

Boot waterproofing

Many boot manufacturers will say their boots are shipped already waterproof, either because they're treated at the factory or because they have a Goretex waterproof liner sock. Don't believe them. You need to vigorously waterproof your boots. Once the leather soaks through once it's much harder to keep then waterproofed after that. You have to be pro-active to keep and maintain your boot's waterproofing.

Usually the boot manufacturer will recommend a waterproofing product on a tag or card that's inside the boot box. Most likely they will recommend a NixWax product. There are different Nixwax waterproofing products depending on whether the leather has a rough finish ("nubuck" split-grain leather) or smooth (full-grain leather). Sometimes they recommend a flouro-spray such as ReviveX or Techtron. Follow the manufacture's recommendations.

Here's the link for waterproofing nubuck / suede finished leather:

<http://www.nikwax.com/en-us/products/productdetail.php?productid=260&activityid=1>

Here's the link for waterproofing smooth leather:

<http://www.nikwax.com/en-us/products/productdetail.php?productid=259&activityid=1>

Here's the link to a water repellent spray ReviveX or Techron spray-on product:

<https://www.rei.com/product/793105/revivex-air-dry-water-repellent-spray-5-oz>

Neal's directions for using NixWax waterproofing products:

1. Boot should be clean before application. Brush off dirt and trail dust with a soft bristle brush. Once loose and dry dirt is removed use a damp brush and/or cloth to clean the boot.
2. The latest Nix Wax products either have a roller ball or sponge type head. Shake the bottle, remove the cap, invert the bottle head down and dab or roll the waterproofing on. You want to work the applicator and waterproofing until the leather actually becomes saturated with the waterproofing liquid. Pay special attention to seams. Wipe off substantial excess, but otherwise let the boot dry (overnight?) and wipe them off with a cloth or soft brush once dry.
3. For a new boot (1st time waterproofing) I'd repeat this a second time.

Neal's psychotic waterproofing for new boots:

1. Wear the boots enough (around town and work) to know they fit properly and you won't be taking them back.
2. Waterproof BEFORE the boots get dirty, while the leather pores are as open and as unclogged as possible. You can still do this after hiking in them, just clean them thoroughly.
3. Remove shoe laces
4. Get a ~4 oz tube of Seam Grip or Seam Seal. <https://www.rei.com/product/603034/gear-aid-seam-grip-seam-sealer> This is a clear liquid with a consistency and opaqueness similar to model glue, it even comes in a similar looking tube. It is used for sealing tent seams and fabric

punctures, and can be found at any of our local outfitters and on-line. If possible fill a plastic industrial syringe with the sealer. I use a 20 ml plastic syringe and a 14 gage needle. Using the syringe run a bead of the sealer on all exterior boot stitching. Use the needle or syringe tip to work the sealer into the stitching. You don't need a syringe, you can apply straight from the tube and use a Q-tip or toothpick to work it in, it just looks better with the syringe.

Let dry overnight. The sealer will soak into the boot and stitching, and will leave a shiny but pliable bead. The result is fully sealed and waterproofed stitching that is much more wear resistant.

5. Vigorously apply the proper Nix Wax waterproofing as described above. Saturate the entire boot exterior. Allow to soak in. Repeat. Allow to dry overnight. Brush boot removing all excess waterproofing.
6. Get a can of ReviveX or similar spray-on waterproofing. The large spray can for fabric contains the same waterproofing product as the small can labeled for footwear, but costs very little more. So it's a better deal to get the large spray can sold for fabric. Pull an old long sock over one arm and with that hand inside the boot, holding it like a popsicle, use your other hand to spray the boot. Spray each boot several times until they are wet and saturated. Let dry overnight. Brush boot removing all excess. Repeat a second time.
7. Re-install laces. Hike

After initial waterproofing:

- Once water soaks through a boot it becomes harder to keep them waterproofed. You need to be preemptive to keep this from happening. It's not unusual to have some wet patches on the outside of the boot after a significant snow hike. This should dry quickly, but you'll still want to touch up the waterproofing to make sure that doesn't get worse on subsequent outings and eventually get through to the boot interior.
- Waterproofing has to be re-applied. The flexing of the boot and scraps and abrasions that occur hiking will open the leather up for water penetration
- If boots have been properly waterproofed they can be worn on multiple outings before re-application. It depends on; how tough and thick the initial leather / synthetic boot is, how well they were initially waterproofed, how much use and abuse they're getting, and what your next outing is.
 - If I'm trail and desert hiking I typically won't waterproof between outings
 - I always waterproof, or at least touch-up the waterproofing before any snow outing.
 - If your last outing was at Joshua Tree where you scratched up the outside of your boots on the abrasive rock, and your next outing is a snow outing, you should definitely re-apply waterproofing.
 - I will definitely re-waterproof before any overnight snow outing. The ramifications of having wet footwear on a multi-day snow outing is much greater than on a day hike.
- I re-waterproof before every outing where there's significant potential for getting wet. Given my psychotic initial waterproofing I usually just brush my boots off to remove loose dirt and give them a once over with the ReviveX spray. This takes 10 minutes.
- Once a year, at the beginning of the climbing season, I will do a full waterproofing using the NixWax (one time) followed by the Revivex spray (one time).