

# The "M"–Check

Your bike is a moving vehicle and is subjected to a lot of stresses, strains and exposure to the elements every time you ride. You should have your bike regularly serviced and maintained by a trained professional to keep it in great working order, but there are also some checks that you should carry out every time you ride to help ensure the bike is safe and comfortable to ride.

The easiest way to check your bike is to remember the letter "M". Imagine drawing a letter "M" on your bike by starting at the front wheel, running your finger up to the handlebars, down to the pedals, back up to the saddle and finally down to the rear wheel. Now at each point on this path we can check a few important elements to make sure your bike is still safely maintained, and the good thing is that this check only takes a few minutes to do so won't get in the way of your ride.



If you spot a problem while doing the M-check then tighten it, adjust it, lubricate it or pump it up... but remember, if you are unsure how to fix it or don't have the tools, visit your local bike technician who will fix it for you and ensure that your bike is safe to ride.

## 1. The Front Wheel

- Is the front wheel secure? Check that the quick-release lever or wheel nuts are firmly tightened.
- Lift the front of your bike and spin the wheel to check that it is straight.
- Is the tyre inflated to the recommended pressure? (This should be written on the tyre wall)
- Check that the tyre tread isn't worn and inspect for damage, debris and bulges.
- When squeezed, are the brake levers effective?
- Are the brake pads worn or the cables frayed? If they are they will need replacing.
- Make sure that the brake pads line up with the metal of the wheel rim and don't touch the rubber of the tyre.
- Is there any damage or signs of wear to the metal wheel rim?
- Are the spokes free from defects?

## 2. Handlebars

- Hold the tyre between your knees and try to move the handlebars from side to side to check that everything is correctly tightened and nothing creaks.



- Is the handlebar stem correctly aligned with the front wheel (i.e. Are the handlebars at 90 degrees to the tyre)?
- Are the stem and handlebars fully secured? Check that the handlebar stem isn't raised above the height limit marker.
- Hold the front brake on and try to push the bike backwards and forwards. Any knocking or ticking indicates a loose headset which will need tightening (a bike mechanic can do this for you).

### **3. Frame, Gears & Pedals**

- Inspect the frame to check for cracks, rust or blistered paint that might indicate damage. Damaged frames need replacing immediately - If you suspect there is a problem, then take it to a bike mechanic for a professional opinion.
- Are both pedals and the chain set moving freely and smoothly?
- Have a short test ride and run through your gears. Does each gear change smoothly without the chain skipping or falling off?

### **4. The Saddle**

- Is your seat height correct? Your legs should be able to extend when pedalling but your hips shouldn't be stretching to reach the pedals. Make sure the seat post isn't raised above its height limit mark.
- Is the seat firmly secured? Hold the front and back of the seat and wiggle it – if it moves, it needs tightening.
- Do your knees bend comfortably? If not, slide your seat backwards or forwards to find the correct position for you.
- Are your handlebars in the correct place? If not, adjust them so that you can reach them comfortably without over-stretching to reach the brake levers.

### **5. The Rear Wheels**

- Do the same checks for the back wheel as you did to the front. See step 1.

Once you have done these simple checks and made sure that everything is correct, you can then enjoy your ride, safe in the knowledge that your bike is in a good condition to ride. If you notice any issues when inspecting your bike then it is important that you have a trained mechanic check it over and perform any necessary work to fix the issue.