The M check for your bike in 11 steps

We certainly notice the National Cycle Network getting busier at this time of year and it's great to see so many people getting that spring feeling and looking to dust off their bikes to go for a spin.



1. Rear wheel

- [ ] It should be tightly fitted and the quick release lever is secure in the closed position. Not all wheels will have quick release levers. If the wheel is not quick release, check that the nuts on both sides of the wheel are secure.

2. Spokes

- [ ] Should be of equal tension and not loose. Pluck each spoke with your finger. The sound from each spoke should be very similar.

3. Air in tyres

- [ ] If the tyre is soft, then attach your pump to the valve and pump up. Note: There are two types of valve fitting – Presta (long and thin), and Schrader (thicker and slightly shorter). Recommended tyre pressure is usually written somewhere on the tyre.

4. Saddle

- [ ] Check your seat post isn't loose and that you haven't exceeded the limit marked on the seat post. Once you have checked these, use an allen key to tighten the seat post clamp. Check the seat is secure by giving it another check once you have finished.

5. Chain

- [ ] Should be clean and oiled. Keeping your chain clean and oiled is important for the smooth running of your bike. Note: Don't use too much oil as this will pick up more dirt and make the chain more difficult to clean.

6. Pedals

- [ ] Make sure they spin smoothly and that your cranks are on tight, spin smoothly, and don't creak.

7. Stem

- [ ] Check that your front wheel and stem do not move independently, and that your handlebar clamp bolts are tight. Perform this check by standing in front of the bike, holding the front wheel between your knees, and twisting the handlebars. You can prevent any movement by tightening the stem bolts and the handlebar clamp with an allen key.

8. Headset

- [ ] Check if there is any rocking or clicking in the headset. Perform this check by firmly grasping the head tube with one hand and applying the front brake with the other hand. This will steady the front of the bike so that you can shake the headset to establish any rocking or clicking in the bearings.

9. Brakes

- [ ] Ensure that the front and rear brakes are working properly. If the brake lever pulls against the handlebar grip, the brake cable needs adjusting. This is done by loosening the brake cable anchor bolt, pulling the cable tighter, and tightening the anchor bolt again. Both sides of the brake mechanism should move when the brake is applied. If this is not happening, turn the small adjustor screw on the stationary side until both sides are moving again.

10. Frame

- [ ] Look for any cracks or damage. This check requires particular focus on the area where the frame joins the head tube.

11. Front wheel

- [ ] It should be tightly fitted and the quick release lever is secure in the closed position. Not all wheels will have quick release levers. If the wheel is not quick release, check that the nuts on both sides of the axle are secure.

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