SOFTWARE & TECH

Craftsman Lawn Mower Model 917 Manual

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Your Complete Resource for the Craftsman Lawn Mower Model 917 Manual

Few things signal the start of a productive weekend quite like the roar of a Craftsman lawn mower engine. For decades, the Craftsman brand has been a staple in American garages and tool sheds, known for its durability, ease of use, and accessible parts. Among the most popular and enduring series is the **Craftsman lawn mower model 917**. Whether you own a self-propelled walk-behind, a rear-engine rider, or a zero-turn model carrying the 917 designation, one document remains essential: the **Craftsman Lawn Mower Model 917 Manual**.

This guide serves as your comprehensive companion to understanding, maintaining, and troubleshooting your 917-series mower. We will walk you through why this manual is critical, how to locate it (even if the original has disappeared), what key information it contains, and how to use that knowledge to keep your lawn looking its best.

Understanding the Craftsman Model 917 Series

Before diving into the manual itself, it helps to appreciate the scope of the 917 family. Craftsman used—and continues to use—the "917" prefix to denote a specific line of lawn and garden equipment, primarily manufactured by MTD (Modern Tool and Die Company). These mowers range from 12.5 HP to 26 HP, feature engines from Briggs & Stratton, Kohler, or Honda, and include various cutting deck sizes from 42 to 54 inches.

The **Craftsman lawn mower model 917 manual**is not a one-size-fits-all document. Each variation (e.g., 917.289250, 917.289260, 917.273120) has its own manual tailored to its specific engine, transmission, and deck design. The manual is the single source of truth for safe operation, proper maintenance schedules, and correct part numbers.

Why the 917 Manual Matters More Than You Think

It might be tempting to skip the manual and rely on intuition or online videos. However, the official Craftsman manual provides details that generic advice cannot match:

- Specific torque specifications for blade bolts and wheel nuts.
- Exact oil and fuel recommendations, including viscosity grades for different operating temperatures.
- Safety interlock system diagrams—critical for preventing accidental starting.
- Parts breakdowns with OEM numbers for ordering replacements.
- Warranty information and registration details.

Ignoring the manual can lead to voided warranties, seizure of the engine due to improper oil, or dangerous bypass of safety systems.

How to Find Your Craftsman Lawn Mower Model 917 Manual

If you have lost the paper manual that came with your mower—perhaps it got wet, misplaced during a move, or was never passed down from the original owner—do not worry. There are several reliable ways to obtain a digital copy of your **Craftsman lawn mower model 917 manual**.

1. Locate the Model Number Tag

The first step is to find the exact model number. For Craftsman 917 mowers, the model number sticker is typically located in one of three places:

- Under the seat (for riding mowers).
- On the frame near the left rear wheel.
- On the rear fender or fender pan (for walk-behinds).

The model number will look something like "917.289250" or "917.273120". Write it down exactly as shown.

2. Download from the Official Sears Parts Direct Site

Sears Parts Direct (www.searspartsdirect.com) is the official repository for Craftsman manuals. Enter your full model number (including the decimal and all digits) into the search box. The site will display your model, and under the "Manuals and Downloads" tab, you can download a PDF version for free. This is the safest source because it is an unaltered, manufacturer-approved document.

3. Use Third-Party Manual Libraries

Websites like ManualsLib, ManualsOnline, and Owner-Manual.com also host thousands of Craftsman 917 manuals. Simply search for your full model number. While these sites can be convenient, always cross-check the page count and revision date against the official Sears Parts Direct file to ensure you have the latest version.

4. Contact Craftsman Customer Service

If you cannot find the manual online, you can call Craftsman's customer service line (1-888-331-4569) with your model number and serial number. They can email you the manual or mail a printed copy for a nominal fee. This is especially helpful for older 917 models from the 1990s that may not be fully digitized.

What the Craftsman Lawn Mower Model 917 Manual Contains

The manual is typically a 40 to 60 page document, divided into logical sections. Understanding these sections will help you find answers quickly when you need them most.

Safety and Assembly Instructions

The first few pages cover essential safety warnings—something many owners skip. For riding mowers, this includes instructions on how to properly attach the seat with the battery connector, add the steering wheel, and install the chute deflector. Walk-behind models include handlebar adjustment and blade installation. The manual also explains the safety interlock system, which prevents the engine from starting if the blade is engaged or the parking brake is disengaged.

Engine and Drive System Specifications

One of the most useful parts of the **Craftsman lawn mower model 917 manual**is the detailed specification table. It lists:

- Engine make and model (e.g., Briggs & Stratton 12.5 HP Model 28N707).
- Displacement (cubic centimeters).
- Oil capacity and recommended oil type (usually SAE 30 or 10W-30).
- Fuel tank capacity and fuel type (unleaded, 87 octane minimum, ethanol-free preferred).
- Transmission type and fluid specifications (if any).

