www.cycle4adventure.co.uk

Checking your bike before your Ride or Mountain Bike Session.

You don't want to turn up for a MTB Ride or session and find there's something wrong with your bike and you can't do the ride. Or something stops working halfway into a ride, which could mean stopping for a trail-side fix or even a long walk back.

To minimise this, we advise that you do a few checks before you attend your Guided Ride or Skills Training session (or indeed your own personal rides).

The first test is quite simple, the **BOUNCE TEST**

Once you have your bike out of your shed,car or van, and it is fully assembled; pick it up so both wheels are approx. 10cm (3in) off the ground and gently drop onto its wheels (don't let it fall over). You are listening for any loose rattles that shouldn't be there.

Usually if you hear something loose; check your wheels are lined up and the quick releases are tightened as the manufacturer recommends, and check the chain is on correctly.

Second test the **BRAKES**

These are very important, will they stop you when you are out on the trails?

Before you ride your bike, stand next to the bike, facing forward with your hands on both brake levers; pull both brakes on and first push the bike forward - the front wheel should stay stationary and the back wheel should start to lift. Return the back wheel to the ground and then keeping both brakes pulled on pull the bike backwards and this time the front wheel should lift off the ground.

The third test is know as the **"M" CHECK**

So called because of the rough pattern you follow when checking the bike.

Start at the front wheel, move up to the handlebars, down to the bottom bracket, back up to the saddle then down to the rear wheel. It's quick to do and will lessen the chance of being caught out by a loose bearing, dodgy spoke or slow puncture when you're mid-ride.

We'll cover these in more details over the next few pages.

M-check - **Front Wheel**

Check that the wheel is securely attached, and that the axle is in good working order: apply the front brake and try to move the wheel side to side. There may be a little movement if you've got suspension forks, but there shouldn't be movement in the axle.

Check the tyre pressure (with a pressure gauge) to ensure they are within the limits marked on the side of your tyre.

Give the wheels a spin to check that they are moving smoothly. Looking at the tyre to ensure there aren't any obvious punctures or signs of damage, on the side walls and tread areas.

Look at the brake pads to make sure there's enough pad left for your ride - if you look through the callipers along the same plane as the brake disc, you'll be able to see this.

Moving around the wheel, ensure all the spokes feel equally tensioned, by pinching them together two at a time; if there's lots of movement, then they'll need tightened before riding.

M-check - **Handle Bars (or Cockpit)**

Make sure the forks are working and are set up correctly. If you haven't already done this, seek advice from your local bike shop or online.

Ensure the handlebars are done up tightly and are straight. You can check how tight they are by holding the front wheel between your knees and attempting to rotate the bars side to side. Your handlebars should not turn when your wheel is fixed between your legs. To check how straight they are, look directly down from above the bars, and see if they line up with the fork crown.

Whilst there, make sure there is no play in the head set; with the handle bars turned to 90 degrees, hold the front brake on and rock the bike forwards and backwards, with your fingers touching where the forks and frame / stem and frame touch. If you feel play there, they will need tightening.

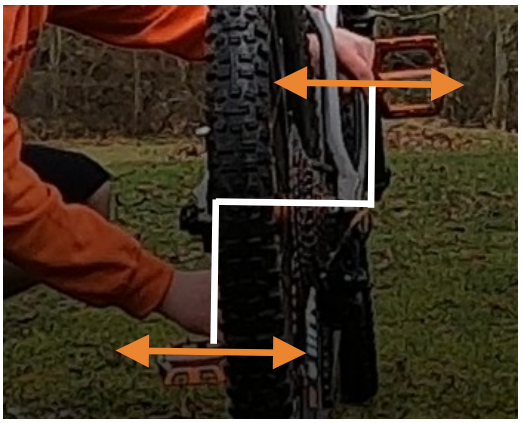
Check that the brake and gear levers are in a comfortable position you like when riding and done up tight enough that they won't move in use, and that you can reach them comfortably without stretching your hands.

Give both brakes a squeeze to make sure they're working, and that the levers move a similar amount. If you find yourself stretching or if the levers reach the bars, you can usually dial them in or out quite easily; some brakes have a dial, others require a small Allen key tool.

ENSURE you have handle bar end caps firmly fixed in both ends of your handle bars!

Headset check

End caps must be in place.



M-check - **Bottom Bracket and Cranks**

Check that your pedals are securely attached and spinning freely. If you ride with clips-in pedals, make sure the mechanism is clean and working well, and if you prefer flats check that you still get enough grip from the pins.

Bottom brackets do eventually wear out. If you've noticed any noise, or 'play'/movement in this area; it could be a sign of wear. To check your bracket is working okay; put the pedals in the '12.30' position (one vertically up, the other vertically down), place your hands on each crank and rock them sideways If the cranks and bottom bracket move, then it might be time for some maintenance.

Whilst your are there; check the chain rings are secure and that there are no damaged, bent or missing teeth.

M-check - **Suspension, seat post and saddle**

If you have a full-suspension bike, check the bearings to make sure there is no play. Do this by gently lifting the bike by the saddle, so the wheels stay on the ground, and feel if they've got play in each bearing; you may able to see play, particularly if you have a sideways push.

Check your rear suspension is working and are set up correctly. If you haven't already done this, seek advice from your local bike shop or online.

If you've got a dropper seat-post, make sure it's moving smoothly up and down so that you can make any necessary alterations as you ride.

Give your saddle is in the correct position and then give it a wiggle to make sure it is tight.

M-check - **Rear wheel and gearing**

As with your front wheel:- check the tyre for pressure and damage; check the spokes, that the wheel spins freely (forward) and check your brake pads.

As with the chainring(s), check the teeth on the cassette and make sure they are clean, oiled lightly and free of rust; then do the same with the chain.

Once you have done the rest of the “M” check you can check the gears are working by riding around gently and making sure they go into each gear. Carefully check your brakes again, with you on the bike, as you are riding, by gently applying them.

Although there are quite a few things to check on your bike, as you do it more often, you will get into the routine and it doesn’t take too long to do.

Do these checks every time you head out on your bike and it could save you from having to do a repair on the trail, or a long walk back to the car, or even a possible pricey repair.

If you find anything that needs attention, take your local reputable bike repair shop/mechanic; or if you are a competent mechanic, there is plenty of information on the internet (including manufacturers websites) on how to repair and adjust most components on your bike.

During Covid-19 times, to minimise cross contact, it is especially important to check your bike is working before you turn up for a session. We would advice checking you bike several days before the session, allowing time to sort any issues, and on the day of, or evening before, the session. We will lead you through an “M”check at the start on the session, but we’ll try to avoid contacting your bike or equipment, in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines.

If you do have any questions, please contact me.

For further information on our MTB Skills courses and Guided rides, please contact us:-

www.cycle4adventure.co.uk

Email: cycle4adventure@gmail.com