

Spring Tune-Up for Leather Harness

by David Freedman

STEP 1: Dismantle all harness parts. Make up a solution of 3 parts lukewarm water to 1 part baking soda or Mr. clean. Wipe down all the harness and buckles using a damp sponge. Dirt under the buckles acts like sandpaper so be thorough. Do a complete safety check while removing soil. All stress points should be checked for excessive wear. The parts that wear the most are usually bridle billets and rein billets, both due to contact with the acid in the saliva Also look for broken loops or keepers, cut straps, cracked leather, bent tongues, broken stitching, and worn buckles.

STEP 2: Leather dries out and you may have to feed it to restore its suppleness. Use a product both you and your harness maker trust Stay away from heavy oils and linseed products. They do not let the leather breathe and will rot the stitches. If the leather does not need treating, saddle soap will make the harness more pliable and give you a fresh base to put on a nice shine with soft cream shoe polish. Black saddle soap is really the best for black harness.

STEP 3: clean all the brass buckles meticulously. This will probably be the only time during the coming driving season that you won't be under pressure so try to do a really great job. Take a lot of time. The more elbow grease you put into it now the easier it will be to maintain later on. Do every nook and cranny with the brass polish you like the best and buff up with a soft cloth to a bright luster. Check out your polishing. -if the job's not great, do it again! End off with a light coating of polish on all the buckles and **LEAVE IT ON.**

STEP 4: Apply black or neutral creamy shoe polish sparingly on leather being careful not to pack it into the stitching. This is only a finishing coat. Penetration of the polish colour is minimal that the shine is strictly cosmetic and cannot harm or imbalance the PH level of the leather. Buff-buff-buff until you puff-puff-puff, and your harness will make you proud.

STEP 5: Use a little soap and water on a damp sponge on the patent leather. Wipe off all excess water. Use a non-silicone spray product like D.C.W., Endust, or Pledge to shine the patent leather. Do not use Armoral, Vaseline, or brass polish on patent leather.

STEP 6: Now you can wipe off the last layer of brass polish you put on the buckles and store your harness until ready for use. Hanging it up is really the best method of storage but you can wrap it up and keep it in a trunk as long as it is away from ammonia fumes.

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I have listed the following items that will be of great help to you in preparation for this seasons show or pleasure use. You may find your own little gadgets to work with other than the ones I have listed. Try to have these items around when you start:

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| 1. Brass Polish | 11. Harness Hook |
| 2. Soft Cloths | 12. Steel Wool (cleans rusty tongs) |
| 3. Saddle Soap (black if possible) | 11 Cotton Swabs |
| 4. Glycerin Saddle Soap great for reins) | 14. Tooth Brushes |
| 5. Shoe Polish (I like cake style) | 15. Shoe Brushes |
| 6. Mr. Clean or Baking Soda | 16. Bucket or Pail |
| 7. Leather Dressing (Lexol, Williams, NO One Step!) | 17. Plastic Container |
| 8. Patent Leather Polish | 18. Harness Blacking |
| 9. Castile Soap | 19. Tack Sponges |
| 10. Old White Bed Sheet great to work on) | 20. Rubber Gloves |
| | 21. Work Apron |