

# SINGER 401A CHECKLIST

*If you are considering purchasing an un-serviced, “farm fresh” machine, keep in mind that missing parts or mechanical issues can add up to a significant servicing bill. Careful inspection prior to purchase can reveal potential expenditures. The following list is not exhaustive but covers the major problem areas.*

## Cosmetic Condition

*You may not care what the machine looks like as long as it sews, but cosmetic condition should always be considered because it can be an indicator of normal use, overuse, or abuse.*

- **Dirt:** Dust, grime, and oil residue are typical, but keep in mind they may obscure paint flaws.
- **Paint:** Small chips, pin-scratches, and abrasions are to be expected when dealing with 50 year old machines. Excessive paint damage, flaking, or discoloration may indicate abuse or exposure to water or chemicals which could mean mechanical or electrical damage.
- **Metal parts:** Oil & grease residue are typical, usually presenting as a yellowish discoloration which can be removed during servicing. Rust or pitting may indicate exposure to moisture which could cause electrical damage.
- **Lids, Doors, Covers:** Look for missing pieces. Compare the machine with a picture of a complete 401 machine.
- **Decorative plates:** Tarnish is typical for the old-style brass badge. Fading of the “Red S” badge is also typical, making it look more like a “Pink S.” Dented or missing plates may indicate abuse.
- **Stencils/Decals:** Scratches or chips to the Singer name are typical and are cosmetic only.
- **Gold trim:** Some wear is typical and is cosmetic only.

## Mechanical

*Before you plug the machine in and step on the pedal, assess whether the machine is operational:*

- **Hand-wheel** should turn freely. Tightness or resistance may indicate a frozen bearing.
- **Needle** should move up and down as the hand-wheel turns.
- **Feed-dogs** should raise & lower
- **Hook:** Open bobbin compartment to see if hook makes complete rotation.
- **Presser foot** lever should raise foot up and down
- **Tension knob** assembly should be complete and knob should tighten/loosen
- **Bobbin winder** should raise to engage handwheel

*If everything moves properly, go ahead and test with power cord and foot control, but otherwise avoid running the machine until after cleaning, adjusting, and lubricating. Running it dirty and un-lubricated is hard on the machinery.*

## Electrical

- **Cords:** 401A machines have **two** cords; a power cord (\$15) and a foot control cord (\$10). Make sure both are present and in good condition. Cords have often been pinched in the sewing cabinet or carrying case, so look for breaks, cracks, or exposed wire.
- **Foot control:** Check for missing rubber feet (\$12) and breaks, cracks, or chips in the housing. Replacement foot control start at \$20+ for generic aftermarket and \$50+ for vintage Singer.

## Miscellaneous parts

- **Spool pins:** there should be 3 pins with felt discs, two on top and one on the lower right hand corner of the platform. (\$5)
- **Special Disc compartment lid/cover:** hinges may be broken or stitch selection chart may be missing from underside.
- **End door:** check for broken hinges and missing threading chart.
- **Presser foot:** there should be a presser foot under the needle bar. (\$6)
- **Needle plate/Throat plate:** this is the oval-shaped plate directly under the needle & presser foot. It should have an oval-shaped opening in the center to accommodate zigzag needle movement. (\$15)
- **Slide plate bobbin cover:** check for free movement and solid attachment to machine. (\$15)
- **Bobbin Tire:** check for cracking, checking, or chips. (\$4)
- **Bobbin case:** make sure there is actually something for the bobbin to fit down into.
- **Bottom feet/bed cushions:** check for missing, cracked, split, or broken feet. (\$6)
- **Bottom cover plate:** the drip pan catches any excess grease and prevents it from dripping onto your table or floor. A carrying case base can double as a drip pan if yours is missing. (\$30+)