

# BIKE MAINTENANCE FAQS

## Q. WHY HAS MY BIKE BECOME MORE DIFFICULT TO RIDE?

↳ You probably need to pump your tyres up. It's amazing what a difference it makes – you'll feel like you're riding a different bike when you've inflated them properly. Use a track pump with a pressure gauge rather than a hand pump to get tyres to the right pressure (look for the PSI number on the wheel to see what pressure your tyres should be at). If you have a road bike or hybrid, your thumb shouldn't make a dent if you push the side of the tyre. Chunkier tyres require less pressure.

## Q. WHAT DO I DO IF THE CHAIN COMES OFF?

↳ Put it back on. Sometimes you can keep your hands clean by simply changing up a gear. Pedal lightly and finesse the chain back into place. If this doesn't work, you'll have to physically put it back on by lifting it up and on to a cog. This is a messy job, so wear latex gloves if you have a pair handy in your saddlebag. If the chain has slipped off one of the chain rings in front, push the rear derailleur forward a touch while you use your other hand to put the chain back on a chain ring. If the chain has slipped off the sprockets on the rear, try to put it back on. If you can't, you'll have to take the wheel off.

## Q. HOW CAN I GET THIS OIL OFF MY HANDS?

↳ Use washing-up liquid and sugar. Only add water when you've worked it all over your hands. Or you could use a special detergent such as Swarfega.

## Q. HOW CAN I GET OIL OFF MY CLOTHES?

↳ Oil stains are easier to banish than red wine, as long as you don't put the stained garment through an ordinary wash before treating it. Often an ordinary stain remover will do the trick, but you can also use bike degreasing fluid, oven cleaner, washing-up liquid or shampoo, depending on the fragility of the garment. If the oil has dried, some people swear by sprinkling some baby powder on it, letting it set, shaking it off and washing as normal.

## Q. WHY DO I ALWAYS END UP WITH OIL ON MY LEG?

↳ Because it keeps touching the grubby rear mechanism, I imagine. Try to train yourself to put your left foot on the floor when you stop at traffic lights or wherever, as that side doesn't have any oily bits.

## Q. WHY DO I KEEP GETTING PUNCTURES?

↳ You may just be unlucky. But chances are, you probably need a new tyre – either your old one is worn out, has sustained a bad tear or there is something sharp sticking out of your wheel rim. To see if that's the case, take off the tyre and run your finger carefully along the metal rim of the wheel. Sometimes spokes poke out of the rim tape, and then you'll have to either file down the spoke (tricky) or replace the rim tape (easier).

## Q. I KEEP GETTING PUNCTURES BUT THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A HOLE IN MY INNER TUBE

↳ Your valve might be leaking. You can check if this is the case without removing the inner tube by filling an eggcup with water and dipping the valve in. If there is a stream of bubbles, you have a leak. Unlucky. If you have a Presta valve, you'll have to replace the whole tube. If it's a Schrader, you can just screw in a new insert, but most people opt to replace the inner tube too.

## Q. WHY DO I KEEP BENDING/BREAKING THE VALVE ON MY INNER TUBE WHEN PUMPING THE TYRE UP?

↳ This used to happen to me all the time when I was a bit cavalier with my hand pump. It never happens if you use a track pump and, when pumping, do your best to support the valve so that, when you're inflating the tyre, the valve is not taking the brunt of your pumping force. If you do break the valve, you have to replace the whole inner tube, I'm afraid, as sooner or later it will fail.

## Q. WHY IS MY SADDLE SO UNCOMFORTABLE?

↳ It might be a rubbish saddle, or simply the wrong one for you – women's bikes often come with men's saddles for reasons I've yet to fathom. But you may also need to adjust it. Try tipping it a few degrees up or down and see if that helps.