

TOP 10 BIKE MAINTENANCE TIPS

By [Bike Week](#)

The following bike fettling tips were provided by Helen Pidd, author of [Bicycle – The Complete Guide to Everyday Cycling](#), published by Penguin.

1. Keep it clean

If there is one thing you can do to prolong the life of your bike, it is keeping it clean. Tedious, but true. No fancy cleaning kit required – a bucket of soapy water, a sponge and an old toothbrush is all you need, though a proper degreaser will help break down the oil and grit in the chain and gear sprockets.

2. Keep your tyres inflated properly

Poorly inflated tyres are prone to punctures. Forget flimsy hand pumps – you need a standing track pump with a pressure gauge to do the job. Nice bike shops will let you borrow theirs. Look on the side of your tyre for a number followed by the letters PSI. That tells you how much air to put in.

3. Check your brake pads

Worn brake pads equal rubbish brakes. You can tell they are worn if you can hardly see the grooves any more. Fitting new brake pads is a very cheap and easy fix and any number of websites can show you how. You just need a set of Allen keys and some patience.

4. Silence squeaky brakes

Screeching brakes are often dirty brakes, or at least dirty wheel rims. Clean and dry both properly and 50% of the time, you've solved the problem. If that doesn't work, they might need adjusting.

5. Tighten saggy brakes

Britain's Biggest Bike Fix. If your brakes have become sluggish and lacklustre – i.e. if you squeeze the brake lever and it moves more than halfway towards the handlebars – you need to tighten them up. The easiest way to do this is twiddle the barrel adjuster by the brake lever. If that doesn't do the trick, you'll need to get your Allen keys out and free the brake cable by opening the brake nut, pulling it taut and closing the nut again. Again, let the internet be your teacher.

6. Get a professional service

Once a year should be fine, ideally at the start of spring if you've been brave enough to cycle through winter. There is no shame in getting the pros in. Think of it as your bicycle MOT. Or why not bring your bike to your local Bike Week and have a Dr Bike check up?

7. Lubrication, lubrication, lubrication

Buy some bike-specific lubricant and use it sparingly on any parts of your bike where metal touches metal. There is no point oiling your chain unless you have cleaned it properly first – you'll make matters worse.

8. Check if your wheel is “true”

Turn your bike upside down and spin your wheels. Do they wobble a little from side to side? If so, they need “truing”. This is a quick fix, but not one for an amateur, as you need special equipment. A bike shop will do this for a small fee.

9. Get your saddle perfect

If you are prone to SBS (sore bum syndrome), experiment a little with your saddle, raising or tilting it slightly to suit your riding style. If you get sore knees while cycling, you might have your saddle too low. When you pedal, your legs should be almost straight on the downwards revolution.

10. Buy some latex gloves

Bike oil is a nightmare to get out from under your nails. If it's too late for that, scrub your hands with washing up liquid and sugar, only adding water right at the end.