

# Shoe Care & Cobbling Basics — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into hands-on practice at your own bench. You will inventory and diagnose your real shoes, run guided cleaning, conditioning, and polishing sessions, attempt your first heel-tip and sole repairs, and build a storage and maintenance routine. Work through one section per course module, and keep the templates as living records of every pair you maintain.

## Understanding Shoe Construction and Materials

Build the diagnostic foundation by inventorying your own footwear and triaging what needs care versus repair.

### Worksheet: Shoe Inventory and Identification

Pick four pairs from your closet. For each, examine the surface and the sole-to-upper join, then fill in every field. Use the hidden-area test from the course when material is unclear.

Pair name / description

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Material (smooth leather / suede / nubuck / patent / synthetic)

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Full-grain or corrected-grain (if smooth leather)

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Construction (Goodyear-welted / Blake / cemented / unsure)

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Resolable? (yes / no / unsure)

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Current condition notes

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### Exercise: Find the Welt and the Top-Piece

On one welted pair and one cemented pair, physically locate the named parts. Run your finger along the welt line and inspect the heel tip. Answer the prompts from what you observe.

- Where exactly does the welt sit on your shoe, and can you see stitching along it?

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- How worn is the heel tip, and has the wear reached the heel block above it?

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- On the cemented pair, can you see or feel the glue line where upper meets sole?

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### Checklist: Wear Triage Pass

- Inspected each pair's heel tip for remaining material
- Checked each heel block for angled grinding into stacked leather
- Checked each outsole for thin spots or daylight
- Inspected welt and stitching for rot or tears
- Examined uppers for surface scuffs versus cracked-through leather
- Sorted each pair into refurbish / repair / retire-or-pro

## Cleaning and Conditioning Leather

Run the core maintenance cycle on a real pair and lock in a conditioning schedule.

### Exercise: Guided Clean-and-Condition Session

Choose one smooth-leather pair. Work through cleaning then conditioning exactly as in the course, then record what you observed. Use damp, never wet, applicators and air-dry only.

- What cleaner and conditioner did you use, and how much salt or old product came off?

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- How did the leather look and feel before versus after conditioning?

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- Did any area darken, and was it a hidden-test area or the whole shoe?

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### Worksheet: Conditioning Schedule Planner

For each pair you rotate, estimate wears per month and set a conditioning interval (roughly every 10 to 15 wears, or quarterly for occasional shoes). Leave the next-due date for you to calculate.

Pair name

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Estimated wears per month

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Conditioner product

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Last conditioned (date)

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Interval (wears or months)

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Next due (date) — you fill in

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### Checklist: Suede and Nubuck Care Run

- Let any mud or stain dry fully before touching it
- Brushed the whole shoe in one direction to lift the nap
- Worked scuffs with crepe rubber or a suede eraser
- Treated any grease mark with cornstarch or talc overnight
- Applied protector spray in light passes, two coats
- Confirmed no leather cream or wax touched the suede

## Polishing and Finishing

Practice the full finishing stack from satin cream shine up to a mirror toe.

### Exercise: Cream, Wax, and Buff Practice

On a conditioned pair, apply a color-matched cream, let it dry, brush it out, then add two thin wax coats with full buffing between. Record results and any color matching decisions.

- What cream color did you choose, and did you go lighter or darker than the leather?

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- How many wax coats did you build, and did thin coats buff up better than you expected?

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- Where did scuffs or faded color improve the most?

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### Exercise: First Mirror Shine Attempt

On a sacrificial or older pair, attempt a spit-shine on the toe cap only. Use tiny wax and single drops of water, light pressure, for 10 to 20 minutes. Note what happened.

- How long did it take before reflections began to sharpen?

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- Did the gloss ever go cloudy, and how did you recover it?

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- What would you change in pressure, wax amount, or water next time?

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### Worksheet: Polishing Product Wardrobe

List the creams and waxes you own or need so you can match every pair. Note which color each pair requires.

Product name

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Type (cream / wax)

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Color

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Pairs it serves

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Owned or to-buy

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### Checklist: Finishing Quality Check

- Conditioned before any cream or wax
- Applied cream and brushed to an even satin sheen
- Built wax in thin coats, fully buffed between each
- Kept wax light on flexing vamp areas
- Restricted mirror gloss to toe and heel only
- Dedicated daubers and cloths by color to avoid cross-contamination

## Repairs, Stretching, and Storage

Attempt your first structural repairs, relieve a tight fit, and set up storage that adds years.

### Exercise: Heel-Tip Replacement

On a pair with worn-but-not-destroyed heel tips, replace one tip following the course steps. Stop and reassess if the heel block is already damaged.

- What replacement tip size and brand did you fit, and how was the old one held on?

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- Was the stacked leather under the tip sound, or had wear reached it?

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- How clean was the final flush trim and edge dressing?

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### Worksheet: Repair Decision Log

For each issue you find, record the fix and whether it is DIY or pro. Leave the estimated-cost column for you to fill from local prices.

Pair name

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Issue (heel tip / lifting sole / scuffed edge / worn toe / through to welt)

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DIY or professional

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Product or part needed

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Estimated cost — you fill in

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Done (date)

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### Exercise: Stretch a Tight Spot

Take a pair that pinches, apply stretch spray, and use a stretcher or bunion plug over 24 to 48 hours. Make small adjustments only. Record the outcome.

- Where did the shoe pinch, and did you use the full stretcher or a targeted plug?

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- How much did one session relieve the tightness?

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- Do you need a second small adjustment, and why not over-crank in one go?

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### Checklist: Storage and Rotation Setup

- Fitted cedar shoe trees to each pair while still warm from wear
- Set up a rotation so no pair is worn two days running
- Moved shoes to a cool, dry, ventilated spot out of direct sun and heat
- Prepared dust bags or boxes with some airflow for long-term pairs
- Lightly conditioned any pair going into long storage

## Your Action Plan

1. Inventory every pair you own, recording material and construction in the Shoe Care Log template.
2. Triage each pair into refurbish, repair, or retire/professional, and flag the urgent heel tips.
3. Assemble a starter kit: horsehair brushes, cotton rags, saddle soap, conditioner, cream, wax, and a suede brush plus protector.
4. Run a full clean-condition-cream-wax-buff cycle on your most-worn smooth-leather pair.
5. Protect every suede or nubuck pair with two light coats of protector spray.
6. Practice a mirror shine on a sacrificial toe until you can recover a cloudy gloss reliably.
7. Replace any heel tip that still has material before it reaches the heel block.
8. Re-glue or edge-dress any minor sole issue, and book a cobbler for anything through to the welt.
9. Stretch any pinching pair gradually with spray and a stretcher over a day or two.
10. Set up cedar shoe trees and a rest-day rotation, then schedule the next conditioning date for each pair.







