

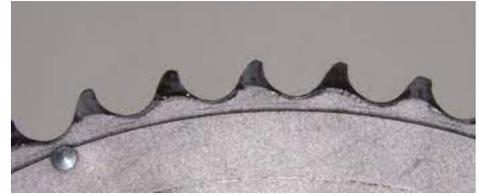
Putting Your Baby To Bed

Our days on our summer road machines are now numbered and it's time to either put them to bed for the season or convert them over for winter duty. Just hanging them up in the garage is very tempting, but a little TLC right now means you will be ready to go on that freakishly warm March day.

Most bicycle part suppliers such as Babac, Live to Play and Cycles Lambert – HLC run short on parts at this time of year under normal conditions. The Pandemic has made this situation worse, so if there are any major issues with the driveline or brake systems on your bike, order the parts now and you might see them by next spring. If you don't do your own maintenance, drop the bike off with your favourite mechanic to have the issues resolved. Depending on their storage capacity, they may hold onto your bike until the parts come in, and then proceed with the repairs. If their storage capacity is limited, they may ask you to bring it back when the parts come in. The shops generally see a steep decline in business once the daytime temperatures get down into the single digits.

1. **How do you store your bike?** Is it hung from the wall or ceiling? Do you store it in the house, an unheated garage, or a heated garage? If you own a bike with hydraulic disc brakes, you may want to store it in a heated location. Air infiltration into the hydraulic system isn't as bad as it once was – but why take a chance. At one time the various components in the hydraulic system had slightly different rates of expansion/contraction, and this allowed air to get into the system. The result was a yearly trip to the shop to have the brakes bled.
If you store your bike just leaning up against a wall in your garage or garden shed be sure to inflate the tires to full pressure and check them monthly throughout the winter. When the tires go flat and the weight of the bike rests on those flat tires and tubes, you're likely going to be replacing tubes and possibly tires as well.
2. **Perform a drop test.** Pick the bike up by the saddle and handlebars (about 5 centimetres) and maintaining control of the bike drop it. Listen for any rattles that might indicate loose parts/components. Make note of those parts – we'll be torquing all the bike later.
3. Inspect your **bike frame** carefully for any signs of cracks or metal fatigue around tubing unions – usually indicated by flaking paint. The bottom bracket area (where the cranks are mounted) and weld points should receive extra scrutiny. On carbon frames the hairline cracks can be difficult to spot, so use a bright light and carefully inspect every square millimetre of the tubing.
4. **Check the wheel assemblies** to see if they need trueing. Even if they are running true both radially and laterally it doesn't hurt to have them checked for spoke tension and trueing. After all, they've seen a lot of kilometres on our "third world" quality streets this past season. Check the brake tracks for excessive wear. Some wheels have a wear dimple. When the dimple disappears – time for a new set of rims.
5. **Bearings.** With the wheels off the ground give each wheel a spin and grip the fork/chainstay near the dropouts (mounting point). You should not be able to detect any coarseness/roughness in the bearings as the wheel rotates. Even better – with wheels off hold the wheel by the axle and spin it. Even very slight roughness can be detected. Similarly, place fingers on the bottom bracket shell and back pedal the drivetrain. Again, the bearings should not exhibit any coarseness – they should be smooth. Finally, with the bike off the ground (shouldering the bike works well) and the bike attitude slightly tipped down, rotate the handlebars left or right. Now let go of the handlebars. They should return to the straight-ahead position by themselves. If they don't the headset bearings may be adjusted too tight, or they may be brinelled or pitted. In all these cases the bearings will need to be overhauled or replaced.

6. **Drivetrain.** Thoroughly clean the chain, chainrings, cassette, and rear derailleur pulley wheels. Now inspect the cogs of the cassette and chainrings for excessive wear. Worn teeth on the cogs/chainrings will have a profile that resembles a shark fin (see right). Replacement will be necessary. Check the chain for wear now that it is clean. If the gauge indicates 50% wear or greater the chain should be replaced. Otherwise, if everything looks good, lubricate the chain, if you are using chain wax. If you use chain oil leave the chain dry (requires a dry storage location) or use a dry condition lube, if stored in a humid environment. Remove any excess lube since it will tend to gather dust, and you'll just have to clean the chain again in the spring.
7. **Brakes.** Check brake pads (disc or rim brakes) for excessive wear. Most pads have wear grooves in them for this purpose. When the groove disappears, the pads need to be replaced. If excessive noise was an issue, the brake pads are contaminated, glazed or they need re-alignment. Since this is a safety system, it's best if a qualified mechanic gets involved here. He/She/They can best determine the course of action
8. **On E-Bikes and E-Shift bikes** fully charge the batteries and top them up every 3 months. If they're left to fully discharge you may not be able to revive them when spring rolls around. Store the batteries in a cool dry location if possible.
9. If the **handlebar grip tape** is worn or is puckering and unraveling, give your trusty ride some new tape. It will seem like a brand-new bike when spring rolls around.
10. **Detail the bike.** Give the bike a thorough wash and use a toothbrush and artist paintbrush to get into all those tiny places that may have gotten ignored through the summer. Give everything a coat of wax and apply 303 protectant (or similar e.g. Armourall) to the tires, saddle, brake hoods and grip tape. CAUTION - Strip the 303 off the tread (using isopropyl alcohol) when spring rolls around, as the tires can slip out from under you if you leave it on. The 303 helps prevent the plastic/rubber from deteriorating. Tires normally "bloom" (activates UV inhibitors in the rubber) as they roll. However, when they don't roll through winter blooming doesn't occur and they can become weather checked. If weather checking gets bad enough, the cord body can become exposed, and the fibres can break down. That's a recipe for a blowout!
11. **Torque all nuts/cap screws/bolts.** Using a torque wrench, and torque specifications, check that all fasteners are tight enough. Many areas of the bike have the torque specification stamped or screened onto them. Don't forget the derailleur hanger screws and rear derailleur mounting bolt – they're often overlooked. CAUTION – If you don't have a torque wrench and the correct torque specifications DO NOT give it the "old tight and then just a bit." Today's ultra-light bicycles/components don't take kindly to being overtightened. Stripped threads or component/frame fracturing can be a result. Under tightening can result in components coming loose – again not a good situation. If you don't have a torque wrench, it's a job for your favourite bike mechanic.
12. With any repair or replacements done – **time to put your ride to bed.** I use an old bed sheet to keep dust off our bikes through the winter months. Be sure to avoid storing your bike in places where there are electric motors running a lot (e.g. furnace rooms). The ozone created by the brushes arcing on the armature of the motor will deteriorate rubber, plastics, fabrics . . . well just about anything.



Well, that's a wrap. When that first Robin sings in spring, your ride will be ready to roll!