Using the wrong oil can cause a 917 engine to overheat or smoke—the manual eliminates guesswork.

Controls and Operation

This section explains every lever, pedal, and switch on your 917 mower. It covers throttle choke, electric start (key or push-button), blade engagement (PTO switch), deck height adjustment, and cruise control (if equipped). For self-propelled walk-behinds, the manual details the speed selector and forward/reverse engagement. Reading this section can help you optimize fuel efficiency and cutting quality.

Maintenance Schedule

A well-maintained 917 can last 10 to 15 years. The manual provides a clear maintenance schedule based on operating hours:

- Every 5 hours: Check oil level, clean air filter pre-cleaner, inspect blades.
- Every 25 hours: Change engine oil, sharpen blades, grease wheel hubs (if fittings are present).
- Every 50 hours: Replace oil filter (if equipped), clean or replace air filter element.
- Yearly/100 hours: Replace spark plug, clean cooling fins, check battery connections, replace fuel filter.
- Before winter storage: Add fuel stabilizer, change oil, remove battery, cover and store.

Following this schedule not only prevents breakdowns but also preserves resale value.

Troubleshooting Guide

When your Craftsman 917 won't start, runs rough, or cuts unevenly, the manual's troubleshooting chart is your best friend. It organizes problems by symptom, then lists likely causes and corrective actions in a logical order. Common issues covered:

- Engine cranks but fails to start (check fuel, spark, safety switches).
- Engine stalls under load (dirty carburetor, clogged fuel filter, bad spark plug).
- Mower deck vibrates excessively (bent blade, loose pulley, debris under deck).
- Transmission does not engage (drive belt broken, pulleys rusted, idler spring broken).
- Battery not charging (faulty stator, corroded wiring, blown fuse).

Each fix includes simple steps that any competent DIYer can follow with basic tools.

Parts Diagrams and Lists

The final major section of the **Craftsman lawn mower model 917 manual**contains exploded-view drawings of the entire mower, broken down into assemblies: engine, deck, transmission, electrical, chassis, and steering (for riders). Each part is numbered and cross-referenced with an official part number. This is invaluable when ordering replacement blades, belts, spindles, pulleys, cables, or even entire deck shells. Ordering by the part number from the manual virtually guarantees a correct fit.

Common Questions Owners Have About the 917 Manual

Is the manual the same for a 917 riding mower and a 917 walk-behind?

No. While both may share the 917 prefix, the manual is specific to the exact model number. Riding mower manuals are longer because they include transmission and deck removal procedures. Walk-behind manuals focus more on handlebar adjustment and wheel drive systems. Always use the manual for your precise model.

Can I use the manual to adjust the carburetor?

Yes, but only for models with adjustable jets. Many newer 917 engines have fixed jets and sealed screws. The manual will indicate which screws can be turned and how many turns from lightly seated. Over-adjusting can damage the carburetor, so follow the manual precisely.

How do I interpret the part numbers in the manual?

Craftsman part numbers usually start with "532" followed by four or five digits. Some parts also have an OEM number from the original manufacturer (e.g., Briggs & Stratton or MTD). When ordering online, use the Craftsman number if you want an exact replacement; the OEM number may work as a cheaper alternative but verify compatibility.

Extra Tips for Getting the Most from Your 917 Manual

Once you have your digital or printed manual, consider these best practices:

- Keep a printed copy in a weatherproof bag taped inside your shed door or under the mower seat. You will have it when you need it most.
- Bookmark the troubleshooting page on your phone if you use the PDF. A quick search for "engine won't start" can save hours of frustration.
- Use the manual to set blade height accurately. The manual gives recommended cutting heights for different grass types—typically 2.5 to 3.5 inches for cool-season grasses, 1.5 to 2.5 inches for warm-season grasses. Proper height prevents scalping and reduces weed growth.
- Share the manual with anyone who borrows your mower. A neighbor using incorrect starting procedures can damage the starter motor or safety switches.

Conclusion

The **Craftsman lawn mower model 917 manual**is far more than a piece of paper that gets tucked away and forgotten. It is the key to safe operation, long machine life, and efficient lawn care. Whether you are a new owner looking to understand your purchase or a seasoned operator tracking down a persistent oil leak, the manual provides the authoritative answers you need. In an age of unreliable internet advice, returning to the original manufacturer documentation is the surest path to a well-maintained machine and a great-looking lawn. Take five minutes today to locate your specific 917 manual, download it, and become familiar with its contents. Your Craftsman—and your yard—will thank you.

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