



CHECKING YOUR BIKE FOR FUNCTIONALITY AND RELIABILITY, OR, IS THIS THING REALLY READY TO RIDE?

It is generally a good idea to inspect your bike periodically, at the very least annually, perhaps in the spring before riding season. It is also a good idea to do additional inspections prior to scheduled events, like a century, or after any type of malfunction or crash. A shop tune-up should include all of the following inspections.

DRIVETRAIN

A) Chain:

- 1) Clean and lubricated, preferably with a wax based lubricant

B) Cable Condition:

- 1) Cables, where visible, should not be rusted or oxidized (dull or covered in white film).
- 2) Housings should not be split or frayed. Housing core should not be visible at ferules (where the housing ends).
- 3) Cables should move within housings with very little friction.

C) Shifters:

- 1) With an indexed system (one that clicks when you shift) you should be able to select individual gears distinctly, in either direction. The rear should not require excessive effort or travel at the lever. The front will usually require more pressure to shift between an easier and a harder gear and will also require more travel of the lever.

BRAKES

A) Brake Pads:

- 1) Brake pads should show even wear. Most brake pads have wear indicators manufactured into the pad. Be sure your pads are not excessively worn.
- 2) Brake pads should be aligned so they contact the rim evenly and flat. Pads should not drag against the rim when the brake lever is not being applied. Pad position on the rim should be centered in the braking area.

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- 3) Brake pads that have been contaminated with a lubricating fluid, solvent, or other liquid, other than soap and water, should be evaluated for replacement.

B) Calipers:

- 1) When engaging the brake levers, observe that both sides of the caliper close equally and that the pads contact the rim simultaneously.
- 2) When the levers are release, check to make sure that both sides of the caliper retract equally.

WHEELS

A) Rims:

- 1) Rims should not be pitted or rusted.
- 2) Rims should not be bent and when spun on the bicycle should rotate true with no wobble.
- 3) There should be no visible cracks or gouges in the braking surface.
- 4) If the rim has braking surface wear indicators, they should be inspected for wear.

B) Spokes:

- 1) Spokes should appear straight and unbent, except where they cross other spokes under tension.
- 2) Spokes should all have tension on them. The rear spokes will have a higher tension on the drive side (side with the chain) than the non-drive side.
- 3) Spokes should not be oxidized or rusted. The nipples (the small part on the spoke where it enters the rim) should be intact and not appear rusted, corroded, or crumbling.

C) Hubs:

- 1) Hubs should not be leaking lubricant or caked with dirt.
- 2) Axles should turn easily and not grind when turned with wheels removed from the bicycle.
- 3) Freehub (the part with the gears attached to it) should spin easily (usually with a clicking sound) in one direction, with the rim held still, but should not rotate in the opposite direction.

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TIRES AND TUBES

A) Tires

- 1) Inspect tires for cuts or excessive tread wear. If you can see spots in the tread that have worn through to an underlying layer, DO NOT ride on that tire and replace it as soon as possible. Visually inspect the sidewalls and tread (if any) for cracks.
- 2) Check for proper inflation as stated by the manufacturer and printed on the sidewall of the tire. The recommend pressure is generally referred to as a range. Higher pressure generally means lower rolling resistance but a harsher ride. Lower pressure results in a smoother ride but greater flat susceptibility and higher rolling resistance.

B) Tubes

- 1) Inspect the valve stem and be sure it exits from the rim at a right angle. Riding an underinflated tube will result in the tube rotating relative to the rim eventually causing the valve hole in the rim to cut into the valve stem causing a flat.
- 2) Be sure to use the correct tube size and valve type (Presta or Schrader) when replacing a punctured tube.

OTHER ITEMS

A) Stem, Handlebars, and Headset

- 1) Make sure the handlebars are pointing straight ahead when the front wheel is pointing straight ahead.
- 2) When you apply the front brake and rock the bike, you should not feel any clicking coming from the headset (the bearing installed in the front most tube of the bicycle).
- 3) Stem bolts should be tightened to the torque specified by the manufacturer.
- 4) Inspect grips or bar tape for tears and replace as necessary.

B) Seatpost and Saddle

- 1) Be sure seatpost clamp is tight and that saddle does not turn in the clamp. Check that saddle is secure to seatpost.
- 2) Check to see that the saddle is pointing forward and sitting level (unless you have intentionally adjusted it off of level)

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C) Pedals and Bottom Bracket/Cranks

- 1) Check that pedals rotate freely and without squeaks or squeals.
- 2) Check that there is no excessive play between pedal and crank arm where pedal attaches.
- 3) If using pedals that except cleats, check pedal mechanisms for bent or missing parts and confirm that your shoes will clip into each side of the pedals if they are two sided. Adjust release tension if necessary.
- 4) Check that the crank arm and chainring assembly rotates freely and that there is not excessive play between the crank arm and it's attachment point (bottom bracket).

STUFF HANGING OFF YOUR BIKE

A) Bags, Racks, and Panniers

- 1) Make sure you have no loose straps or fasteners that are broken or will not allow a tight attachment.
- 2) Inspect racks for rust and broken or loose fasteners. Replace or tighten as necessary.
- 3) Inspect bags for tears or cuts that will allow contents to escape.

ITEMS TO CARRY ON YOUR RIDE

A) Food and hydration

- 1) Water and/or sports drink
- 2) Gel shots or blocks
- 3) Real food (i.e.: PB&J sandwich)

B) Spare tube, air, and tools

- 1) Correct sized tube with correct valve type.
- 2) Pump or CO2 dispenser with filler compatible with tube valve type.
- 3) Spare CO2 cartridges (at least two 16G cartridges) if using CO2 dispenser rather than pump.
- 4) Tire levers (at least two) to help remove tire in case of flat.
- 5) Small Multi-tool.

NOTE: A creaking sound while riding your bike usually indicates something not adequately tightened and/or lubricated. A creaking sound might be very minor but can sometimes be an indication of a major problem. Know where your creaks are coming from.

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