

Walking and Bicycling Resources



Basic Maintenance

A couple minutes of work can substantially reduce your chances of getting a flat tire or wearing out parts of your bike. A good rule of thumb is to know what your bike sounds like when it's in good repair. When it's squeaking, groaning, or otherwise complaining, try to identify the source of the noise. It's good to know how to fix your bike, but just like with your body, do consult a professional before undertaking serious repairs, and be sure to take your bike in regularly for proactive care.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- **Wheel wobble** – do your brakes rub, but only at certain times through the rotation? First, double-check that the wheel is straight in the dropouts: lower the quick-release lever and push the rim with your thumbs until it lines up between the brake pads, then tighten the axle lever back up. If the rim continues to rub on the brake, then your wheel needs to be trued.
- **Loose handlebars, headset, fenders, or other components** – if something is rattling or squeaking, then it is probably loose. Look for parts that can move but shouldn't; hold your front wheel between your legs and try to twist the handlebars, or engage the front brake and push the bike forward to see if there is movement between the wheel and the frame. Try tightening the bolts, but see a mechanic if the problem is in the headset (where the fork and frame come together with the handlebars).
- **Slack cables** – the cables will naturally stretch, affecting the braking and shifting action on your bicycle. Sometimes cables can be re-tightened, but if they've reached the end of their usefulness, you will need new cables.
- **Rust** – keep your bike indoors and dry, or the frame will rust and become dangerous to ride. Keep an eye out for rust spots, and clean and cover spots with some touch-up paint or nail polish.

TIRE INFLATION

Pump your tires up to full inflation every time you go for a ride, or once a week if you ride regularly. This will help keep the tube from rubbing against the tire and puncturing it, and it will also cushion your rim from bending under hard impacts. It will also be easier to ride on the street, because it reduces rolling resistance on the ground by reducing friction



ONCE A WEEK

between the tire and the road. The optimal inflation for your tires should be written on the side; it will most likely be in the 50-70psi range for mountain bike or hybrid tires or 90-110 for road bikes. Before inflating, you should know what kind of valve you have: Presta or Schrader. Schrader valves are more common on mountain bikes and hybrids, while Presta are often found on road bikes. Many modern bike pumps can take either style, but make sure you're buying a pump that will work with your bicycle.

CHAIN LUBRICATION

EVERY FEW WEEKS

Does your bicycle chain squeak as you ride? If it does, your chain is likely in need of lubricant. A dry chain will rub on the cassette and chainring, wearing them down and making a clicking or grinding noise. Begin by wiping the excess dirt and grease off the chain; degreaser isn't necessary (although having your drivetrain professionally cleaned every once in a while isn't a bad idea). You can even use an old toothbrush to get into the cassette and remove more build-up if necessary. Now, drip a light but steady stream of lubricant on the chain while slowly rotating the pedal backward with your other hand. This will ensure complete coverage. You can shift through the cassette to cover all the gears in lube. Clean off the excess lubricant with a rag, as it will gather dirt. Note: double-check with your local bike shop before removing the chain on your bicycle. Many modern chains cannot be put back together and are expensive to replace.

CLEANING

WHENEVER NECESSARY

Rust, dirt, and grit wear away at all the components on your bicycle; and dirty rims not only wear out the rims and brake pads but also reduce your braking ability. You will want to clean your bicycle more frequently in the winter, or if you have been riding in the rain and mud. First of all, keep your bike dry – leaving it wet (or keeping it outside in the elements) will cause your frame to rust and become dangerous to ride. Wipe off grit and mud on the rims and double-check the brake pads. They shouldn't be worn down significantly, or asymmetrically. Avoid high-pressure washing, as that will remove lubricant and grease from places it should be.

Source: *Bicycle South Tech Tips Website.*