

## Two Minutes a Bicyclist Can't Afford to Miss

Is bike inspection something you have been reserving for a rainy day activity? It shouldn't be. Make this two minute check each time you are preparing to ride. Correct any problems and make adjustments on the spot. When you ride, your attention should be on the *road* at all times. If you hear a rattle or suspect a problem, get off your bike and off the road to check it. Do not start looking your bike over while you are moving. Taking attention away from the road ahead to glance down at the bike has caused many a bicycle crash.

### The Two Minute Check

1. Check that your front wheel quick release (or axle nuts) is tight.
2. Squeeze the front brake lever and check that the brake pads align squarely on the rim. Also check the brake cable and housing for cuts or kinks (make sure to check both at the brake and at the lever).
3. Pick up the front of the bike and spin the front wheel. Check for wheel trueness (side to side wobble caused by improperly tensioned or broken spokes, or a bent rim), tire wear, and brake pad clearance from the rim (about 1/8 inch). If you have fenders or a handlebar bag, make sure these do not rub on the tire.
4. Grab the front brake and try to rock the front wheel back and forth. If you feel any play, your headset might be loose and need adjustment. Pick the front wheel up off the ground and turn the handlebars side to side to make sure the headset is not too tight.
5. Repeat steps (1) through (3) for the rear. Also check the vertical alignment of the rear derailleur's roller cage (it should be in the same plane as the freewheel cogs).
6. Grab the crank arms and try to push them in and out to check the crank arms and bearings for looseness. There should be no lateral play in the crank axle. Also check that the pedals are screwed in all the way, flat against the crank arms (note: there is a left and a right pedal, the left pedal is reverse threaded. The pedals should be marked with an L or an R either on the back of the spindle or on the flats.)
7. With the rear wheel off the ground, turn the pedals and shift through the gears. Make sure the derailleurs can reach all your cog/chainring combinations and does not throw the chain off the front or back sprockets. If there are problems, you may need to make a cable adjustment or adjust the derailleur limit screws. Watch the chain pass through the rear derailleur jockey wheels looking for bent or tight links. Check the derailleur cables and housing for cuts and kinks (again, check both at the derailleurs and at the levers).
8. Try hard to twist the saddle up and down, and left and right. If it does not move, it's secure.
9. Do the same to your handlebars, bracing the front wheel between your knees. Put all your weight on the handlebars when twisting up and down to make certain they will not slip in a panic stop.
10. Check other attachments, nuts and bolts to make sure nothing is loose or might rub against your tires.
11. Check your tire pressure with a gauge. Keep your tires pumped up to the recommended pressure marked on the tire.