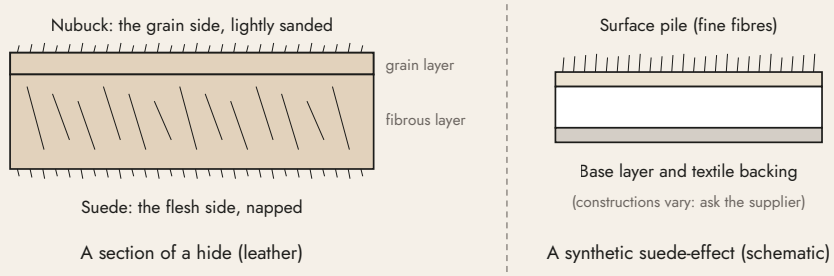
Suede, nubuck, microfibre and *faux suede*: what to specify

What suede, nubuck, microfibre and faux suede are, how they wear, and what to ask a supplier to prove.

AT A GLANCE

Material	What it is	What the sources say	Where it suits
Suede	Leather: the flesh side of the skin, napped	FIRA's leather page separates suede (flesh side) from nubuck (grain side); it gives no care or suitability for suede	Low-touch surfaces (practice)
Nubuck	Aniline leather with the grain surface lightly abraded to a velvet finish	FIRA: absorbent, soft but vulnerable to spills and contamination; the oil or wax version lightens where used hard, such as seats, and scuffs easily	Surfaces touched little (as our leather sheet says)
Finished (split) suede-type	A flesh split with a polymer surface coat	FIRA: weaker than grain leather, low-stress uses only	Light, low-stress use
Microfibre suede-effect	A man-made cloth with a fine surface pile; constructions vary	No source read defines it or gives wear figures	Ask for test results before any hospitality use
Polyurethane-coated suede-effect	A textile or backing carrying a polyurethane layer, finished to look like suede	Some polyurethane products age with heat and humidity; the test commonly named is ISO 1419 Method C (see the tests section below)	Only with an ageing test result
Woven or brushed textile suede-effect	A textile whose surface is brushed or napped to look like suede	No source read; treat as a cloth and use the cloth tests	Seating, as a cloth, with the performance tests

'Where it suits' is practice, not a standard. Terms such as microsuede and faux suede are trade words with no standard definition in the sources we read: ask the supplier what the material is made of, in writing.



A hide in section (left) and a synthetic suede-effect (right). Schematic and not to scale; real constructions vary. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

REMEMBER

- Suede and nubuck are leather; microfibre and faux suede are man-made, and the trade words overlap.
- Write what the material is, not a trade name.
- No claim of stain resistance or chemical freedom without a certificate; fire is judged on the finished composite.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

NAMING THE MATERIAL

Facing material [item ref]: [suede (leather) / nubuck (leather) / microfibre suede-effect / polyurethane-coated suede-effect / woven textile suede-effect], fibre or hide content [ ], backing [ ], supplier reference [ ], colour [ ]. Trade names are not accepted as a description. Supplier states the construction in writing before quotation.

TESTS

[Supplier] provides, before approval, results for: rub wear to [BS EN ISO 12947-2:2016 / method for coated fabrics, stated] to [ ] cycles; colour fastness to rubbing and light to [method and grade]; for polyurethane-based materials, an accelerated hydrolysis ageing test to [ISO 1419 Method C or equivalent, duration and pass criterion stated]; for leather, the tests listed in the leather clause. Laboratory and method are named on each result.

CARE AND CLAIMS

[Supplier] states the cleaning method, the products to avoid, and the cleaning regime the material was tested for. Claims of stain resistance, cleanability or the absence of a named substance are accepted only with a certificate or test report naming the material and the date.

FIRE

Fire route for each item: [composite with route A / B / C] to [BS 7176:2007+A1:2011 / current edition] [Medium] Hazard, with a test report for the finished composite as supplied: cover, any interliner and filling. A report for the cover alone is not accepted. [Supplier] confirms the composite in writing before the sample is approved.

TERMS USED

Nubuck

Aniline leather with the grain surface lightly sanded to give a velvety feel. It absorbs liquids easily and stains, and is often confused with suede.

Suede

Leather with a soft, napped surface made from the underside (flesh side) of the skin. It is delicate and marks easily, so use it where it is touched little.

Faux suede

A man-made fabric, usually microfibre, that imitates suede. It can be hard-wearing and cleanable, but some polyurethane versions age or crack, and the fire route must be checked.

Split leather

A layer cut from the flesh side of a hide. A finished split is coated with a polymer to imitate grain, and suits only light, low-stress use.

Hydrolysis

The breakdown of a polyurethane layer by moisture and heat, which can show as cracking or flaking of a coated suede-effect over time.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- FIRA, Leather types, characteristics and maintenance: 12 Sep 2022, read 7 Nov 2026.
- BS EN 15987:2022; ISO 1419:2019; BS EN ISO 12947-2:2016: search-listing summaries read 7 Nov 2026, standards not read: 15987 current (2 Nov 2022); ISO 1419:2019 current, 2018 edition withdrawn; 12947-2:2016 current. Confirm on BSI Knowledge.
- BS EN 13336:2022: see our leather sheet for its status and the test list; not read.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/suede-nubuck-microfibre-and-faux-suede. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.