulting skins will subsequently be treated in various ways to obtain the required dimensions, suppleness and finish.

#### From leather to strap

Now ready to be fashioned, the strips of leather that will make a strap are cut, turned in, reinforced, lined, glued, stitched and sewn ... operations often carried out by expert hands that have been trained over many years. Some straps will be fitted with a tongue buckle and loops while others will have a folding safety clasp. There are three common types of strap: sports, classical and fashion. All will be checked according to the same criteria for robustness, tensile strength and resistance to abrasion and various types of dirt; furthermore the quality of the dye will be tested. The only aspect that may vary, according to the designated use, is the degree of resistance to wear and tear and other effects of being worn.

#### Looking after a leather strap: some practical tips

Since it is made from a natural, resistant material that is highly absorbent, a leather strap fitted to a Longines watch will last a long time if a few precautions are taken and minimum care is applied.

As a general rule, it is recommended to avoid bringing a leather strap into contact with all chemical or natural substances that may spoil it through corrosion or discolouring. If in doubt, it is always wise to protect the whole watch.

**Protection against heat:** Never place a leather strap near a source of heat – open fire, radiator or back-up heating, oven or cooker.

**Protection against light:** Avoid leaving the strap exposed to strong direct light, sunlight or a powerful lamp over a long period.

**Drying a wet strap:** Leave a wet or damp strap to dry at normal room temperature, preferably even in a cool place.



## Cleaning

Clean a stained or dirty strap straightaway. Three methods of cleaning are recommended:

**Using water:** Rub with a damp cloth, and if necessary some soft soap. This method is especially suitable for straps made of smooth or grained leather. Even if the leather is very dry, make sure that it does not absorb too much liquid.

**Brushing:** Use a soft brush (for example a nail-brush). This method is recommended for nubuck types of leather or suede. It will remove the dirt and refresh the surface fibres.

**Manual cleaning using a solvent:** First of all, test the reaction of the leather to the solvent to ensure that it does not discolour or change in appearance. This method is suitable for all types of leather, including nubuck.

Whether it is fitted to a traditional or contemporary Longines watch, a leather strap that is treated properly and cleaned regularly will last for between six months and a year. Obviously this depends on the wearer and his or her activities, the climate and the environment in which the watch is worn, as well as the metals and other substances (cosmetics, perfume, jewellery, fabrics, etc.) to which it is exposed.