

# Checking your bicycle is safe to use

**SAFE**  
VEHICLES   
**SAVE LIVES.**

Road **Safety** Week 

When you ride a bicycle on the road, you have a responsibility to make sure it is roadworthy and well-maintained for your safety, and the safety of others.

This factsheet gives you information to help you understand:

- How to carry out a simple 'M' check on your bicycle
- The law around making sure your bicycle is fit for the road.

## 'M' checks for bicycles

If you ride a bike, keeping it well maintained is important to keep you and others safe. Regular checks only take a few minutes and following the shape of the letter M means you won't miss anything out.

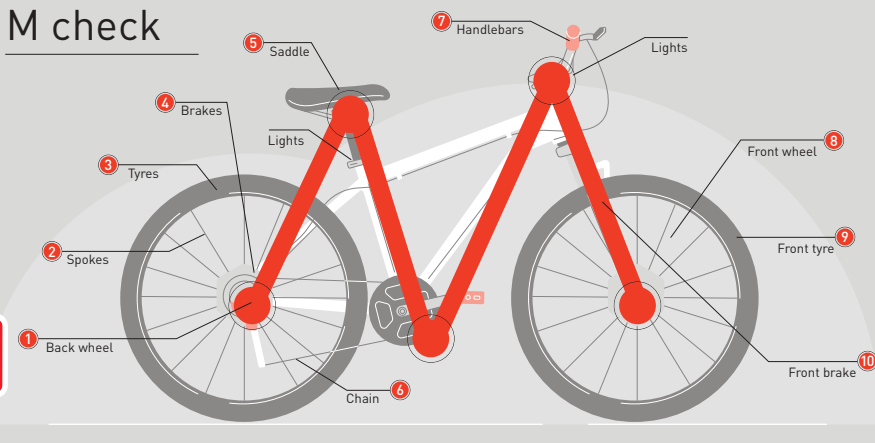


### What to check for

Starting at the rear tyre, check your bike following the letter M, taking in the saddle and brakes.

- 1. Back wheel** - Check your back wheel is fitted securely. Give it a spin to make sure it's aligned.
- 2. Spokes** - Pluck your spokes to check their tension. They should all make a similar sound
- 3. Back tyre** - Your tyres should fit to the wheel rim. Look for damage and check your tread for wear. Pump up tyres to the correct pressure, which should be written on the tyre. If the pressure keeps dropping, you may have a slow puncture.
- 4. Brakes** - To ride on a public road, you must have front and rear brakes that work independently and efficiently. It's the law! Check your back brake, by applying the brake and pushing your bike backwards. Adjust the brakes and cables if necessary.
- 5. Saddle** - Your saddle should be fitted securely at the right height and angle. Tighten bolts and the seat clamp if you need to.

### M check



- 6. Chain** - Check your chain is clean and oiled, so that pedals can spin smoothly.
- 7. Handlebars** - Check handlebars are tight to the stem and move in line with the wheels. Your headset shouldn't rock or sound gritty.
- 8. Front wheel** - Your front wheel should be fitted securely and spin smoothly with no loose spokes.
- 9. Front tyres** - Like your back tyre, your front tyres should fit to the wheel rim. Check for signs of damage and wear and ensure tyres are pumped to the correct pressure.
- 10. Front brake** - Check your front brake, by applying the brake and pushing your bike forwards.
- 11. Lights** - To ride in the dark, you need reflectors and working front and back lights. Check they're clean and attached securely.

It's a good idea to get your bike serviced regularly by your local bike shop. You can also take a course to learn more about basic bicycle maintenance so you can do it yourself!

Brake has also produced a quick visual guide to carrying out an M check. Why not print a copy and stick it on the wall by your bike as a handy reminder.

Continued →

## The law around making sure your bicycle is fit for the road

There is detailed information and rules for you and your bicycle in the Highway Code.

This states that you must ensure your brakes are efficient and you **must** use lights after dark - white at the front and red at the rear.

You should also ensure that lights and reflectors are kept clean and in good working order, tyres are in good condition and inflated to the right pressure, gears are working correctly, the chain is properly adjusted and the saddle and handlebars are adjusted to the correct height. You should fit a bell to your cycle.

If you do not follow the rules, you put yourself and others in danger. Many of the rules in the Highway Code are legal requirements, and breaking them is a criminal offence. You may be fined or in a serious case sent to prison.

Find out more at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/annex-1-you-and-your-bicycle>

### Find out more

- Watch a short film by Brake to learn how to carry out a simple M check on your bicycle.  
<https://youtu.be/21scaFMPpA4>
- For more detailed guidance on how to make sure your bike is ready for the road, go to  
<https://www.cyclinguk.org/essential-cycle-maintenance-advice>

**SAFE**  
VEHICLES   
**SAVE LIVES.**

Road   
**Safety**  
Week

[www.brake.org.uk/road-safety-week](http://www.brake.org.uk/road-safety-week)  
**#RoadSafetyWeek**

Organised by



Sponsored by

