

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation recommends a quick, overall inspection of your motorcycle before you ride. Motorcycles don't wear out overnight, but a daily check of your machine's general condition and fluid levels can make your ride a safer one. Just as a pilot performs a pre-flight inspection of his aircraft, you should do a pre-ride check of the critical components on your bike, easily remembered using the term T-CLOCS, which stands for Tires, Controls, Lights, Oil, Chassis and Sidestand.

These are simple, easy-to-access items that anyone who rides should be able to identify and check. And despite the length of the MSF's list, you can probably check everything in about five minutes. Depending on what you find, that could be the best five minutes you spend all day.

- **T - Tires and wheels**
Check your tires for proper air pressure, tread depth, cracks, bulges or embedded objects. Check wheels for dents, cracks and roundness. Check spokes for proper tightness or missing spokes. Check bearings and seals for signs of failure.
- **C - Controls**
Check all levers, making sure they are not broken, bent, cracked or loose. Apply the front brake and push the bike forward. The brake should feel firm, and the front wheel should not move. Check the rear brake in the same fashion. Check the condition and routing of control cables, making sure they move freely, are not frayed, have no sharp angles and are of sufficient length as to not interfere with steering. Check that all hoses are in good condition and don't interfere with steering. Make sure your throttle moves freely, with no sticking and snaps closed when released.
- **L - Lights and electrical**
Check your battery, making sure the terminals are clean, electrolyte fluid is sufficient, and that it is properly secured. Check your headlight, making sure it works, has no cracks and is aimed properly. Check all other lights and reflectors for operation, cracks and fastening. Check wiring, looking for frays, clean connections and proper routing.
- **O - Oil and fluids**
Check oil and fluid levels, including brake and clutch fluid, coolant and of course gasoline. Check all fluid reservoirs, hoses and lines for leaks.
- **C - Chassis**
Check condition of the frame, looking for cracks, dents or bends. Check forks and shocks, making sure they travel freely and are properly adjusted. Check steering for smoothness by turning the handlebars through the full operating range. Check chain or belt, for proper tension, lubrication and wear. Check all fasteners, bolts and cotter pins, making sure they are not missing, broken or loose.

- S – Sidestand (Kickstand)
Check the sidestand and centerstand. Make sure they are not cracked or bent, and that they spring into place and the tension is sufficient to hold them.

Although this sounds like a lot, the inspection can be performed quite quickly. While it won't guarantee against a failure of some sort, it increases your odds of finding problems before they become dangerous or fatal. How well you ride depends on how well your motorcycle performs. And that depends on the quality of care you provide.