

# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SERVICING YOUR ROAD BIKE



**MERLIN**  
**CYCLES.COM**



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## Introduction

Riding a bike is an unparalleled experience, the thrill of the wind rushing through your hair; the rush of pedalling your heart out whilst racing uphill... it's a feeling like no other. But in order to ensure this feeling lasts as long as possible, it's essential that your bike is properly cared for. It's with this mind that we at Merlin Cycles have put together this comprehensive user guide detailing everything you need to know about servicing a road bicycle.

Whether you've just bought your first road bike or you are simply looking to save some money and maintain your cycle yourself, this guide will outline everything you can do to keep your hardware peak condition.

## Why Do It Yourself?

If you're a long time cyclist, chances are you've had to have some work done on your bike in the past. Whilst you yourself may have occasionally replaced the chain or changed your gear cable, but when it comes to actually getting your hands dirty and fiddling with the technical parts, many people prefer to take their bike to a specialist, or back to the store from whence it was brought.

Of course there's nothing wrong with this. These are trained professionals whose job it is to help you, and there will be some issues which are probably best dealt with by an experienced professional; but you could often save yourself the trouble by actually carrying out the majority of work yourself.

Even if you're a complete novice when it comes to mechanics, it's never been easier to service your own bike. There are thousands of resources and guides (much like this one) that are freely available to you via the web.

There are three main reasons you should consider doing your own bike maintenance:

### **1. It saves you money**

Taking your bike to be repaired can be a very expensive endeavour. Bike store staff are purposefully employed to fix your bicycle at a set rate, even if it only takes 10 seconds to do. By maintaining your cycle yourself you're eliminating what is often a completely unnecessary spend.

Even after you've invested in all the specific tools (and trust us, they are certainly a wise investment), you'll find that over time you end up saving yourself considerable amounts.

### **2. It saves you time**

Finding the time in day-to-day life to travel to the shop and have your bike looked at can often be incredibly difficult.,

Bike stores, especially local ones, are often so busy that they either have to make customers book appointments or simply refuse to service any models they didn't sell themselves.

This can of course lead to people going days, if not weeks, without their bike – not an ideal solution. Instead of waiting around without being able to ride, why not learn how to fix it yourself? You'll be back on the road in no time.

### **3. It keeps your bike in its peak condition**

When was the last time you gave your cycle a proper once over? Are you sure that everything is running as smoothly as possible?

Once you know what you're looking for, you can check your bike over after every ride. Gone will be the days when you have to wait until something breaks to have it fixed; with this handy guide at your disposal you'll be able to identify and repair problems, ensuring your bike is at its best.

### **The Tools:**

First of all you'll need to make sure you've got the right tools for the job. Below we've assembled a list of essential equipment you'll need to get the job done properly. These items can all be purchased from your local hardware or bike stores, and having them to hand will save you considerable amounts of money in the long run:

- Chain Tool
- Set of Allen Keys
- Spoke Wrench
- Torx Wrench
- Hex Wrench Set
- Adjustable Spanner
- Small Screwdriver
- Bracket Removal Tool
- Cable Cutter
- Floor Pump
- Wet Lubrication
- Degreaser
- Cable Caps
- Garden Hose, With Adjustable Spray Nozzle
- Cleaning Brushes
- Cloths Or Rags
- Bucket And Sponge

These 17 items should make up your essential bike repair kit. You may already have some pieces lying around at home. Most homes with gardens will already have access to a hose for example, and cloths and rags can be made from old clothes or dishcloths.

Furthermore, you can reduce costs considerably by purchasing all-in-one sets and multi-tools. The [Topeak Alien range](#) features three incredibly robust multi-tools, each containing a broad selection of the above tools, including Allen keys, screwdrivers, a chain tool and a Torx wrench. Their size and mobility make them an invaluable tool for any cyclist.

Muc-Off, the official supplier of bike care products to Team Sky, have a range of bicycle cleaning products, such as [de-greaser](#), [chain cleaner](#) and [wet lube](#). They also offer complete cleaning kits, which contain all the necessary oils, lubricants and brushes to keep your bike running in tiptop shape.

If you plan on keeping up the maintenance, it may be worth purchasing a bike stand for support and a chain checker, such as this [stainless steel tool](#) from Icetoolz, in order to monitor whether or not your chain has stretched.

## Washing Your Bike

Cleaning is a big part of keeping your bike running properly. Whilst some may treat it like a chore and groan at the thought of having to give their cycle a scrub down, it's still an essential part of the maintenance process.

You don't have to meticulously clean out every nook and cranny, but by rinsing, washing and applying lube to your bike you'll ensure you extend its lifespan leaving with you with a great looking piece of kit when you're finished, so that's always a plus.

You should never put a dirty bike away, so if you've been on a long ride and have come back coated in mud, be prepared to pull out the hose and get scrubbing.

First things first, give your bike a light all-over rinse in order to remove any debris or excess dirt; if you jump straight in and start scrubbing then you'll only end up spreading the grit and scratching your frame.

Once you've given it a good rinse, prop the bike against the stand (or whatever you're using to hold it up), grab a sponge, fill up a bucket with warm soapy water and give your cycle a good thorough wash. Use the brush to remove any stubborn areas of dirt, being extra careful not to leave any scratches.

Give your bike another quick rinse to remove all the soap suds, then use the cloth to dry everything thoroughly.

Once everything has dried out, spray both wheels and the bike with your chosen degreaser and let that soak in for a minute.

