

Drive less. Save more.

Drive Less How-To's

How to get your bike road-ready in 5 easy steps

Hi. I'm Stephanie Noll with the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, and I'm here today to show you how to get that bike out of the shed and road ready in a few easy steps. Once you get your bike out of the shed there are five easy steps you can do to make sure your bike is road ready.

Step #1: check tire pressure

The first is to check tire pressure. You can start out by just giving your tire a squeeze. And if it's squishy you want to get more air in there.

Step #2: fill tire to maximum PSI

Now we are going to pump up our tire to the maximum PSI (Pounds per Square Inch) that's written on the (tire) sidewall here. Your tire is probably going to be somewhere between a maximum of 50 and 100 PSI. This tire is 100. And this pump has a gauge on it which is going to let me know if I've reached that. If you don't have one of these at home, check with your neighborhood bike shop. They'll be happy to let you use theirs.

Step #3: check brakes

The next thing you're going to want to do is make sure your brakes are working properly. You can do this by squeezing your hand brakes. They shouldn't reach all the way to your handle bars. There should be an inch or two there. And then you want to pick up your bike and try to rock it backwards and then lean on the front and try to move it forwards. It should stop in both of those cases. If your brakes don't seem tight enough and you don't have experience tightening them yourself, your neighborhood bike shop can help you out easily.

Step #4: clean the chain

So if your bike has been in the shed for a while, your chain is probably a little bit dry and rusty. The first step is to just take a clean rag and pull your pedals backwards. And run the chain through the rag getting any extra dirt. Next you want to take a bottle of bike specific lubricant. Give it a shake. And then you can drip it on your chain as you move your pedals backward again. Once you have that good and on your pedals your last step is to take your rag and wipe off any of the excess grease. And now as long as your chain is running smoothly you're ready to go.

Step #5: check seat height

The last thing we are going to check is our seat height. You want to make sure if you standing next your bike your seat is about the same height as your hip bone. If it's too high or too low you can adjust it. Your bike might have one of these quick release levers on it. If you have one of these you can just open it, turn it and move your seat where you need to put it. If you don't have a quick release lever you can use a crescent wrench.

Now that you have checked your tires, brakes, chain and seat height, your bike should be ready to go. With lights, a lock and a helmet you'll be ready to go too.