



Now that you have beautiful moccasins, remember to take good care of them with regular leather care and resoling them when necessary. With good care, a pair can withstand years, if not decades!

In this little document, you will find a simple homemade leather balm recipe and how to make soles, either in leather or rubber crepe.



Making Soles <https://vimeo.com/524164623/22179abd2a>

I don't recommend making soles straight away. It is best to wait until you can see the footprint under the shoe to make the soles.

Therefore, you will clearly see where to stick the soles and how to shape them precisely. It also gives time for the leather to stretch. It would usually take 2-3 weeks. You can wait longer but it is best to do it before there is a hole...

Over the years, soles can be replaced as many times as necessary.



MAKING SOLES



Tools

You will need:

- A brush, a sponge, or a wet wipe to clean your shoes.

- Leather or thin rubber sheet (available on our online shop)

We have found that too stiff leather makes slippery, uncomfortable soles that get undone easily. If you want to keep the same comfort and high sensory feedback as with bare moccasins best is to use rather soft leather (can be the same as for the moccasins).

We have also been using thin (3mm) compact rubber sheets with much satisfaction. It makes the moccasins more water-resistant as the water doesn't penetrate through the sole. It is very flexible and lasts quite long.

- **Universal Contact cement glue** (from your local hardware shop)

The quality of the glue is quite important but no need to buy expensive specialized glue, most hardware stores have what you need. You can find it in liquid or gel form. Both work but I prefer liquid one. I think it penetrates the leather a little better.

We use glue instead of stitching because the stitch would touch the ground and not last.

- **Something to apply the glue** (a stick, a piece of plastic bottle, or a paintbrush + solvent)

It is easier and more precise to apply the glue with a large paintbrush, but you would need some solvent to clean it afterward. Alternatively, I have often used a piece of the plastic bottle cut into a kind of drop shape to make a disposable spatula. In the last resort, you could use a wooden stick cut with a clean tip, it does the job...

- **An awl**, or any other sharp and pointy object to scratch the leather.

- **A pair of sharp scissors**. Good kitchen scissors usually are enough.

Preparing the Work:

1) Cleaning

Tip:

We have found that cleaning and preparing the shoes well is just as important as the glue itself, if not more.

Prepare your moccasins for gluing soles by making sure the bottom is totally **clean and dry**. Scratch and brush dry as much dirt as possible and finish cleaning with a damp sponge or a wet wipe. Wipe out the excess water and let it dry fully.

If any dirt, dust, or humidity is remaining, it could prevent the glue from sticking well and all your work will be done for nothing...

2) Scratching



With the awl, draw around your footprint and scratch the surface that will receive glue, meaning, everywhere it touches the ground. You can enlarge the sole under the arch area even if it doesn't touch the ground. Don't hesitate to scratch quite hard to open the leather to receive the glue deeper.

This is one of the most important steps to make sure your sole will stick well but also because you are drawing the final shape of the sole.

3) Applying the Glue

CAUTION: Use the glue in a well-ventilated area or even outdoors as the solvent contained in the glue can be toxic. Read the recommendations on the packaging.

The general idea is to glue the shoes on a wide piece of leather or rubber before cutting the soles.

MAKING SOLES



Tip:

As the leather absorbs a lot of glue, you can apply two layers of glue (waiting that is dries in between)

This glue is meant to be applied on both sides and will stick as soon as it is in contact with another glued surface. On the opposite, it will not stick where there isn't any glue on the shoes.

It is not possible to move it once it was glued. You have only one chance. That's why if you try cutting the soles first and sticking them in the right position, it will most likely be a mess with the sole not aligning, glue sticking out, etc. So please, follow the method below:

Spread the glue evenly all over the piece of leather/rubber that you will use for soles and over the bottom of your moccasins.

On the shoe side, try being as precise as possible on the edges because this will determine the final shape of the soles.

Let it dry until it is not sticky to the finger anymore (around 10 minutes). For optimum bondage, you can apply a second layer of glue.

4) Gluing It Together:



Place the moccasins on the leather/rubber and press firmly/hammer them together. Make sure it contacts everywhere and especially on the edges of the soles. Make little patches if there are holes you need to cover inside.

Note: The glue will hold straight away but it reaches its maximum strength after 24 hours. It is best to wait a day before walking with your moccasins again.



5) Cutting the Soles



Separate the two shoes and carefully cut around the sole as close as possible to the edge of the glue on the shoe side. Be very cautious to avoid cutting the moccasin itself. If you are right-handed, I find it a little easier to cut in an anti-clockwise direction.



After cutting, press again, especially on the edges that are more vulnerable to opening. That's it!

Unglue and start again when you need new soles. (or glue on top of the old layer if it still holds well.).



Making Leather Balm

Leather loves to be nourished. Regularly treating your moccasins will prevent the leather from stiffening and cracking. With time, the leather will acquire a beautiful patina.

Here is a simple recipe for a leather balm to make at home with beeswax and oil.



Only Two Ingredients Are Necessary:

- Beeswax
- Vegetable oil (sunflower, olive, colza... as you wish)

The oil will penetrate the leather to nourish it and the beeswax will act as a water repellent.

For beeswax, you can ask your local beekeeper or recycle an old candle for instance. My local beekeeper sells wax for 20 euros a kilo. You would need only 50 grams or 100 grams. So 2 euros worth of wax is already a lot.

The choice of oil does not have much influence, but olive oil tends to darken the leather a little more.

If you live in a very humid climate and encounter mold issues, you can add a few drops of clove oil to the shoe cream.

How to Do It:

The idea is to melt together about $\frac{1}{4}$ of beeswax and $\frac{3}{4}$ of oil. 100 grams of beeswax will give you 400 grams of leather balm.



1) Take a chunk of beeswax and weigh it. Place the beeswax in a small jar and add 3 times its weight of oil. It is more practical to choose a jar with a wide mouth and rather flat.

2) Place the jar in a small pot of water and bring it to a boil. Keep it at the lowest heat until the beeswax melts completely with the oil. You can use a spoon or a wooden stick to stir it up.

3) Let it cool down. The texture should be firm but soft enough to spread easily at room temperature. If it is too hard, warm it up again and add a little more oil.

How to Use It:

To treat your moccasins, apply this leather balm with a brush, a soft cloth, or a sponge, or even your fingers. Rub it well into the leather. Once the leather has absorbed what it could wipe the excess with a soft cloth. If you want a shinier finish, you can buff it by rubbing the leather vigorously with a soft cloth.

The leather will temporarily darken but it will lighten again after a few days.



Never warm up the beeswax directly in the pot, it is inflammable at high temperature!

If some mixture goes in the water, let it cold down completely before cleaning it.





Earthing Moccasins

Joa and Lougaya

"For the Lord gave you shoes to walk in his ways"

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