Many people like to wax or polish their bike straight after washing it. It's a great way to keep the cycle looking great and ensure that dirt doesn't stick as easily, but too much can cause unnecessary build-up. In reality you only need to apply a new coating once every three or four washes.

## Maintaining Your Bike



We live in a culture where shopping is as easy as taking out your mobile and pressing a few buttons, so it's no surprise that some people prefer to purchase brand new bike parts instead of properly maintaining and restoring the old components of their bicycle.

However, with just a few simple checks, and a little bit of elbow grease, you can save yourself a whole lot of money and extend the life expectancy of your transport.

We've provided several tips for the proper upkeep of each part; use the quick links below to find the relative to the information you're looking for:

- [Handlebars](#)
- [Seating](#)
- [Frame](#)
- [Drivetrain](#)

- [Chain](#)
- [Brakes](#)
- [Tyres](#)

## Handlebars

**Stem:** If your handlebars are constantly squeaking, loosen the bolts (or top cap if you're using a threadless stem) holding the stem in place and slide the bar out. Wipe the previously clamped area with a few drops of cycle oil and place everything back in its rightful place, tightening accordingly.

On a separate note it's recommended that you check for any loose bolts at least once a month.

**Tape:** Is the tape around your handlebars coming loose, or looking a little worse for wear? If you have the right kind of tape to hand ([available here](#)), it can easily be replaced.

Pop the end plug off and unwrap/cut away any old tape. It's also worth cleaning the handlebar thoroughly now in order to remove any excess glue. Once clean, begin wrapping the tape around the bars in the direction that your hands roll on the drops. If your hands wind to the outside wrap clockwise on the right and counter-clockwise on the left, and vice-a-versa if they roll to the inside. When it comes to the flat section, always wind toward the saddle.

## Seating

**Saddle:** Your saddle can take a lot of wear and tear over time, so if it's looking a bit worn it may be worth buffing it up. If you have an authentic leather saddle, don't be afraid to restore it using shoe polish, just be sure to buffer it properly before riding again, as you will not want to stain your cycling gear.

A good polish will also help your saddle withstand the weather, although it's definitely worth keeping it covered (a simple plastic bag will do the job) when not in use.

**Post:** Make sure you clean and grease your seat post just as regularly as the rest of your bike. When it comes to keeping your seat at the right height, use a small piece of masking tape or a permanent marker pen to highlight the correct position.

When checking your post, be sure to look for any rust around the collar. These are relatively inexpensive to replace, and it will save you a lot of hassle later down the line if you do it now.



## Frame

Your frame is the central hub of your bike. It holds everything in place, and should be taken care of accordingly.

Check regularly for any rust or wear and tear by removing your wheels and giving it a full inspection. When it comes to keeping it in pristine condition, be sure to rinse, wash, rinse again, dry it off, lube, adjust and wax thoroughly.

## Drivetrain

Your drivetrain is the conduit that keeps your wheels turning; maintaining it properly will make life a lot easier.

Oiling the bottom bracket's cable guide at least once a week (or straight after a ride in the rain) will prevent it from getting too gummed up.

To ensure a silent ride, put a few drips of oil into the derailleur pulley wheel hubs as well.

## Chain

**Length:** Use the chain checker to measure whether or not your chain needs to be replaced. 24 chain links can stretch to 12.2 inches rivet to rivet before needing to be replaced.

**Skipping:** If your chain is constantly skipping, turn your derailleur's barrel adjuster by half. Turn it clockwise if the chain drops to a smaller cog and counter-clockwise if it jumps up to a larger one. If it's still skipping you can try turning it by another half, but don't tighten it too far.

**Oiling:** You should only lubricate between the side plates and under the centre roller of your chain; coating the entire chain serves no purpose other than to create a mess.

Once the chain is sufficiently oiled, let it properly soak in for a few minutes before wiping the whole thing down again to remove any excess gunk; then continue to wipe it clean after every ride. You only need to apply lube again once the chain starts squeaking.

## Brakes

**Disc Pads:** Measure the thickness of your disc pads to ensure they work properly. Road disc pads should be no thinner than 2.5mm before needing to be replaced.

We stock a wide range of quality road bike brake pads; [Click here](#) to browse our selection.

**Cables:** Put a cap on any freshly cut cables to stop yourself from cutting up your hands.



## Tyres

**Sealant:** If you use tubeless tyres, the sealant securing them will eventually dry out. To keep your tyres in the best condition this should be removed and reapplied once every two months.

**Inflation:** Tyre pressure is an acute aspect of how well your bike will handle. If the tyres are under inflated, you'll be riding on flats and wasting energy. Pump up your tyres too much and you risk them bursting as they're more prone to damage.

The maximum compression will be printed on the sidewall of your tyre; use a pressure gauge to ensure you're not inflating it all the way, checking it at least once a month to make sure it never drops too low.

**Tread:** Check your tyre treads frequently to be sure that they have not worn too thin. A tell-tale sign is that the surface of summer tyres, which have no tread, will begin to flatten when they wear.

**Mudguard:** Investing in both a back and front [mudguard](#) will help keep you relatively splatter free when riding in the rain.

The above is just a brief guide on how to properly look after your road bike; but it'll certainly help you with getting started. There's always more you can do to ensure your bike stays in its best condition, so for all your biking needs, including a wide range of cleaning products and all the latest news from the world of cycling, Visit [www.MerlinCycles.com](http://www.MerlinCycles.com)