

The Fix

5-MINUTE INSPECTION: CHECK THESE THINGS AFTER EACH RIDE, AND NEXT TIME YOU'LL ROLL WITHOUT A HITCH

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Most cyclists, if they check their bikes at all, wait to do it five minutes before the group is about to start rolling. What's the point? No one's going to wait for you to remedy a cracked frame or a torn sidewall. Be one of the smart ones: Give your bike this once-over after each ride, so you're ready to go at the drop of a hat--er, helmet.

QUICK-RELEASE

CHECK FOR: Side-to-side play in the wheel; QRs or skewers that aren't tight or secure

HOW?: Make sure quick-releases are closed all the way, and that bolt-on skewers are securely fastened.

ON YOUR NEXT RIDE: Your wheel won't come loose and detach from your bike midride.

WHEEL

CHECK FOR: Trueness

HOW?: While spinning the wheel, watch the distance between the rim and the brake pad. It should be uniform for the entire rotation. If it wobbles, the wheel needs truing. (Watch our pro true a wheel at BICYCLING.com/videotrue.)

ON YOUR NEXT RIDE: Your wobbly wheel won't lead to more serious problems, such as a shudder while descending or brake pads rubbing.

BRAKES

CHECK FOR: Grit on the pads, caliper alignment

HOW?: If your brakes feel gritty, clean the pads with a rag and degreaser; replace pads if the grooves are worn more than 50 percent compared with new pads. Calipers are aligned if the pads are equidistant from the rim.

ON YOUR NEXT RIDE: You won't go to grab the levers only to roll right through the stop sign at the bottom of the hill.

TIRE

CHECK FOR: Low tire pressure, embedded glass, slices in the tire or sidewall

HOW?: Inflate tires to proper pressure, and carefully remove embedded debris with tweezers. A cut tire or sidewall is prone to a blowout and shouldn't be ridden; replace it.

ON YOUR NEXT RIDE: Your chances of flatting will greatly decrease, and you may have prevented a nasty midride blowout.

SEAT BAG

CHECK FOR: Supplies you may have depleted on your ride

HOW?: If you used something during a ride, replace it so it's there for the next ride. If your spare tube has been in there for a while, give it a quick inspection to make sure it's still intact.

ON YOUR NEXT RIDE: You'll have a spare tube and CO2 cartridge to lend to the guy who didn't follow this postride checklist.

CLEATS

CHECK FOR: Loose bolts and overall wear

HOW?: Worn-out cleats won't engage as crisply. You'll know when they've just plain quit on you, then it's time for new cleats. Bolts can loosen over time. If your cleat isn't secure to your shoe, tighten the bolts.

ON YOUR NEXT RIDE: Your foot won't pop out without warning, and you won't tumble to the ground because you couldn't disengage your cleat.

FRAME

CHECK FOR: Cracks, especially at the joints

HOW?: Using a rag and bike polish, wipe dirt and moisture from your frame. Look for cracks, flaking paint and other irregularities.

ON YOUR NEXT RIDE: You'll either be on your bike because you didn't find a crack, or you'll be on your way to the shop for a pro evaluation. If your carbon frame is cracked, don't mess around. Failure could be catastrophic.