

Next steps (if this is your first bike)

- Build your support network.
(Bike friends, bike shops, bike groups who know some nice routes, your local community bike hub if you have one.)
- You do you.
Figure out what speeds, distances, clothes, and cafés work for you. It's all good!
- Learn how to lock your bike.
(A U-lock through the frame and the back wheel is a good start.)
- Get exploring!
Discover a new perspective on the areas you live and work.



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IS THAT second hand BIKE you want to buy JUNK?

A pocket guide to buying a secondhand bike, for those who aren't (yet) very familiar with bikes.

Take care

Protect yourself against harm, from buying stolen property or from being ripped off. Advice is available online, for example at https://files.bikeindex.org/stored/dont_buy_stolen.pdf

Do your own risk assessment and take the steps that are appropriate for you.

Bike Index is a non-profit registry based in the US that helps recover stolen bicycles. If there's a serial number on the bike (typically engraved on the bottom of the frame at the bottom bracket), check the bike is not listed as stolen at bikeindex.org.



Do you need...

- ...a step-through frame? (Either because it suits your body's capabilities better, or you'll be hauling big heavy loads - or small wriggling kids - that'll make it difficult to swing your leg over the back.)
- ...a decent range of gears? (What loads will you be carrying, up which hills?)
- ...a rack for panniers? (Or bosses for mounting one.)
- ...mounting points for fenders. (Work-a-rounds exist if the bike doesn't have them.)
- ...something narrow enough to fit through the gates, doorways and bollards on your regular journeys?
- ...to attach a child seat or trailer?
- ...suspension, or will some decent sized tires do? (Is there clearance space for these, and also for fenders if you want them too?)
- ...a different-shaped cycle? (Perhaps a trike if your balance isn't so steady, a recumbent if you need to take the weight off your wrists, or a recumbent trike if you like conversations with strangers!)
- ...to stick to a budget? (Don't forget to factor in lights, locks, bags and rain gear.)
- ...to think about where the bike will get stored? (Hub gears and covered chains work well if the bike is to be outside in the weather a lot, a folding bike might be useful if you need to bring it into an office or small flat.)
- ...to take a friend as an extra set of eyes and to help you stick to your brief?

If you don't want to (or can't) do all the checks on reverse, learning how to do the "ABC Quick Check" is a good move.

Turning corners on soft tires can get interesting.

Tires have air. Nothing loose that will fall into the wheels as you ride.

Saddle, seatpost, stem are fastened properly.

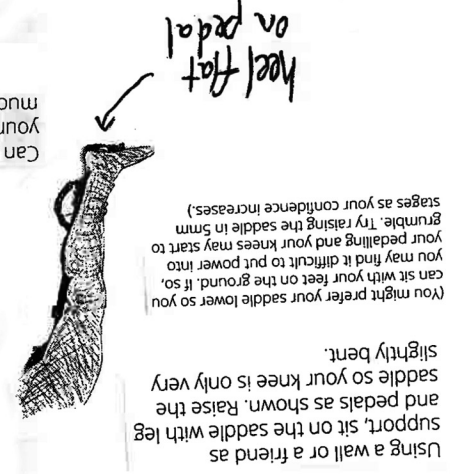
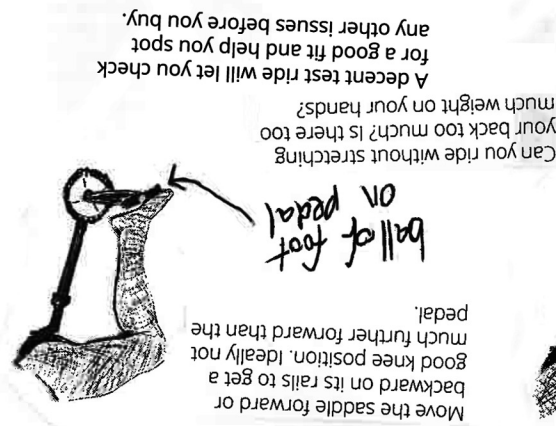
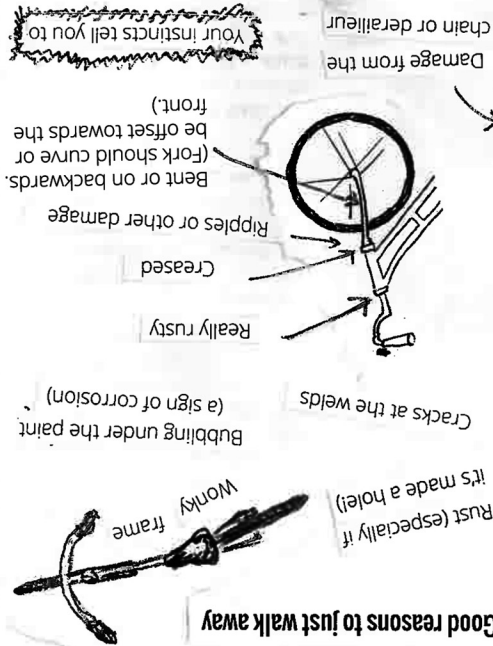
Check any quick releases are secure.

