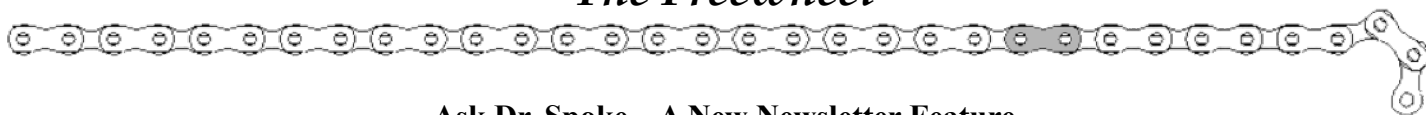


# The Freewheel



## Ask Dr. Spoke – A New Newsletter Feature

Dear Dr. Spoke,

A couple of years ago, I rode the seven day and 450 mile RAGBRAI. Lovely days of riding. I kept noticing my brake levers would nearly bottom out (hydraulic disk). When I returned home, much to my chagrin I discovered the brake pads were nearly gone. So my question, what is a good pre, mid and post-ride check list for my future cycling?

Lucky Idiot in ABQ.



Hello “Lucky . . . in ABQ”

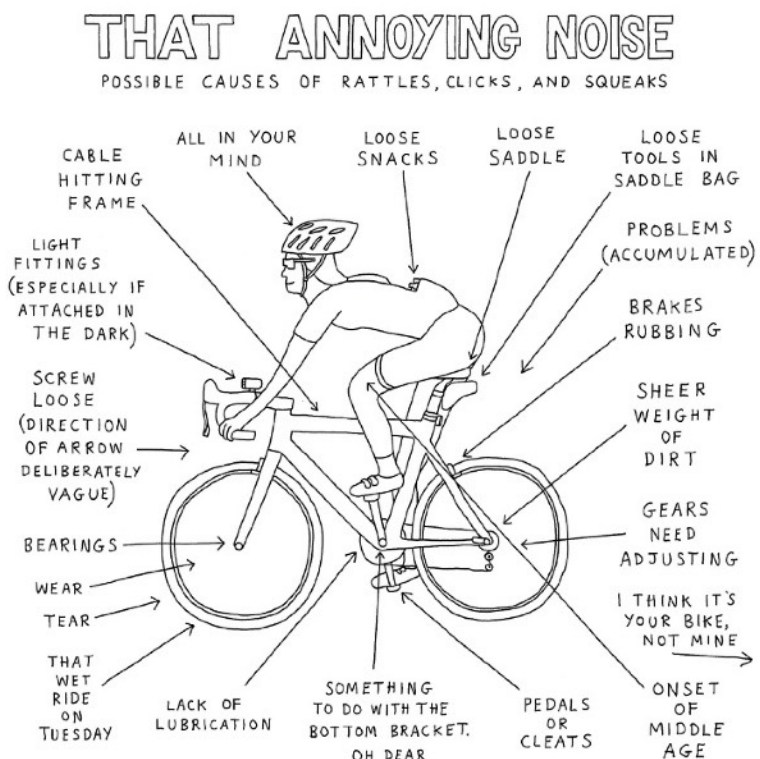
My hunch is that you already have a fairly good idea of at least some of the things for which to check before a ride like RAGBRAI such as tires, spare tubes and a well-lubed chain. For the big tours I recommend a full tune up well before departure. Whether you do it yourself or have it done at a shop, a tune-up usually includes but not limited to:

Check for wear on cogs, especially the smaller ones\*, condition of brake pads as well as shift and brake cables (or hydraulic tubing and fittings), clean and lube chain\*\*, handlebar grips, saddle position\*\*\*, wheel truing, condition of hub skewers, pedal and shoe cleats (if using) and saddle condition/comfort. Make sure the brake pads are not dragging on the rims/disks and chain steps to all the correct cogs/chainrings. Bar tape and grips need to be in good shape. The less obvious things to check are ALL of the bolts and there are a lot (including those holding the water bottle cage(s)) on a bike. They must all be snug—neither stripped nor rusted. The bearings in hubs, bottom bracket, pedals and headset all must be properly lubricated and correctly adjusted. The latter requires special bike tools, which many recreational riders probably don't have or know how to use them.

These check points apply to the typical bike of the 80s and 90s. If your bike is newer/requires more check points such as electronic shifting or suspension then a tune up at a shop is your best bet. During a ride the most important things to check are usually the tires, wheel trueness and chain condition. At the end of the ride focus on anything about your bike that got your attention, whether it's a new noise or compromised performance in any aspect. If that's case, go back to your check list.

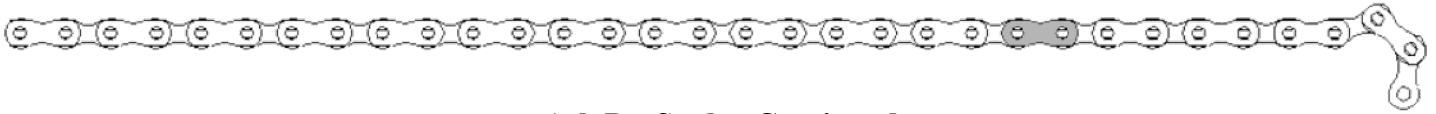
If you want to be really thorough about this issue, consider making your own check list with validation by someone familiar with your particular bike to make sure nothing is overlooked. A spreadsheet is a natural for such a list. Here are some common areas:

\* A chain jumping over high-gear (small) sprockets usually indicates worn cogs AND chain. Cogs or the entire cassette as well as the chain should be replaced.



From The Cycling Cartoonist by Dave Walter

# The Freewheel



## Ask Dr. Spoke, Continued

\*\* A squeaking chain always indicates a lack of lubrication. There're more types of chain lubes on the market than we can count. Of course WD-40 is a no-no while wax is perhaps the best of all options. Waxing a chain would be an excellent topic for Dr. Spoke to cover. If anyone is interested, ask for it.

\*\*\* Saddle and bar position for optimum comfort and performance is another big topic for Dr. Spoke to cover in a future article.

\*\*\*\* And, of course, the graphic (previous page).

**Questions for Dr. Spoke?** "Ask Dr. Spoke" is planned to be a regular feature of the NMTS newsletter. While the initial focus may be on bike mechanicals, Dr. Spoke can expand into other realms based on your interests. Possible topics include

- Bicycle terminology, e.g. frame construction, geometry, gear ratios, components, etc.
- How to purchase a new or used bike
- Essential maintenance, e.g. chain lube, brake, gear adjustments, wheel truing, etc.
- Flat prevention, repair, tire, tube selection
- E-bikes e.g. types, features, pros and cons
- Favorite local bike shops
- Online purchasing
- Wheel selection
- Bike fitting
- Bike transportation (bike racks and so on)

If you have a question about any of these topics, send an email to "[DrSpoke@nmts.org](mailto:DrSpoke@nmts.org)" and watch for a response in a future newsletter.