



By this time in the season some of you may be looking around for a new bike. What was fine in past years, now feels like it's holding you back. How do you know where to spend your money to get a bike that will work for you now and in the future? In the first part of this series of articles we will look at some broad points to help to get you started. Then we will dive into the drivetrain, brake system and finishing kit.

General Recommendations

1. Shop at well-established local bike shops for your new rig. After-sales service is very important, and you can't get service work done by an on-line supplier. Big box discount stores quite simply don't carry anything worth riding – period!
2. Resist the temptation to purchase a bike based on its looks. Bike manufacturers know that “eye candy” sells, so they often hide substandard parts on the bike. Their favourite parts to substitute with low-cost garbage parts are saddles, bottom bracket bearings, headset bearings, wheel hubs, spokes, free bodies, rims, chains, and finally, pedals. None of these parts are “fun” or “pretty” parts, so buyers often don't take any notice of them. However, they're all hard-working parts that will fail prematurely and it will be you that will replace them on your dime
3. Spend the largest percentage of your budget on the parts of the bike that cost the most to upgrade down the road. So, prioritize the frame/fork and wheel-set even if it means that you need to downgrade some finishing kit, driveline and brake components to put towards the cost of the frame/fork and wheelset. Most quality bike shops will take the components on trade if you decide to do some substitutions.
4. Don't settle for the gears that are standard on a bicycle. You need to be able to use all the gears that come with the bike, so change out chainrings, cassettes, and derailleurs to suite your strength and the terrain that you expect to ride in.
5. There's a 99% chance that the saddle that comes with the bike will feel like a torture device, so don't write-off a bike based upon a sore butt after a test ride.
6. Do push for a test ride outside. When new bikes were \$299.95 and sold at hardware stores . . . well that was one thing, but now when you can drop upwards of 15K on a bike of your dreams you should be able to ride it on the roads that it will see when you own it.
7. Don't fall into the trap of buying a gender specific bike. A bike either fits you or it doesn't. Designs are improving, but there was a time when bike manufacturers took the “shrink it and pink it” route without putting much thought into women's bikes. While it's true that a sizeable percentage of women have long legs for their height - it is by no means a universal rule. Bodies (both men and women) come in all sizes and torso to leg ratios.
8. The most critical dimension when it comes to determining the proper sized frame for you is the top-tube length. It has a direct relationship with femur length and torso length, and this is key – the only adjustment is the saddle rail position on the seatpost – perhaps 3 to 4 centimeters. Zero offset or extra setback seatposts can give some extra adjustment, but the adjustment is limited. If a salesperson does not check your knee-over-pedal-spindle, ask for someone else or go to another shop. A top tube that is either too long or too short for you means the bike will never fit and feel right. If there is a trained bike-fitter on staff demand that they assess your fit.
9. With Electric Assist bikes check into the battery replacement cost. Batteries can cost upwards of \$400.00.
10. Again, with Electric Assist bikes, stick to well-known brands of electric motor and control systems such as Bosch and Shimano. Big box and discount stores often carry unbranded systems that have very little to no technical support and parts network.

11. Both Electric Assist and Electric Shift bikes need regular firmware updates so be sure that the dealer that you are considering has the software and training to do updates to your new bike.
12. Modern aluminum, titanium and even some steel frame bikes can closely rival carbon as a frame material, so don't just consider carbon fibre frame bikes.
13. If the dealer offers a discount on accessories at the time of purchase you can usually save a substantial amount on lights, bells, racks, water bottle cages etc.
14. What is the return policy if the bicycle turns out to be the wrong fit for you? Some dealers will take the bike back if it is relatively clean and undamaged.

Next time we will look at gear systems and the options that are available to you.