

# **7 Common Bike Repair Mistakes That Most Riders Make**

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**Mistake #1: Putting too much (or not enough) air in the tires.**

It's a given that you need to have air in your tires if you want to ride your bike, but it's just as important to have the right amount of air in them.

Too much air in your tires can blow them off the rim, while too little air makes it extremely easy for you to get flat tires.

Either way, you will get horrible traction and handling, which could lead to broken parts (and even broken bones, if you're not careful.)

To figure out how much air pressure you should use, check the manufacturer recommendation on the tire sidewall. It should give you a range or at least a maximum pressure.

Road tires are usually rated at 80-120 psi, while mountain bike tires take around 35-50 psi.

(Exact pressure depends on the tire, rider weight, type of riding, weather conditions, and personal preference.)

My advice is to get a nice floor pump with a gauge and check your tire pressure every week.

Also, don't use the pump you see at gas stations. It's made to fill up car tires, and it could easily blow up your bike tires!

**Mistake #2: Putting too much (or not enough) lube on the chain.**

Like with tire pressure, getting the right amount of lube on your chain is critical.

Too little lube and your chain will squeak and wear out a lot faster than it should. It won't shift properly, either.

Putting too much lube on your chain will just attract extra dirt, which will contaminate the chain and also make it wear faster than it should.

For the chain to function properly, it needs to have a small amount of lube in between the rollers. This is easy to accomplish with a basic chain lubing procedure:

1. Wipe dirt off the chain.
2. Drip lube onto the chain as you rotate the cranks backwards.
3. Run through the gears to work the lube into the chain.
4. Wipe off any excess lube.
5. Repeat if necessary. (Like when the chain is very dirty.)

The two key elements here are 1) remembering to lube your chain and 2) wiping off excess lube when you do lube the chain.

So when do you lube your chain?

If your chain gets soaked with water or gets dirty, lube it. If your chain looks dry and shiny, lube it. If it squeaks, lube it.

### **Mistake #3: Replacing a tube without fixing the flat.**

The most common bike repair is fixing a flat tire, and that is something that every rider should be able to do on their own.

However, some people learn to switch the tube, but they forget about actually fixing the problem. By that I mean you need to figure out what caused the flat and stop it from happening again.

Flats can be caused by a number of things, from glass, pot holes, and rocks, to problems with the wheel and spokes.

To determine the cause, always check your tube when you remove it. If there are two holes that look like a snake bite, that is a pinch flat. It means you should put more air in your tires (and avoid hitting pot holes.)

If there is a hole on the outer side of tube, it's probably from a thorn or glass. Check the tire for any debris still stuck in it *before* you put a new tube in there.

If there is a hole on the inner side of tube, it's probably from the rim. Perhaps your rim tape is old and there are spoke holes exposed, or there is a sharp edge somewhere. Either apply new rim tape or smooth out any sharp edges.

(To make this process easier, always line up the tire logo with the valve stem, which makes it easier to match up the hole in the tube with a possible thorn in the tire.)

**Mistake #4: Over-tightening the quick release skewer.**

I see a lot of quick release skewers that are clamped down as tight as possible (even on the bike shop floor.)

It's total unnecessary to put so much force on the quick-release lever, not to mention that you could break it (especially with new, super light versions these days.)

The quick-release only needs to be tight enough that closing the lever leaves an imprint on your palm. That's all it takes to hold the wheel securely in place.

**Mistake #5: Not using bike-specific tools.**

Some people will “fix” their bikes by grabbing a big open-ended adjustable wrench from their tool box and using it on whatever bike part needs adjusted.

That is NOT a good idea!

You wouldn't cut a steak with a butter knife, would you? Then why use carpentry and automotive tools on your bicycle?

Big adjustable wrenches won't fit the small wrench flats on most bike parts. (But they will round the edges and scrape adjacent components.)

It's a good idea to have certain bike-specific tools on hand. Here are a few examples:

- Have a quality set of metric Allen wrenches. (Low quality ones will lose their shape and start stripping bolts on your bike.)
- Cone wrenches (very thin open-ended wrenches) are crucial for hub adjustments.
- A pedal wrench is good idea, because removing pedals can require quite a bit of force.
- Cable cutters come in handy, too, because common wire cutters don't work on bicycle cables.
- Tire levers. Available for a mere \$3/set, these let you easily remove your tires without the sharp edges of screw drivers!

**Mistake #6: Not performing regular maintenance at all.**

The biggest mistake of all is simply ignoring bike maintenance completely.

Routine maintenance is not hard and does not require much time.

Here are a few easy things you can do:

- Wipe dirt and grime off your bike.
- Check to make sure the bolts are not coming loose.
- Inspect the frame for cracks or damage.
- Lube your chain.
- Wipe residue off your rims for better braking performance.

At the very least, take your bike to the shop every so often so they can go over it.

Better safe than sorry!

**Mistake #7: Using WD-40.**

On second thought, this could be worst mistake out there!

WD-40 is so problematic that it deserves its own section. It is great for its intended use, but it is NOT for bikes (or other delicate applications!)

What makes WD-40 so useful for eliminating squeaks and freeing rusted bolts is its power. It's amazing and super strong.

But once it's there, it does not go away! It's hard to clean off and you can't paint over it. It basically takes over, so it will destroy any grease or lube you have on your bike.

It should be used only as a *last resort* for stuck seatposts and restoration projects.

NEVER use it for chain lube or degreaser, NEVER use it to polish your bike, and NEVER use it to moisturize your leather saddle.



**THE END**

Thanks for reading!

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