

Minor Bike Repairs

Most bicycle riders do not have the time, knowledge or tools to do major repairs on their two-wheeled friends. But cyclists could enhance their riding enjoyment if they knew a few basic minor repairs and carried a few tools along on rides. Knowing how to change a flat, tweak a derailleur, remove a rear wheel or deal with a cut tire can make the difference between enjoying the rest of the ride after a brief delay or taking a long walk home.

The No. 1 concern I hear is getting a flat on the rear wheel. For many cyclists, the list of issues with a rear wheel range from greasy hands to trying to get the tire through the brakes to doing battle with the chain/rear derailleur. A telltale sign of a frustrated rider is a bike upside down on the edge of the road! It need not be that way. The solution is as simple as following a few steps. First, resist the normal urge to simply get off the bike and start taking off the wheel. Second, remember to shift to the smallest cog on the cassette. That creates more slack in the chain, plus if one always puts the chain on the smallest cog, it's easier to remember where to put the chain upon re-assembly. Next, open up the quick release on the brake before opening the skewer quick release.



At this point, you can drop the wheel out by simply lifting up the rear of the bike, putting a finger on the back of the rear derailleur cage and pushing it forward. The increase in chain slack does the trick – as long as you have the bike right-side up. Once you've replaced the tube, reverse the process and you're ready to ride – no greasy fingers, no dusty seat or scratched cyclocomputer from putting your

bike upside down. **One caution:** if you're replacing a tube on a road bike, before fully inflating, push the tire back and forth to allow you to see the rim strip so you know that none of the tube is underneath the tire bead. If any of the tube is under the bead, a pinch flat will occur sooner than later.



While it doesn't happen to me that often, an occasional piece of glass, or other sharp object, will create a slit in a tire/blowout. It usually happens miles from home. When we're touring, there's an easy fix – grab a spare tire out of the cart. But on day rides, I don't carry extra tires – except one spare on our tandem. The next best-case scenario is to have a tire boot with you. Most people forget theirs, if they have one. I usually fall back on a “free” fix. To keep my wallet from deteriorating due to sweat, I carry it in my jersey pocket inside a plastic sandwich bag. I fold the bag over until it fits the width of my tire where the slit is, inflate and pedal on!

During the Seattle to Portland ride, the “chatter” of many of the 9,000 bikes about drove me bonkers. The sounds came from rear derailleurs that were not properly adjusted. Either the derailleur cable was slightly too slack or too tight. For most derailleurs, the solution is simple: move the barrel adjuster (at the back of the derailleur) in the direction you want the chain to go. That usually means turning the adjuster counterclockwise to increase tension and move the chain to a bigger cog (exception: Shimano rapid-rise derailleurs).