
Break in a Baseball Glove

One of life's greatest lessons is learning how to break in a baseball glove. The secrets to conditioning a glove are passed along to little leaguers like an heirloom watch is entrusted to a new generation.

This was a time-honored tradition in my family. Each winter, come later October or early November, when the fallen leaves had been raked up and the air smelled like smoking chimneys and snow, my dad would take me into the garage.

With a few old stained rags, a secret batch of ingredients and our elbow grease, we would set to work breaking in a new glove. By April, the glove would be ready for a game of catch.

Everybody's dad probably has their secret formula for the homespun compounds, ointments and techniques used to break in a baseball glove. Regardless of the method used, the end always justified the means. A broken-in baseball glove means that it has been tenderly softened up, creating comfort and flexibility. The glove, now soft and supple, also has a worked-in pocket ready to catch fly balls and tag runners.

There are so-called experts who will argue that your dad's baseball glove alchemy was all hocus-pocus. They'll tell you that there are no secret methods and mixtures to break in a baseball glove. These people will say that the best and most logical way to do it is simply apply oil specifically designed for this purpose.

If you choose to follow logic, you can buy baseball glove oils in sporting good stores. Rub the oil over every part of the glove, including the laces and inside surfaces.

Oil helps to keep the leather moisturized so it won't dry out and crack. It will also help to keep the glove webbing taut. According to the experts, this specially formulated oil will not damage the glove, as some compounds will.

"Experts be dashed", dads everywhere exclaim. Their homegrown solutions are devised from things that only a dad can come up with. Dads will break in a baseball glove using Vaseline, saddle soap, foam shaving cream, mink oil, or tanners glove oil. Some secret glove recipes even call for you to put the glove in the oven for a few minutes to bake in the oils and foams.

Whether you choose to follow modern science, or rely on your dad's tried and true traditions, hopefully you'll come out of hibernation in the spring with a baseball glove that's broken in, soft and ready to play ball.