

AI-Powered Antiques & Furniture Identification Checklist

Learn how to photograph, identify, and evaluate antiques and furniture using AI tools.

QUICK START

- Photograph joinery, hardware, and finishes from multiple angles with a size reference (ruler/coin).
- Use AI to identify wood type, construction style, and approximate date range.
- Search historical catalogs or collector forums for similar designs and labels/marks.

Photographing Guide

Capture clear, well-lit details that AI and experts can assess.

- Overall front, side, back; include scale object.
- Joinery: dovetails, mortise-and-tenon, pegs, screws, nail types, drawer bottoms.
- Hardware: hinges, pulls, locks, escutcheons; show fasteners from inside.
- Wood + finish: end grain, wear patterns, patina, oxidation lines, shellac vs. varnish clues.
- Underside/backs: tool marks, saw kerfs, secondary woods, unfinished areas.
- Labels/marks: maker stamps, paper labels, stencil, chalk marks; shoot straight-on with OCR clarity.

AI Prompts

- Identify the era and likely maker region from joint types, hardware, and wood species.
- Describe materials and craftsmanship (hand-cut vs. machine-cut dovetails, saw marks, fasteners).
- Find comparable auction results for similar items and summarize price range and dates.
- Suggest preservation or care techniques appropriate to the finish and construction.

Notes / Item ID:

Step-by-Step Workflow

1. Capture photos per the Photographing Guide. Include a ruler and neutral lighting.
2. Run images through an AI visual classifier to estimate wood species and construction era.
3. Use reverse image search and query collector forums for stylistic matches.
4. Extract any labels/marks with OCR; translate if necessary.
5. Compile comparable sales from auction databases; record date, condition, provenance.
6. Assess condition (see Condition Grading) and note alterations/restorations.
7. Form a preliminary date range, region, and value band with evidence citations.

Evidence to Capture

- Primary wood and secondary wood (drawer sides/back, case interior).
- Tooling: hand plane chatter, sash saw vs. circular saw marks.
- Hardware wear: screw slot shape, thread form, patina consistency.
- Finish clues: crazing, alligatoring, fluorescence under UV (optional).
- Joinery proportions: pins/tails ratio, drawer runners/kerfing.
- Provenance: inscriptions, shipping labels, repair receipts.

Red Flags for Reproductions

- Uniform machine-cut dovetails with identical spacing on "early" pieces.
- Phillips screws, modern nails, or bright zinc hardware claiming 19th c. origin.
- Artificial wear: sanded edges, consistent worm holes, identical patina spots.
- Fresh stain in recesses; finish inside drawers or backs where originals are bare.
- Mismatched oxidation: new wood inside, dark outside without plausible reason.
- Incorrect tool marks (circular saw marks on supposed pre-1860 boards).

Condition Grading Quick Guide

- Excellent: Original finish and hardware; minimal wear; no structural issues.
- Very Good: Light wear; minor reversible repairs; largely original.
- Good: Noticeable wear; some replaced hardware or finish touch-ups; stable.
- Fair: Significant wear; structural repairs; refinished or multiple replacements.
- Poor: Major damage; missing parts; extensive non-original alterations.

Condition notes:

Valuation Checklist

- Comparables: at least 3 recent auction results with similar form, materials, and scale.
- Provenance: documented ownership history, maker labels, regional attribution.
- Condition impact: grade and specific issues affecting value (+/-%).
- Demand: current trend indicators from forums/dealers; regional preferences.
- Rarity: production numbers, bespoke indicators, unusual features or sizes.
- Authenticity confidence: summary of evidence and uncertainties.

Valuation notes:

Suggested AI & Research Tools

Tool-agnostic examples; substitute with your preferred services.

Image classification

Reverse image search

OCR for labels/marks

Translation

Auction databases

Forum search

Embeddings search

Links or preferred tools: