

Sewing Machine Maintenance Class: Required Materials and Nice-to-Haves

Okay. I know this is long (“concise” has never been a great word to describe me,) but I would really love everyone to come as prepared as possible. The less time I have to spend explaining all of this in class, the more time we’ll have to explore the info you came here for (and the more likely i’ll be able to help with individual machine issues!) But if you really can’t handle all this reading, i’ve recorded a video to accompany this document. It is also not particularly concise (i talk a lot. Get used to it.)

[~x~Materials Video!!!~x~](#)

****Note:** A small, single-use packet of the mandatory items can be provided for use in class for \$15. Please give at least one week’s notice so I can get this together.**

****Note 2:** Every section is divided into “Mandatory” and “Recommended,” but nothing is technically MANDATORY. You’re welcome to come to classes as empty-handed as you want. I don’t feel like I personally would learn much without following along on a machine, but if you want to pay just to sit and absorb the information, who are we to stop you?*

I. Your Sewing Machine & Accessories

Mandatory Items

- **Your Personal Sewing Machine:** This is the most crucial (and obvious) item! Please bring the machine you intend to maintain and work on during the class. Ideally this machine is fully functioning so we can focus on maintenance. If your machine isn't currently working, this class might be able to teach you the maintenance steps that might get it back in action. However, please note that any individual machine troubleshooting beyond the class curriculum is not guaranteed and will only be possible if we run ahead of schedule, so bringing a non-working machine is a bit of a chance you take.
****Loaner Machines:** If you prefer not to or are unable to bring your own machine, or if you just want extra practice or to see how different machines work, loaner machines can be provided for you to work on in class. There is a **\$20 fee** for a loaner machine, and you must request one at least **one week prior** to the class date. Supplies are somewhat limited, and it may or may not be functional.**
 - **Power Cord & Foot Pedal:** You can certainly maintain your machine without running it, but there’s nothing more satisfying than hearing it run so much better after a good cleaning and oiling, why deprive yourself of that gratification?
- **Standard Accessories:**
 - **Bobbin Case(s) & Bobbins:** Bring at least one bobbin case and a bobbin.
 - **Needles:** You'll need at least one fresh **universal needle** for class. Fun fact: this is the *only* time I'll ever recommend a universal needle. I hate them for sewing, there is literally always a better option, but they're perfect for testing.
 - **Fabric & Thread for Testing:** Bring at least two 6x6 inch squares of **quilting**

cotton. For thread, bring **two contrasting colors**: one specifically for your bobbin, and a *different color* for your top spool. This setup is crucial for really seeing how your machine performs after its tune-up!

- **Presser Feet:** Your standard presser foot.
- **Little brushy things**
 - Your machine probably came with one. It's probably not great, but it will do. There are lots of other options. Paintbrushes with soft bristles work well, as do make-up brushes. These both have the added benefit of being available in packs of multiple sizes. I also rather like these silicone guys: [Amazon.com: Sewing Machine Cleaning Brushes - 20 PCS Reusable Silicone Dense Bristles Clean Brush for Internal and Spool Area](#)

Recommended Items

- **Owner's Manual (if available):** Your manual contains valuable information about your specific machine's lubrication points, tension settings, and troubleshooting. If you don't have a physical copy, try looking for a PDF version online. Still no luck? Feel free to contact me – I have access to a large collection of manuals and might be able to help you out.
- **Specific-Use Needles:** If you primarily sew a specialty fabric (knits, denim, leather etc.) feel free to bring tester squares of these and the appropriate needles to test those functions specifically.

