
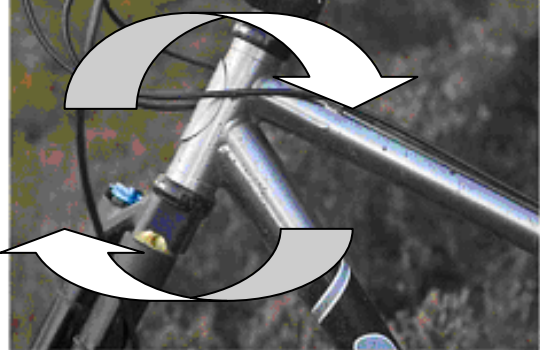
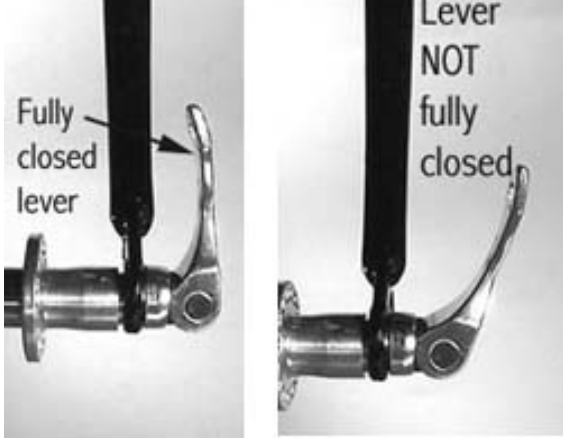




5 things to check before you ride home this evening

If you can answer "yes" to any of these questions, think about getting your bike looked at by an expert as soon as possible.

What to check?		Why?
	<p>Wheels</p> <p>Do the wheels rub on the brakes? Do they turn in the frame easily?</p>	<p>Whilst you can ignore a slight rubbing on the metal part of the wheel, a lot of rubbing will slow you down, If they're out of alignment the brake blocks can rub through the side wall of your tyres and cause them to puncture. If the brakes go into the spokes, the wheel can jam and you can get thrown off the bike or the wheel can get destroyed! Get it checked out!</p>
	<p>Headset</p> <p>Whilst there are different designs they all do the same thing: allow the bike to steer. Jam on the front brake and rock the bike back and forth. Does it knock or feel loose where the forks turn in the frame?</p>	<p>If it's loose, take it to a bike shop and get it adjusted (it should be tight enough that it doesn't rock back and forth but still turns easily) – a very loose headset can cause the bike to shimmy dangerously, causing you to crash.</p>
	<p>Skewers/quick releases</p> <p>Are your skewers closed? They don't screw closed! Wind them fairly tight and then flip the lever over like a door bolt so that the convex side is facing you (you should see the word "close" on it).</p>	<p>Bit of a no-brainer this one! If the quick releases aren't done up properly the bike can become hard to control or, in the worst case, the wheel can fall out!</p>
	<p>Can you pull the brake levers all the way to the bars (the pic to the left is fine)? If you can, find the adjuster (somewhere between the brake and lever) and turn it anti-clockwise (so it's winding it out). This will make the brake firmer and more powerful. Lift the end of the bike off the ground and check that the wheel still spins without touching the brakes, adjust the brakes as close as you can without the wheel rubbing</p>	<p>Do you want to end up under a bus?</p>
	<p>Put the front wheel between your knees and try to turn the bars with your hands. If you can turn them easily, get the right sized Allen key and tighten them just enough to stop it happening (modern bikes have the bolts on the side of the stem, not on the top as in the picture). Same thing if you can twist the bars in the handlebar stem (don't overdo it or you can damage the tubes).</p>	<p>Both problems can cause you to lose control. Check this after you've had a crash.</p>

If you're not sure what you're doing ask one of the BUG group or take it to a bike shop (most will offer free advice hoping to make sales). It goes without saying if you have a crash or someone damages your bike, get it checked out by an expert as soon as possible. Making sure your bike is safe is your responsibility. That said, unlike a car, the only person you're really likely to hurt is yourself. Even if you take your bike to the shop once a year and have it serviced thoroughly (Station Cycles will give you a discount as MM staff) it'll cost you about a £100 or so. What's that? A couple of tanks of petrol maybe? Looking after your own bike is easy – far, far simpler than a car. Learning to do it isn't hard, gives a sense of satisfaction and saves money.

Most of the tools you need are dead cheap (some Allen keys, Phillips and flathead screwdrivers and maybe a set of spanners), the specialist stuff can be left to the bike shop. To learn how to look after your bike properly, try this website: <http://www.parktool.com/repair/>

If you're stuck, there are people in the BUG who can help with emergency repairs: Michael Scaife, Chris Hyde, John Foster. There are several good shops in Cambridge: Station Cycles are the closest, Ben Haywards are the friendliest and Drakes are good too.