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## Leather Basics with Elke Bergeron

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### Chapter 1 - Leather Basics

All about leather

(jingle) - Hi, my name is Elke, and I thought it would be a good idea to have an overview of leather before you start making your projects, so you can understand a little bit more about how leather works. I was in the garment industry for a very long time, and I worked with outerwear and that kind of leather, but recently I've been making handbags, and using leather as accents and jewelry, and it's been a process to learn how to use it correctly and how I like to use it in different projects. When you're going to go buy leather, leather is measured more in weight, not by yardage or the width of inches like a fabric would be. The quality I have in front of me is veg tan quality, it's a natural leather actually oxidizes over time. It comes in different thicknesses which correspond to a weight. So a very heavy weight would be 12 to 13 ounces, and thinner as you go down in weight to a four to five ounce, which would be perfect for bags, or a very structured bag, like a briefcase. I tend to use the veg tan quality more for straps and bracelets and accessories, not so much for bags, because it doesn't have that soft, supple feel to it. Veg tan also has the ability to oxidize. So when you first see the sample on a roll, it will be really light and white, but the more it gets exposed to the sun, it'll get darker and start oxidizing to a really rich patina. This is actually the same color as the natural, but after time and wear has turned into a really nice dark chestnut brown. As you can see on the swatch here as well, some parts have been exposed to the sun, and some haven't, and that depends on the coloration of the leather. Because of the flaws on leather, you always want to buy at least 20 percent more than what you're going to need for your project, because you're going to have some cutting loss. The best place to buy leather is at a leather resource store, that way you can walk in and you can touch the leather, you can talk to the people that work there, and you can figure out what is the best type that you need for your project. If you really don't have any leather sources in your town, you can always get it online, and a good resource is Tandy Leather. And they'll have tools and different qualities for any kind of leather project you may want to use. This is an example of a pouch that I made out of veg tan leather. And it holds my iPad, so it's nice and structured, and I don't really need it to be soft and flimsy, I need it to be strong and hold the iPad inside. But if you're looking to make something softer like a handbag, this is made out of a cowhide, and you can see that the texture and the leather itself is much more round and soft and supple. At your local craft stores you can buy many different kinds of leather, but they come in small swatches. This is a deerskin hide, which is also great for handbags or garments. It can be a little bit thicker and spongier, but it's got a really nice soft feel. You can come in and get lightweight leathers at a leather store, and these are better for garments, or maybe a small pouch or something that you don't need too much strength in or weight. So this bag is an example of combining the two types of leather. The bag itself is made from a cowhide, which is really nice and soft, it's also a natural finish. The cowhides are also bought on big rolls that you need to cut up individually. The straps and the front closure is made from the veg tan. So it's stiffer and stronger than the actual bag leather. Leather also comes in different lacing qualities. You can buy it on rolls, you can buy it in pieces, and you can also make your own. These were made just by using a piece of veg tan similar to this and the cow, and I just painted it, and then you can do any color you'd like. I tend to use these for zipper pulls and tassels, but for this kind, maybe the latigo lacing you could use for sewing up moccasins or traditional leather wear. This is a suede lacing, and it comes in rolls. It's a little bit stiffer, and it's not

a very high quality, but it's really fun to use for different art projects and different leather crafting projects as well. You can also cut your own with a rotary cutter. This was just a piece of suede, and you can cut it, if you don't need a long piece. You can make any width you'd like to be able to use in your projects as well, from whatever leather you have on hand. This is deerskin lacing, which is nice and soft. I like to use this for jewelry and for necklaces. Maybe now that you've had an overview of leather you'll feel more confident going to the leather store and feeling and touching the qualities, and finding out what works best for you and your projects that you'll want to make out of leather.