

Hand sewing your re-enacting clothes is great but those long inner seams that no one will ever see can get exhausting to sew. If you are considering buying a sewing machine there are many machines that are under \$100 available from Amazon, Joann's Fabrics and even Walmart.

Here are a few things to consider:

Brand of machine. Singer and Brother make good machines that are pretty easy to find. Both companies make durable portable machines for reasonable prices plus the accessories for these brands are easy to come by.

Number of stitches. Many machines come with dozens of decorative stitches. For our purposes you really only need to go forward and backward, have a zig-zag option and make a buttonhole – the rest is gravy. The more fancy stitches on a machine, the higher the price goes.

Buttonhole options. You will see machines marked with either “4 Step” or “1 Step” buttonholes.

With a “4 step” machine you need to calculate the size of the buttonhole based on the size of the button, measure and mark the length on your garment, then do each step individually (bottom bar tack, side one, top bar tack, side two) by moving the stitch selector knob on the machine for each of the 4 steps. It's not a big deal but if you are doing a lot of buttonhole it can be time consuming.

“1 Step” means the machine has a special foot you attach to the presser foot, put the button you are going to use in the space on the back of the foot, set the stitch selector knob to buttonhole and go – the machine automatically measures the size of the hole needed and does the four sides in one step.

Most machines tend to be “4 step” but Brother makes a nice machine with “1 Step” – model # XM2701.

Heavy duty VS regular. A regular machine will sew pretty much all of the types of fabrics we use for re-enacting. A heavy duty machine has a stronger motor and is good if you plan to sew a lot of heavy fabrics like canvas, Russian drill etc. Singer makes a good heavy duty machine – model #4411.

Here is a list of machines I currently own or have used in the past and been very happy with that you might want to consider. (Prices are from Amazon as of January 2018; also available at Joann's or Walmart who have sales from time to time)

Brother XM2701 – 1 step buttonhole - about \$83

Singer 2259, 2263 or 1304 – all 4 step buttonhole – range about \$70-85

Singer Heavy Duty 4411 – 4 step buttonhole – about \$140