Leather Work Glove Selection – Quick Tips

Leather work gloves are capable of standing up to some of your most rigorous tasks. Leather helps protect workers' hands from exposures to cold, heat, abrasion and impact. It also offers dexterity and breathability. These characteristics make leather an ideal choice for work gloves.

The variety of choices in leather, as well as work glove design features can make finding the best leather work glove a bit challenging. Understanding the differences between leather types and glove features, such as cut pattern, thumb design and cuff style, can aid in choosing the proper glove for the application. Review the below steps to ensure you have the best leather work glove for your job.

Choose a Type of Leather

Leather is made from the tanned hides of a variety of animals. Since leather is a natural product, it can vary in thickness, appearance, durability and color from animal to animal and hide to hide. The hides come from various parts of the animal's body. Full or top grain leather comes from the external or hair side and is typically smooth. The flesh split or bottom layer is generally stiffer and heavier and is often referred to as suede leather. Cuts of leather from the side and shoulder of an animal have the greatest durability. Belly cuts are less durable.

Cowhide is the most common and popular type of leather found in work gloves due to its availability, durability, excellent abrasion resistance and heat resistance.

Pigskin leather is processed for toughness and pliability. It offers the greatest breathability. Pigskin dries soft and stays flexible.

Goatskin leather offers the most dexterity when compared to cow and pig leather. It has the greatest tensile strength, ounce per ounce. The natural lanolin in the skin makes the gloves very supple, waterproof and abrasion resistant.

Deerskin leather is naturally soft and supple and offers excellent dexterity. When exposed to water, deerskin dries softer than cowhide leather and will remain flexible after being wet and dried.

Choose a Cut Pattern

The way a glove is cut contributes to its dexterity and comfort.

Gunn cut gloves have a single-piece seamless back – the entire back and all four fingers are cut from one piece of leather. The palm, little finger and index finger

are cut from one piece of leather and the two middle fingers are cut from another piece and sewn separately to minimize bulk in those fingers, increasing dexterity. This cut provides better wear and greater comfort.

Clute cut gloves offer a palm free of stitching. The palm and all four fingers are cut from one piece of leather and on the back side each finger is a separate piece of leather. This provides a roomier fit.

Choose a Thumb Design

Thumb design makes a big difference in the functionality and comfort of a leather glove.

A **straight thumb** is a continuous full leather thumb with a sewn seam around the thumb. This design is most commonly used due to its economical pricing.

A **wing thumb** design has the thumb sewn out to the side of the glove. Welts are added to the seams for strength and less stress on the palm.

A **keystone thumb** style has a set-in thumb that is sewn in as a separate piece and positioned to provide maximum comfort, reinforced extra stitching and improved dexterity.

Note: Photos Courtesy of Pre-Recorded Selecting Leather Gloves Webinar.

Choose a Cuff Style

Cuff Style is important to consider when selecting a work glove, as it can offer protection and fit that may be necessary for certain applications.

Knit Wrist cuff – Offers comfort and a snug fit. This cuff style is generally a stretch-knit fabric sewn into the leather work glove. It helps prevent particles and debris from falling into the glove.

Safety cuff – Protects the wearer's wrist and ensures quick removal should the glove become entangled with product or machinery. It is usually about two and one-half inches long.

Gauntlet cuff – This cuff style provides additional wrist and forearm protection (usually four and one-half inches) for workers that may have to reach into areas that could catch, cut or snag the forearm or wrist.

Band Top cuff – Band of material sewn to the glove for light duty wrist protection.

Slip On cuff – Easy on and off style with glove material extending to the wrist area. Generally found on drivers gloves.

Note: Photos Courtesy of Pre-Recorded Selecting Leather Gloves Webinar.

Summary

Choosing the right leather glove for the task is the best way to get the most out of the leather glove you choose. If working with rough materials such as wood or metal, then choosing a thin-skinned leather glove may not be the best choice. If the task requires dexterity and tactility, then choosing a glove that is made from thick and bulky hide material may not allow a worker the sensitivity and flexibility he/she may need to perform his/her job.

Ultimately determining the type of leather, and the cut, thumb and cuff style desired will help you find a leather work glove that will suit your needs.

Commonly Asked Questions

Q: What is a thumb welt?

A: A welt is a narrow strip of leather, approximately one-half inch wide that is sewn at the seams to protect the seams from abrasion. A thumb welt is placed in the seam where the thumb joins the palm.

Q: What is Grade A leather?

A: Grade A leather typically has very few surface flaws and is usually softer with little or no scar marks to the hide. As the grade continues downscale to B, C and D it is found to have more flaws or surface marks and can be a little tougher.

References

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