Front and back brakes work

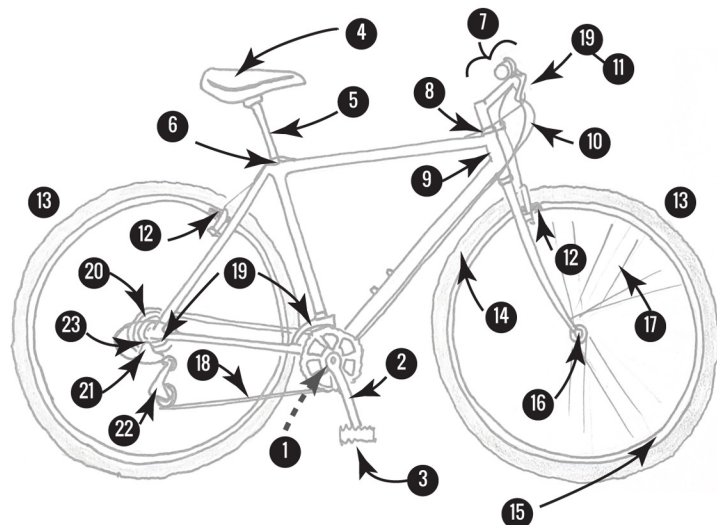
make sure of the following:

The checks on the other side of this sheet will give you a good idea about what sort of condition the bike is in. If you plan to ride it away, as a minimum you should

Is it safe to ride home?



Basic fit (You'll need a multitool and maybe a wrench.)



Bike parts wear out with use

On a secondhand bike, they may already be worn or damaged.

Here we show you how to check components & give an indication of how expensive it might be to buy new low- to mid-range replacement parts.

\$	less than \$15
\$\$	\$15-30
\$\$\$	\$30-50
\$\$\$\$	\$50+

Repairs or service work might also have additional costs for repair labor. Sometimes a bike shop will install parts at a discount if they are purchased through the shop. A community bike hub or co-op may have less expensive reconditioned components available for purchase.

7 Handlebars & cockpit

Is everything firmly attached? Are the handlebars undamaged & centrally aligned? Do the grips stay in place? Do the handlebar stem bolt(s) feel tight? Are the ends of the bars plugged?

[Handlebar stem: \$-\$\$; bolts & plugs \$]
[Handlebar plugs: \$]

8 Headset

Is the steering "indexed"? Hold the bike off the ground with front wheel lowered & move the handlebars. Does the steering move freely, or is there resistance?

Is the headset loose? Check for play between the head tube 9 & the rotating parts. Sometimes this can be addressed with a service but a truly worn headset may need full replacement.

[Headset bearings: \$-\$\$]

10 Brake & gear cables

Are they damaged? Check visible cables for rust or fraying. Check cable housing for cuts or other damage.

[Cable: \$; cable housing: \$]

11 Brakes

Do they work? Pull each brake lever independently & see if you can move the bike forward. Do the levers move freely? If they pull all the way back to the handlebars, you may need to adjust or replace cables or replace worn pads. Do they feel sticky or gummy when released?

12 Rim brake pads

Are they present? Are they chalky or hard? Do they match the curvature of the rim? Are they worn down past the "wear line"? If there is little to no pad left, or if they're old & hard, they will need to be replaced. Do they rub against the wheel? That will require an adjustment.

[Rim brake pads: \$]

Disc brake pads

Are they present? Are they worn? Is the rotor bent?

