



Bike Maintenance Tips

Regular maintenance is important to your safety as well as the long life of your bicycle. Maintenance isn't just a yearly tune-up. It means inspecting your bike every time you take it out for a ride. Listed below are quick checks to perform before heading out.

Tires

Inflate tires to the rate pressure as listed on the sidewall of the tire. Use a pressure gauge to insure proper pressure. Look for any damage to the tire such as cuts, bulges, or tears. Remove small bits of glass, nails, etc. Replace the tire if it is damaged.

Brakes

Check your brake pads for wear. Most newer bikes have ridged brake pads; replace the pads if the ridges are entirely worn down. Check your brake pad adjustments, they should hit the rim, not rub against the tire or dive into the spokes. Check your hand brakes, they should travel at least 1 inch between the bar and lever when applied.

Check your cranks and chain

Your crank bolts should be tight. Check your chain for signs of wear. Grease your chain—first with your bike upside down; take hold of your chain with a cloth. Pedal and run the cloth lightly over the chain to



remove dirt. Then, keep pedaling and apply a thin layer of chain grease. Excess grease will attract more dirt. If your chain skips on your cassette, you might need an adjustment.

Check your quick releases

Your hubs should be tight in the frame and the quick release should engage at 90 degrees. Your hub quick release should point back to insure that nothing catches on it. Inspect your brake quick releases to insure that they have been re-engaged if you have removed your wheel.

Take it out for a ride

Check to make sure the brakes and gears are working properly. If your bike won't stay in gear or can't shift to a low or high gear, get it checked out. Inspect your bike for any loose or broken parts, replace or fix them. You might even try picking your bike up and shaking it to see if anything sounds loose.

Winter Bike Care

- **Rims** - When wet, brake pads grip aluminum rims better than they do steel.
- **Tires** - Fat tires have better traction. Tires less than 1 1/4 inch wide work better on wet streets when under-inflated. Use tires with a deep tread pattern.
- **Salt Damage** - With lots of winter riding, occasionally wipe your frame, rims, spokes, and derailleurs, and lube your chain. Use a toothbrush for hard-to reach parts.
- **Fenders** - They beat almost anything to keep you dry on wet pavement. The newest plastic ones are inexpensive and light, but can break if installed wrong.
- **Bearing Damage** - After biking in wet weather put your bike indoors so bearings can dry.
- **Brakes** - Grime builds up on brake pads, making them squeak or scratch your rims. Run a rag between each pad and the rim, like shining a shoe. Occasionally remove the wheel and check pads for wear.



Note: If the vocabulary used on this page leaves you scratching your head you might consider taking a basic bike repair workshop.

For more information:

Russ Ulrich, rulrich@baltometro.org, 410-732-9575