

SERVICE TIPS

A clean bike is a healthy bike!

Basics,... the rest is up to you...

TIME: Half an hour for a basic clean. Two hours for a super clean

DIFFICULTY (0-5): 3

Tools: Clean, fluff-free cloth, Scrubbing brush, Bucket, Old toothbrush, Cassette lockring tool, Large adjustable spanner, Chain whip, Chain cleaner box (Finish Line, Park Tool or similar)

Materials: Spray-on degreaser, Light spray-on lube, Chain lube, Anti-seize grease

Basics

Some people love to keep their bikes perfectly clean, while others hate the whole cleaning process. But regular bike cleaning is essential. Before any serious maintenance, carrying a bike on a car rack (where dirt and grit can get rubbed in and damage paintwork) or before racing, cleaning becomes very essential indeed. Putting a dirty bike into a workstand clamp is likely to scratch the paintwork, and dirt will often find its way on to new parts. A clean bike is also much better and easier to work with if you have to do a puncture repair or other repairs while out riding

It's impossible to suggest how regularly you should clean your bike, as it depends on the amount and type of use your bike gets. It should be cleaned after every time it gets seriously dirty, though. Some of the steps here can be missed out depending on just how dirty it is...

Notes and tips

The messy bits of bike cleaning need to be done outside, preferably on a hard surface with a drain

Don't use a jet wash. Use a standard hose or two buckets – one with some washing-up liquid added and one without for rinsing. A variety of brushes and sponges are essential, as well as an old toothbrush, preferably electric, to clean the difficult to reach parts. And remember to keep the brushes clean – they will rapidly become oily if you're not careful. If the chain is worn, the cassette will probably also need replacing. Use proper chain lubes; if you're cycling mainly in dry conditions a light chain lube is best, as it attracts less dirt. For all-weather conditions, use a heavy duty chain lube that can be dripped between the links. Be careful to wipe off the excess thoroughly. We have found degreasers vary widely in their effectiveness – **Finish Line** works well and **Carb & Choke cleaner** is an excellent spray-on degreaser. White spirit should be used with care, but it's still the most effective degreaser – though it should be disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner.



1] Chain Cleaning 1

The first job is to clean the chain. With modern chains, it's a bad idea to separate and remove the chain – chain cleaner boxes such as the **Finish Line** or **PARK TOOL** make it unnecessary. Most chain 'breakages' are caused by poor joins. Set your bike level in a workstand and, with newspaper to catch any drips, fit the chain cleaner box just in front of the rear derailleur. Fill the chain cleaner box with a biodegradable degreaser or white spirit (don't pour white spirit down the drain). Don't use petrol: the fumes are flammable.

2] Chain Cleaning 2

Slowly rotate the pedals backwards, while holding the box in position, to pull the chain thoroughly through the degreaser. The chain will need quite a few passes through the box. Check how clean the chain is. Once there's no dirt or oil to be seen, remove the chain cleaner box. If your chain is particularly dirty, remove the box, throw away the contents and refill with fresh cleaner. Hold the chain in the lower run with a thick mat of kitchen roll or, better still, a piece of old cloth, and rotate the pedals slowly backwards to remove excess cleaner. Leave the chain to dry.



3] Initial Frame Cleaning

Fill a bucket with warm water and washing-up liquid, and another bucket with just warm water. With a variety of brushes and sponges, clean the tyres and wheels first – the tyres, rims, spokes and hubs. Be careful not to pour water directly into bearings. Remove both of the wheels from the bike, then work your way from the top gradually downwards – the saddle/seatpin, bars, top of the frame and brakes. Use brushes to get to the awkward bits behind the chainset and round the wheels – a strip of cloth is excellent for getting behind the fork blades and stays.

4] Cleaning components

Spray-on degreaser should be used on any oily or greasy areas. Use an electric toothbrush to clean difficult to reach parts. Work methodically, starting with the front and rear brake pads, then the lower headset bearing area, chainwheels and around the cranks and bottom bracket. Then move on to the front and derailleurs, especially the pulleys wheels and derailleur cage. You should be able to get everything clean without any dismantling. A little white spirit will help in areas where there's caked on grease and oil. Rinse with fresh water.

5] Wheels and cassette

Remove the rear wheel's quick release mechanism and slide the cassette lockring tool into place. Use the quick release without springs to hold the lockring tool in position. Working from above, fit a chain whip or tool on the left side of a larger sprocket with its handle just above the horizontal. Fit a large adjustable spanner to the lockring tool so that its handle is just above horizontal on the right-hand side. Push down firmly on both tools. Take care not to let the chain whip slip. Remove the quick release and then unscrew the lockring.



6] Cleaning the cassette and wheels

Lift off the cassette and make a note of the order the sprockets and spacers come off. Next, dunk the cassette into a tub of degreasing solution. With a cloth and/or a toothbrush clean the freehub. Be very careful not to let degreaser near the dustcaps or to get it into any of the bearings. After soaking for a short time, scrub the cassette thoroughly in the degreaser, making certain that you get out any bits of matter that are trapped between the sprockets that are joined together.



7] Cables and tyres

Check both front and rear tyres for cuts and embedded glass, grit or other matter, anything found should be carefully prised out. Check the sidewalls for cuts or any damage, especially any close to the bead. Check your tyre pressures with a proper gauge and inflate as necessary. Check the inner cables for signs of fraying at the shifters or stops, and for any that are seriously frayed at the derailleur. Check the outer cables for cracking or sharp kinks. Check cables have end caps fitted. Any cables with problems should be attended to.

8] Refitting the cassette and wheels

Refit the cassette in the correct order. With all the sprockets fitted, check that the top gear sprocket stands slightly proud of the freehub body. If not, you have missed out a spacer or shim. Fit the lockring using the lockring tool, refit the quick release without its conical springs, and tighten the lockring with an adjustable spanner until you hear or feel three or four distinct clicks. Remove the quick release, and then remove the cassette lockring tool and refit quick release, complete with springs. Refit both wheels to the frame.

9] Lubrication and corrosion protection

Remove the stem bolts and smear the threads with anti-seize grease. With Aheadset-style stems, grease should be applied between the stem and steerer. Clean and smear the quill of conventional stems with grease. Remove the seatpin fixing bolt and smear the threads with grease too. Remove and clean the seatpin, smear the pin and the inside of the seat tube also. Remove the seatpin bolts, coat with grease and refit. Apply a little light lubricant to the pivots of the front and rear derailleurs.



10] Drying, checking and lubing the chain

A **Rohloff Caliber** or **Park Chain** checker make testing for chain wear simple. If one's not available, use a steel rule and measure the chain's pin-to-pin distance over **24 links**. If it's greater than **308mm**, the **chain is worn** and **needs replacing**. If the chain is okay, spread some sheets of newspaper over chainstays to prevent any lube reaching the rim or tyre. Lubricate the inside of the links with a quality chain lubricant – we prefer lubricant that can be dripped on or applied with a small brush rather than a spray. Wipe off any excess.

Now Your bike is clean,...