II. Cleaning & Lubrication Supplies

Mandatory Items

- **Sewing Machine Oil:** This *must* be specifically labeled "**sewing machine oil.**" Make sure you're getting oil for *domestic* sewing machines, as industrial oils are formulated differently (this can be hard to tell, so if in doubt, text me a picture of what you're looking at and I'll let you know. But definitely avoid anything with the words "commercial," "industrial", or "defrix" on it.) And absolutely no household oils – they'll gum up your machine! I **do NOT recommend Singer brand oil** (the oil itself is fine, but it comes in an opaque container and makes it impossible to tell if it's turned yellow, i.e. gone bad.) For the best quality, I highly recommend [Blue Creeper Sewing Machine Oil](#). [Zoom Spout oil](#) is another good, reliable choice. A small bottle (1-4 oz) is plenty.



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- **Grease/Lubrication:** Some modern machines don't take grease at all and only use oil, but if your machine is this new, it's probably still under warranty, in which case you shouldn't be opening it up on your own anyway. And yes, you can use SMO in place of grease, but it doesn't last as long and it's not as effective. So get some grease. And that grease needs to be [Super Lube Synthetic Grease](#). I've seen it at Harbor Freight and Home Depot and Ace Hardware, but it's cheapest on Amazon. I'm sure there are other kinds that are okay, but it's too risky to use something else when this is easily accessible,



- inexpensive, and 100% SAFE.
- **Cleaning Solution:** You'll need some type of cleaning solution for stubborn grime and old

oil. [Krud Kutter](#) is highly recommended (Red label.) [Blue Creeper](#) once again is the best by far, but more expensive. Though if anyone is interested in splitting the cost of a larger quantity, let me know, i'm almost out 😊 (note that this is a different product from **Blue Creeper Sewing Machine Oil** and neither is a replacement for the other.) **Windex** is safe to use for simple cleaning, but will not do anything to break down old grease and oil. **Isopropyl Alcohol** is good for old oil but is a highly noxious irritant and evaporates so



fast, you spend a lot of time reapplying.



- **Rags:** Some type of rag is essential. I use [Intex Cloth-like Rags](#) (horrible product name, I know.) They last forever, you can tear one into 1/8ths and it can last for a whole cleaning, and they leave no lint behind. Other disposable shop towels are great too, like [Scott Shop Towels](#). I don't recommend actual cloth rags, wasteful as that is. They just leave so much lint behind, and old compacted oil is so tacky you usually have to throw it away anyway.
- **Cotton Swabs/Q-tips:** There are all sorts of cleaning tools out there with fuzzy ends that are good for precision cleaning, and you will need to bring at least one kind. Q-Tip brand swabs are not recommended, they're super linty. The dollar store ones with the paper handles are great, but the best are the ones with foam tips, like [these](#), though they are significantly more expensive. I usually go through about 5 or 6 of these per machine I

- clean, but if they're really bad it can be 15-20. So consider that before investing too much.
- **Small Container for Waste:** An old jar or plastic bag works great for disposing of lint, old oil-soaked rags, etc.

Recommended Items

- **Hand Wipes:** If you don't like having your hands dirty for very long, you may want some kind of personal wipe for your hands.

III. Precision Tools & Machine Access

Mandatory Items

- **Screwdriver Set (Small to Medium):** You'll need various sizes to open access panels and tighten/loosen screws. Your machine probably came with a little dinky, keyhole-shaped, or triangular one –and it probably sucks for anything serious! I highly recommend getting some **stubby screwdrivers** (like [this set on Amazon](#)), as well as standard small-to-medium flathead and Phillips head screwdriver. I will have my drivers with me for anyone to use if they need one they don't have, but be aware you'll need them eventually to do the maintenance on your own.
- **PRY TOOLS/SPUDGERS/SCRAPERS!!:** you'll need something to get between the plastic covers of your machine and coax them open (many lower-end singers and brothers barely use any screws at all and hold everything together with interlocking plastic tabs. It's infuriating.) They come in many forms (see picture below) but I don't recommend anything metal. It'll mar your machine way more than plastic. A simple Amazon search for "pry tools" and you'll find what you need. Just be aware that some are incredibly thin and meant for tiny tech like smart watches and phones. You want something a little heftier, meant for larger devices. Paint/spackle plastic scrapers are also a great option.
- **Screw Management:** You'll need a way to keep track of all those tiny screws!
 - **Option 1: Container with Partitions:** Use a container with separate compartments and clearly label where each screw came from (i have a tray divided into 3 columns x 3 rows, and put screws from the top of the machine in the top row and work my way down so I don't have to label them.)
 - **Option 2: Blue Painter's Tape:** The most foolproof method! Use blue painter's tape (like [this one on Amazon](#)) to attach each screw to the body of the machine, right next to where it goes back. This is cheap and effective.
 - **Option 3: Magnetic Dishes:** Magnetic dishes (like [these on Amazon](#)) are also great, but only once you *really* know your machine and where every screw goes and feel comfortable throwing them all in one dish. It's also an option to take pictures of every screw and where it came from and then use that as a reference, which eliminates the need for keeping track. That's too much work for me, but it's an option.

