Leather has a long tradition, and it is still a valuable resource today. Although much of its use is for shoes and belts, leather can be used to make a lot of things. Leather comes from different kinds of animals. Depending on the animal, and how the material is made, leather can be thick or thin, stiff or soft, and it can even be made into various colors.

With so many uses for this natural material, most people don't have to look far to find something made of leather.
Leather is a material made from animal hide, or skin, which makes it very durable. Most of the leather produced for everyday use comes from the hides of cows. However, other animals, such as sheep and deer, are also used.

Special leather is made from such animals as sharks, snakes, and alligators. Items made from these animals are uncommon and can be very expensive to buy.
Suede is a soft material that doesn't absorb much water. Unlike fur-covered leather, suede is made from the layer of skin that is closest to the insides of cows. Occasionally, the skins of goats and sheep are also used to make this material. Because suede keeps its wearer very warm, jackets and coats made from suede are a popular kind of outerwear.

There are many uses for leather besides clothes. Footballs, baseball mitts, and other sporting equipment are made with leather coverings. A cowboy almost always sits on a leather saddle while on horseback. Cars can have comfortable leather seats, and even some car engines have belts made of leather.