

**GIVE YOUR BIKE  
A HEALTH CHECK**



**MAINTENANCE**



# YOUR BIKE

## KEEP IT MAINTAINED, IN TUNE AND LEGAL

It makes sense that if you look after your bike, it'll look after you. Unlike a car, if a bike has a mechanical problem then it can end up in a crash with you on the ground. Some quick technical checks before you ride are essential.

## KEEP IT CLEAN

Sounds daft, but it isn't. Keeping your bike clean means you're 'up-close and personal' to it more often, meaning that you will more easily spot potential problems with the following;

## TYRES AND CHAIN

Tyres are the interface between the road and your bike, therefore it's vital that these should be maintained with the correct tyre pressures for optimum handling and braking performance and adjusted accordingly when a pillion or heavy luggage is carried. A visual check on a regular basis will reveal any damage and is essential for monitoring wear – the tyres of some modern bikes can wear very quickly. When replacing your tyres, it is important that you use the correct size and type, as specified by the motorcycle or tyre manufacturer. Buy your tyres from a reputable source and have them fitted by a tyre specialist. Visit [www.tyresafe.org/tyre-safety/](http://www.tyresafe.org/tyre-safety/) for more info.

The chain tension should be adjusted in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines (you'll find it in your bike's handbook) and kept lubricated with an appropriate chain oil. Sprockets should also be checked. Uneven wear on the sprockets means that they may need to be changed as the chain hasn't been adjusted properly and has damaged the sprockets. If a sprocket requires replacement, you must also renew the other sprocket and chain as they wear at the same pace.

## BRAKE PADS

Cleaning your wheels often will mean you'll soon see how much wear you have left on your brake pads, front and rear. Never let them wear down to the minimum – see the coloured marker indicating the wear limit. Generally this is 2mm in depth. If you do not maintain and monitor your brake pads, your discs will become scored and damaged which is dangerous as well as expensive to repair. Be sure to follow the maintenance schedule recommended by the manufacturer with particular attention to the brake fluid change intervals and levels.

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## SUSPENSION

Many motorcycles now have multiple suspension settings. Remember that the front fork legs will have settings on both fork legs and these must be balanced.

### THE SETTINGS CAN BE DESCRIBED AS:

- **Compression** – Compression damping controls the rate at which the suspension compresses over bumpy road surfaces.
- **Rebound** – Rebound damping controls the rate at which the suspension returns once it has been compressed, too much and the suspension will return too slowly, too little and the suspension returns to its starting position too quickly. This can affect the handling and can sometimes be felt through the handlebars as a shudder.
- **Pre-load** – Forks and shock absorbers settle into a natural position when a bike is in a static position. When you brake or accelerate or corner they slide on their stanchions. By setting the pre-load you control how much of the suspension's maximum travel you want to use.

If you are unsure about the suspension on your bike, refer to the manufacturer's settings in your handbook or seek expert advice.

## STEERING DAMPERS

A steering damper is an ideal device for calming the handling of your bike but ONLY if it's on the right setting. Some motorcycle manufacturers now fit steering dampers as standard equipment onto their sportsbikes. Ask a suspension expert from a dealership to install, maintain and advise on set-up.

## THEFT AND SECURITY

A motorcycle is more likely to be stolen than a car, an alarm allied to a good quality chain and anchor should hopefully put off all but the most persistent thief. Many insurance companies nowadays offer discounts on policies where the rider has made efforts to secure his bike against theft using locks and alarms. When looking at this area, consider those that are Thatcham Approved or Sold Secure.

Be sensible – ALWAYS lock your bike, preferably to something solid and immovable. Garage your bike if you can. If you have to park your bike outside in a town or city then be aware of the increased number of CCTV cameras available and, if possible, park near them to deter criminals working in that area.