Recommended Items

- **Telescoping Magnet Pointer:** Ditch the pliers (they can cause damage!) and grab one of these! A telescoping magnet pointer (like [this one on Amazon](#)) is a cheap and awesome way to scoop up dropped screws.
- **Tweezers:** Very useful for picking out stubborn threads or reaching small components. You'll find what works for you, I often use a giant 11" pair that's meant for arranging

- aquarium decorations. You may prefer something more precise and less...flamboyant.
- **Dental Picks:** Highly recommended for detailed cleaning in tight spots, and for scraping off the really old oil that's dried on. I use [this kit](#) and it's awesome.
 - **Headlamp or Small Task Light:** Provides direct illumination, which is crucial for seeing into the dark recesses of your machine.

IV. Personal Safety & Comfort

I don't use any of these but I probably should. Go for it if you're a safety queen.

Recommended Items (All)

- **Safety Glasses/Goggles:** Recommended for protecting your eyes from flying debris (lint, small parts) during cleaning, especially when using compressed air (if allowed/used in class).
- **Gloves:** Disposable nitrile or latex gloves can keep your hands clean when dealing with oil and grime.
- **Apron or Old Clothes:** Sewing machine maintenance can be messy! Please wear something you don't mind getting dirty or oily.
- **Hair Tie (if applicable):** To keep long hair out of the way.

V. Note-Taking & Reference

Mandatory Items

- **Camera (Smartphone is fine):**
 - Take photos of your machine's internal components *before* disassembly. These photos will be a lifesaver when it's time to put everything back together!
 - Taking pictures of each screw when it's removed, right next to where it was removed from, is another very effective method of screw management

Recommended Items

- **Note-Taking Options:** Whether you prefer a classic notebook and pen/pencil, a tablet, or a laptop, having a way to jot down important tips, steps, and observations is highly recommended. The class itself will be videotaped and all participants will have access to those recordings as well.

VI. Optional: Materials Provided by Instructor

- I mentioned this at the beginning, but again, for your convenience, I can provide all the necessary supplies (including oil, brushes, cloths, etc.) for a fee of **\$15 per person**. If you wish to take advantage of this option, please let me know at least **one week prior** to the class date. This will not include a loaner machine to work on (separate fee,) a camera, nor a screwdriver set (as mentioned, you can just use mine as needed.)

VII. Important Reminders

- **Arrive on time** with all your materials organized and ready.
- **If you have questions about specific tools or your machine or ANYTHING AT ALL,** please contact the instructor before the class. I want everyone to be as comfortable as possible going in, and if there's anything I should know about your machine or your needs or goals for this class before we begin, I'd love to be as prepared as possible to accommodate!
- **Safety first!** Always follow the instructor's guidance regarding machine handling and tool use.
- **Disclaimer:** While the instructor has never personally broken a machine during maintenance, participants are ultimately responsible for any damage that may occur to their own machines during the class or afterwards in applying what you've learned.

Whew. Damn, that was a lot. Let's make it worth it, and have a productive and informative class!