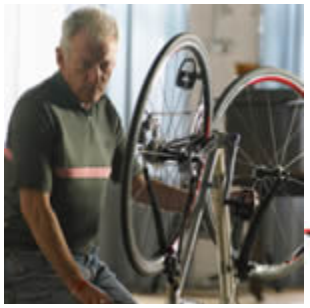
5 Quick Tips to Keep Your Bike Running Its Best

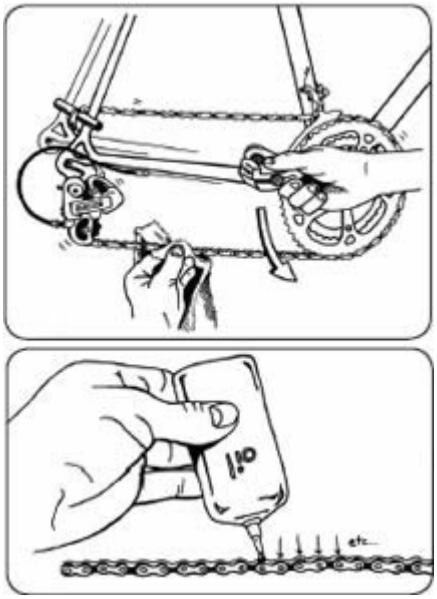


By Lennard Zinn
VeloNews

Want to enjoy your riding more, and make your drivetrain last longer?

Just follow these simple tips—and pump up those tires.

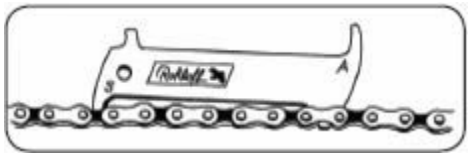
1. Wipe and lubricate your chain after every ride.



1. Wipe the chain by turning the cranks while holding a rag on the chain.
2. Using a rag, squeeze the teeth of the jockey wheels between your index finger and thumb as you turn the cranks to remove grease and dirt.
3. Wipe the teeth of the cogs as the freehub turns. If it's really dirty, work a rag back and forth between each pair of rear cogs.
4. Wipe the derailleurs and the front chainrings.
5. Drip chain lubricant into each of the chain's links and rollers as you turn the cranks to move the chain past the drip bottle.

2. Check your chain for excessive wear.

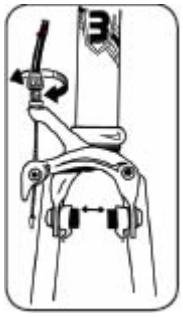
Brace the hook end of a Rohloff chain-wear gauge against a chain roller, and if the opposing curved tooth falls completely into the chain so the length of the tool contacts it, the chain is shot.



Alternatively, ProGold's chain gauge is as quick and easy to use. Brace the hooked end against a chain roller and let the long tooth drop into the chain. If it drops in close to the "90 percent" mark, your chain is done.

3. Keep your brake cables in proper adjustment.

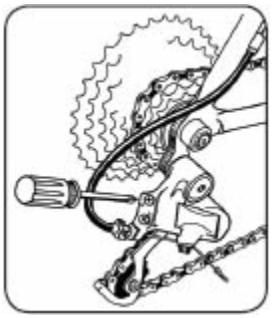
1. On brakes whose barrel adjuster threads into the brake arm, turn the barrel adjuster counterclockwise to tighten the cable. On brakes with a nut on the barrel adjuster, turn the nut clockwise; the barrel adjuster will be pulled straight upward out of the D-shaped hole in the brake arm.



2. Increase the tension sufficiently so that the lever does not hit the handlebar when the brake is applied fully, yet do not make the tension so tight that the brake rubs or comes on with very little movement of the lever.
3. If the barrel adjuster cannot take up enough cable slack alone to get the brakes as tight as you want, screw the barrel adjuster back in most of the way to leave some adjustment in the system for brake setup and cable stretch over time. Loosen the cable-fixing bolt clamping the cable at the brake, pull the cable tight, and retighten the clamping bolt. Tension the cable as needed with the barrel adjuster.

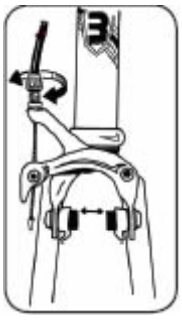
4. Ensure that your rear derailleur inner limit screw prevents the derailleur from contacting the spokes.

The low-gear limit screw stops the inward movement of the rear derailleur, preventing it from going into the spokes; it's often labeled "L" and is usually the bottom screw.



1. Shift the chain to the inner chainring on the front. Shift the rear derailleur to the largest cog gently, in case the limit screw does not stop the derailleur from moving into the spokes.
2. If the derailleur touches the spokes or pushes the chain over the largest cog, tighten the low-gear limit screw until the derailleur does neither.
3. If the derailleur cannot bring the chain onto the largest cog, loosen the screw one-quarter turn. Repeat this step until the chain shifts easily up to the largest cog but does not touch the spokes or push the chain over the top of the cog.

5. Adjust your left shift cable's tension so that your front derailleur works optimally.



1. With the chain on the inner chainring, remove any excess cable slack by turning the barrel adjuster on the cable stop counterclockwise (or loosen the cable-fixing bolt, pull the cable tight with pliers, and tighten the bolt).
2. Check that the cable is loose enough to allow the chain to shift smoothly and repeatedly to the inner chainring.
3. Check that the cable is tight enough that the derailleur starts to move as soon as you move the shifter. Fine-tune while riding.

Illustrations by Todd Telander, courtesy of VeloNews