[Disc brake pads: \$-\$\$; disc rotor: \$\$]

13 Wheels

Are they out of true? Spin them and look at them from the front; does the edge of the rim wobble? Small wobbles can usually be corrected. If the wheel is too far out of true to be fixed it will need to be replaced. Rear wheels cost more than front wheels.

[Wheel: \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$]

14 Tires

Are they worn? Can you see threads or many small cuts? Are there bulges or gashes or dry rot from sitting? If there's rim brakes, check to see if the brake pads have been rubbing against them. Are they flat, with no visible issues? There may be a puncture or a slow leak, or the inner tube may just be flat. Inflate & inspect!

[Tire: \$\$; inner tube \$]

15 Rims

Are they damaged? Look for cracks or dents (around the spoke holes, too). Are they worn? Do they feel concave to the touch? Is (was) there a wear indicator line? (Note: It may be worthwhile to just replace the whole wheel.)

[Rim: \$\$\$]

16 Wheel hubs

Are they loose? Hold the frame with one hand and the wheel with the other. Push and pull across the bike to see if there is any play. Loose or dry hubs can be repaired.

[Hub: \$]

17 Spokes

Are they loose? Go around the wheel squeezing pairs together. Are any missing or damaged? Pay attention to the area near the rear derailleur (if present).

[Spokes: \$]

Front suspension (if present)

Are the fork stanchions damaged? Rust & discoloration are a bad sign. Test them by pulling on the brakes & leaning your body weight on the front of the bike.

[Suspension fork: \$\$\$\$]

Drop test!

Lift the front of the bike up by 8-10 inches & then let it drop to the ground. If anything is loose, you should be able to hear it.

18 Chain

Is it rusty? Rusty chains aren't happy chains! Is it worn? It happens - you'll have to replace it at some point. Worn chains can damage the gear sprockets though, so those may need replacing too.

[Chain: \$-\$\$]

19 Gears

Do they work? Lift the rear wheel up & turn the cranks (a happy helper is useful!); change gears up & down in sequence, watching the chain closely. If the gears don't change properly - & nothing is obviously broken - it could be a handful of relatively simple things that can be repaired. If changing gears is difficult, check cable condition. The shifter itself may be gummy or broken, as well.

[Gear shifters: \$\$-\$\$\$]

20 Gear sprockets

Wipe with a rag & look for broken or bent teeth. Are they worn? Are the teeth symmetrical? If they look like a "shark fin" or Hokusai's great wave, they need replacing.

[Rear cassette/freewheel: \$\$-\$\$\$; crankrings \$\$-\$\$\$]

21 Rear derailleur

Is it loose? Hold the cage 22 & move it in & out towards the wheel. More than 3mm of play coming from the component (rather than the bolt attaching it to the hanger) will affect gear changing & could mean your bike needs a new derailleur soon.

[Rear derailleur: \$\$-\$\$\$]

23 Rear derailleur hanger

(This is the tab that the rear derailleur bolts onto.) Is it bent? A bent hanger messes up the gear indexing. View it from the rear of the bike & see if it's parallel with the gear sprockets. Depending on the bike, it might be possible to bend it back into shape. It can also be replaced. If it's an integral part of the frame & is very bent or cracked it'd be best to not buy the bike.

[Rear derailleur hanger: \$]

1 Bottom bracket

Is it loose? Grab a crank 2 in each hand and wiggle - do you feel movement? Is it dry or damaged? Hold onto one crank & turn; make sure movement feels smooth & fluid.

[Bottom bracket: \$\$-\$\$\$]

3 Pedals

Are they damaged? Look for cracks, broken off bits. Do they spin freely? Some pedals can be serviced; others will need to be replaced.

[Pedals: \$-\$\$]

4 Saddle

Is it damaged? Signs of damage include rips, tears, or creaks. (Creaks may also indicate the clamp needs tightening.) Is it clamped firmly? Put your weight on the saddle & check it doesn't tip forward or backward.

Note: Some shops prefer to sell a full kit of seatpost + saddle clamp & don't keep only clamps in stock.

[Saddle: \$\$; saddle clamp \$-\$\$]

5 Seatpost

Is the seatpost stuck? Loosen the seat clamp 6 & check you can move the seatpost up & down. Can you get the saddle high enough to fit you without exceeding the maximum extension mark on the post & not be too downward on the handlebars?

[Seatpost: \$-\$\$]