

When will Riding Season ever get here? Is my equipment ready? Part 3 (Bike Fitness)

I recall a particularly bad day at work several years ago. Several key pieces of high tech gear failed at the worst time for our clients and they were in an uproar. My boss being unusually philosophic told me with a shrug, "Sometimes stuff breaks." To say I was surprised by her comment in an understatement (she can breathe fire with the best of them). However, as I think back about what she said and apply it to other "stuff" like motorcycles, there are times no matter what you do to keep your bike and its equipment working, things sometimes break. This Educator's Corner article will attempt to give you information to help you keep those occurrences at an absolute minimum.

As all of you already know, the best thing you can do for your bike is to keep it well maintained. Many people provide advice about maintenance routines and special tricks to keep their motorcycles in top form. However, if you are like me, all the advice starts to sound like a lot of noise after all a while. For me the best advice I can get about maintenance is as close as my owner's manual. It is full of information about the bike its systems, operating instructions and the highly useful maintenance interval chart. This chart describes what work needs doing along with the proper mileage and time interval. If you follow those directions, I think you and your bike will have a long and enjoyable relationship.

Of course, there are things you must do between scheduled maintenance to keep your bike fit. For example the T-CLOCK check to be performed by the rider and co-rider before every ride. As you know, T-CLOCK is an acronym that stands for Tires, Controls, Lights, Oils & Fluids, Chassis and Kickstand. By checking each of these categories on your bike, you are increasing the chances you will spot potential safety and maintenance concerns that before they turn into costly and dangerous problems.

To help you do your T-CLOCK check, I have provided you with a table that describes it. Feel free to print the table and post it on your bike. It is a great way to remind you to do the inspection. I have mine taped to the inside of my trunk lid.

T-CLOCK Check	
Item	What to do and check
Tires & Wheels	Use a tire gauge to check for correct COLD pressure, sufficient tread, look for cuts, bulges, punctures; spokes cracked, bead intact, free spinning
Controls	Check to see if brakes controls firm, leaks in hoses, cables sound (look for fraying or binding), Levers free and lubed; throttle closes firmly when released
Lights	All lights operational (headlights, taillights, turn signals, brake light); clear of condensation, Battery fluid up to correct levels, check for frayed wiring
Oil & Fluids	Visibly check oil and break fluids for fullness and leaks; check your fuel level, check your coolant level.
Chassis	Check your steering head and swing arm for proper travel and leaks. Check to see that all panels are secure and tight.
Kickstand	Retracts firmly; cutoff switch works properly; spring is serviceable; same for centerstand

I am asking that you do this check each time you ride. I can almost guarantee that if you do this regularly, your payoff in terms of fun, safety and maintenance cost will be great.

By the way, the Chapter will be sponsoring a bike check in cooperation with Everett Powersports after our April meeting. This will correspond to our Road Captains Course to take place on the same day. It will be a great chance to get your bike checked and to brush up on the fundamentals of group riding.

In closing, the last three Educator's Corner newsletter articles have focused on fitness in preparation for the riding season. Between your improved core body fitness, your "ready to ride" mental fitness and bike fitness, we all ought to have great riding season.

Ride safe and ride well.

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