

Five Top Tips on Cycle Maintenance from [Made Good](#)

1. Don't wait for something to break

The most important reason to look after your bike is to make sure it doesn't let you down. A little time spent on regular cleaning, inspection, lubrication, adjustment and replacement of worn parts makes a bike much less likely to fail unexpectedly.

Every time you ride your bike important components are wearing down. Planned maintenance - rather than waiting for something to go wrong - will minimise the amount of time your bike is out of service, the amount of time spent working on your bike and the cost of keeping your bike running.

2. Take your time

When you do a job for the first time you're also training yourself to do it right. Allow plenty of time, don't rush and never panic. Think carefully before you do anything. Stay calm and use your brain.

When you're dismantling use a container to collect parts as they come off. If you're not certain what you're doing you can make notes or sketches - or take pictures - as you go, or lay parts down in order on a sheet of paper and number them. This makes it easier to re-assemble things correctly. Collect and store rags and containers with your tools.

Use barrier cream on your hands. It protects them from strong chemicals and makes them easier to get clean when you're finished. Some cleaners and lubricants - some skin types - may also require rubber gloves. Gloves keep your hands clean but may make working more difficult. It's better to clean your bike first. The hydraulic fluid used in disc brakes is toxic and needs careful handling.

3. Levers and lubricants beat brute force

A long-handled spanner gives you much more leverage on a sticky pedal

A long spanner gives you more leverage on a sticky pedal

If your bike hasn't been serviced for a while, some of the

components - pedals in particular - might need a bit of persuasion before you can get them off.

When parts won't come apart, apply dismantling lubricant with a small brush and allow time for it to penetrate. Set the parts so that gravity will draw the penetrating fluid into the frozen joint.

Begin to move parts that are stuck with a small tightening movement. This means you can push hard with less risk of slipping - and damage - when the stuck part moves. Make sure the tools you're using fit well and give the maximum mechanical advantage. Don't sweat and strain - get a longer lever. If the parts are fixed with an adhesive, heat may be required to soften the glue.

4. Diagnose squeaks and rattles on the move

When it's not obvious where a noise is coming from, head for a quiet street and do some detective work:

A noise when you go over a bump suggests a fitting or accessory is loose.

Does the noise sound in all gears?

A noise only when you pedal suggest a problem with the drive. Look for problems in the drive by lifting the back wheel, pedalling the drive and checking through the transmission - from where your foot touches the pedal to where the tyre touches the road.

A noise while you pedal OR freewheel suggest a problem with the wheels or brakes; this is worth stopping to check.

Once you've identified the part or system that isn't working as it should, look at it carefully. What is it supposed to do? What is it doing? What could you adjust to change what it's doing and make it do what it's supposed to do?

Make considered adjustments changing one thing at a time and rechecking after each adjustment. Even if you do the wrong thing, and make things worse, if you know exactly what you did you can reverse the last step and try adjusting in the other direction.

5. Choose your tools carefully

Good tools will repay the investment many times over. Light multi-function tools are better-than-nothing for roadside

distress-repairs but dedicated single-use tools make things easier for planned home maintenance.

A repair stand makes many jobs much easier. Some fold for easy storage. If you don't want to invest in a repair-stand improvise by hanging your bike from a couple of slings over the branch of a tree, a washing line or hooks in ceiling joists; anything to get the wheels off the ground.

Tools will be cheaper bought as a kit, especially if you have a generic modern bike. If your bike is older you may be getting tools that don't work for you and some you need may not be included. If you want to assemble your own outfit begin with tools for punctures and fitting adjustments of the seat, handlebars and the positions of any controls.