

How to choose designer hand bags?

Buying a designer handbag is an investment in you. So, why not start by choosing the right type of bag specifically for you, and then learning a little about what can be done to protect it and make it look new for many years to come?

Let's first talk about choosing a handbag. Having your handbag last a lifetime starts with choosing the type of bag that fits your lifestyle and how you'll use it. Then the care part becomes easier. When discussing the right type of bag we're not talking about color, style or even function. That's very individualistic, and part of what owning a fine handbag is all about. Handbags demonstrate your individual style and taste. What we're going to talk about are the materials used to make the bag.

In order to decide the type of bag to buy you first should categorize yourself as to what type of handbag user you are. Handbag users can be put into three general categories. The first category is the person who buys a handbag, immediately loads all her stuff into it, and uses it every day until it either gets dirty, falls apart, or she sees another bag that she can't live without. Then she just takes everything from the old one, puts it into the new one, and starts the cycle again.

The second type of handbag user is one that alternates between two or more bags. This alternating process has to do with color, size of bag, and function for which the bag is being used on that particular day. This woman may be just as tough on her handbags as the user in the first category, but they last longer because her bags get breaks in between usage.

The third type of handbag user has a collection. Her bags are used very intermittently using much the same criteria as the user in category two, but mood also plays a role. She has enough functional and great looking bags that she can make a choice based on her mood for the day. Her bags last forever and she tends to take good care of them between outings.

Women in category number one should always buy leather bags, or at least pay attention that the bag is made from sturdy material. Leather can take a beating and can be cleaned and protected from the elements. The finer leather bags actually look better with use and age. Some of the types of bags we have carried at eStyleSense.com that fit this category are the Marc Jacobs Classic Collection, and most of our Prada bags.

Category two members can get away with a fabric bag as part of the two or more they change out. By fabric bag we mean, for example, Gucci bags made with their signature Jacquard fabric, or most of the Fendi bags we carry. Designers like Gucci and Fendi are a nice alternative from the heavy leather bags, but they aren't meant to be everyday bags in our opinion. The fabric gets dirty fairly quickly especially if children are in the picture.

For those of you in the first two categories we want to point out also that you should look at the hardware on the bag you choose as well. Gucci zippers just aren't as sturdy and built to take the abuse like the zippers on a Marc Jacobs or a Chloe bag. If the bag has a lot of rivets and you put a bag to heavy use, this may not be the best bag for you either. And speaking of rivets, look at the back of what appears to be rivets on a bag. Sometimes these actually have screw heads on the back. These screws can and will come loose. So if you buy one of these bags for everyday use, be prepared to tighten down those screws once or twice a month or risk losing them. Also, bags with a push lock closure may not be your best choice. The facing of the push lock will get scratched quickly. Certain Marc Jacobs push locks break in 5-10% of the bags that come under heavy use.

Women in the third category can and should buy any bag they feel rounds out their collection. Given intermittent use and proper care, their designer bags will last a lifetime or even two.

Taking care of your expensive designer bag is not hard although most don't take the steps to do so. For women in the first two categories, the everyday users and the alternators, you should get a good leather cleaner and conditioner. About a month or two after you start using the bag, take an hour or so in front of the TV and clean and condition your fine leather bag. Use the cleaner sparingly, it doesn't take a lot. Doing this may change the color of the leather slightly because you are adding moisture to an otherwise fairly dry surface. You are also removing hand oils, lotions, hairsprays and whatever else the bag has come in contact with. If you do this regularly you will find that the bag will not fray around the stitching or wear out quite as quickly. The leather will also become suppler, and actually look better with age.

At eStyleSense.com we recommend and carry handbag care products made by Lovin My Bags. Lovin My Bags is the only company in the world to our knowledge that has a line of products specifically for handbags. Most of the leather care products on the market are for general use such as for cars or furniture and aren't safe for most aniline leathers used in the manufacture of designer quality handbags. But no matter what type of leather cleaner you use, start with a small area in a non-visible place on the interior of the bag and test the product before cleaning the whole bag. And of course, follow the manufacturers' instructions.

For those of you that choose the fabric bags we discussed above, you have to be prepared that they will eventually show the evidence of some dirt and hand oils. We have not yet discovered a fabric protector that is marketed for, and therefore safe to use on a Gucci, Fendi or similar designer handbag. Wiping your bag gently with a damp, soft cloth from time to time will prevent dirt from seeping into the fibers.

Another important material that heavy users need to be aware of is brass. Brass looks great when it is new. And some people like the way brass looks after it is exposed to the elements and becomes oxidized, but others don't. Two things will happen to brass over time. The first is that it looks like it develops a dark, filmy substance. What actually is happening is that the lacquer that brass is treated with to protect it from the elements is wearing off. Ideally it's time to clean the brass with a brass cleaner like Brasso® and then recoat the brass with a new clear lacquer finish. The lacquer will actually dull the shine a bit and give it a slightly darker sheen. Most people won't take the time to add the new lacquer finish, so if you want your brass to shine you'll need to clean it regularly after the initial lacquer coating is gone. And be careful to keep the brass cleaner off the leather as it could change the color of the leather slightly.

Those of you that own a Chloe Paddington will notice that when your lock is new it has a dull finish to it. However, if your locks lacquer finish begins to wear off and you decide to clean it and completely remove the lacquer finish, it will become very shiny. You will either need to accept this new look to your brass lock or apply the lacquer coating we talked about above.

How quickly brass reacts to the elements depends on the elements to which brass is exposed. Sometimes moist air and even pollutants in the air will be enough to begin the oxidation process. If you use hairspray and tend to pull it out and spray it around your bag, your brass isn't going to like it. The chemicals in hair spray will eat the lacquer finish rather quickly and oxidize the brass. The point here is that if you aren't about to clean your brass and yet you want it to always look shiny and new, go with a bag made with gold-toned hardware and stay away from brass altogether.

Gold-toned and silver-toned hardware are easy to care for and will continue to look like new throughout the life of the bag. If your gold or silver-toned hardware shows any signs of losing its luster, apply just a small amount of liquid jewelry cleaner to a jewelry care cloth. Gently rub the hardware and you will see it shine like new. Of course, use the same steps that we talked about for leather care. Test a small area first to see if the jewelry cleaner you use is safe for your hardware, and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Lastly, all categories of handbag owners should follow these two simple steps when the bags are not in use. Stuff them with tissue paper so the bag will keep its shape while being stored. Then put it inside the dust bag that the designer so nicely provided for you and store it in a clean, dry environment. I've heard many women say that they put their shoes inside their handbag dust bags and leave their handbags to collect dust. What's easier to clean, shoes or handbags? Find something else to store your shoes in and keep your beautiful handbags protected from dust and moisture.

Choosing the right type of handbag, and then taking a little time to protect and preserve it, will keep it looking new for many years to come. Then those of you in category two can work your way into having that fabulous designer handbag collection.

About the Author

Ashley is the author of this article on [designer handbag](#). Find more information about [designer houses](#) here.

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