

The M-check is an easy way to make sure that your bike is safe to ride. It involves following an M shape to check five points of your bike.



Cycling



All ages



Under an hour



What you need

If you are going to do your own basic repairs, tools you may need include:

- allen keys
- screwdrivers
- spanners
- a pump
- lubricant
- puncture repair kit

(Visit www.sustransshop.org.uk to view a range of eco-friendly bike maintenance products).



Things to remember

If you haven't got the right tools or are unsure if your bike is safe to ride, visit your local bike shop. They will be able to make any necessary adjustments or repairs and are usually very good value for money.



Activity instructions

The M-check should be done on a regular basis, and when you get used to it, it won't take longer than a few minutes to do.

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



1

- Is the front wheel secure? Is the quick release lever or wheel nut 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 written on the tyre wall?
- Check that the tyre tread isn't worn and inspect for damage and bulges.
- When squeezed, are the brake levers effective?
- Are the brake pads worn or the cables frayed?
- Make sure that the brake pads line up with the metal of the wheel rim and don't scrape the rubber of tyre.
- If you've been using your bike for a long time, especially with lots of hills or in gritty conditions, the wheel rims can become worn out by the brake pads making your bike unsafe to ride.
- Is there any damage or wear to the rim or tyre?
- Are the spokes free of defects?

2

- 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?
- Are the stem and handlebars fully secured? Check that the handlebar stem isn't raised above the height limit mark.
- 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 shop will do this for you).

3

- Inspect the frame to check for cracks or blistered paint that might indicate damage. Damaged frames need replacing. This is especially important if your bike has been in an accident. If you suspect there is a problem, take it to a bike shop.
- Are both pedals and the chain set moving freely and smoothly?
- Have a short test ride and run through your gears. Does each gear click in smoothly without the chain skipping or falling off?

4

- 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.
- Are your handlebars in the correct place? If not, adjust them so that you can reach them comfortably.

5

Now do the same to the back wheel as you did to the front. See step 1.

For more information, download our Basic bike maintenance activity sheet.

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