



Suspicious noises key to bike health

So you finally bought a bike. Chances are you want to preserve the life of the machine as long as possible, but don't know how to go about it.

The best thing to do is listen. Keep an ear open to every sound the bike makes and check any suspicious noise. That's the most important part of bicycle maintenance, according to Bob Bumstead, who teaches a University P.E. class on bicycle touring.

"Just listening to your bike can tell you it needs oil or that something is working itself loose," Bumstead explained.

"Screws and bolts can work loose on a bike and if you catch the problem at the beginning, you'll avoid big problems in the end."

Second on Bumstead's maintenance list is regular oiling, especially during the rainy season when water can quickly strip the bike of its oil.

"During the winter, I oil my bike's chain and the rollers on the derailleur once a week," Bumstead said, adding that his brakes undergo a good oil job about every two weeks.

In addition, Bumstead says he takes the chain off his bicycle and completely cleans it twice a

year. He also repacks the bike's front rear hub and axle with new grease and new ball bearings if necessary and greases the cables with a waterproof grease.

Another maintenance item on Bumstead's list is brake adjustment. He explains brakes need tightening when you can squeeze the brake handles enough to touch the handlebars.

For avid bicyclists, brake adjustments are necessary every couple weeks.

The bike's saddle (seat) is another important maintenance spot, Bumstead says, especially if it's leather.

"Whatever you do, don't ride on a wet leather saddle," he warned.

"That stretches it out of shape."

For on-the-road breakdowns, Bumstead advises bicyclists traveling long distances to carry a tool kit containing the following: pump, tube repair kit, tire irons, six-inch crescent wrench, screw driver, spoke wrench and a device called the "third hand," which assists in adjusting brake cables.



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