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Shake it Out!

By: Gene "Lucky" Rigsby,
Sr. Road Captain and President of Top Cats Illinois!



It's that time... to take out and shake out your bike and yourself and get ready for your (our) first group ride"

Most every early or pre-riding season article I've seen is about preparing your bike, prepping yourself and starting off slowly to rebuild the muscle and mental memory to get moving at a higher speed, safely on the road again. This article will be no different as it is a very important process in kicking the riding season off right, and with our kick off ride

quickly approaching, which I am planning now, the time to prepare is now. Just like any other ride during the season, the RC will expect everyone attending the first ride of the season to be prepared mechanically, physically and mentally, and this article will help you get there.

Before getting to the nitty gritty, a note to all that may winter store their bike with a dealer and have the bike prepped or "summarized" so they just have to pick it up and go. Great if you do, but I would warn you to trust but verify. I know some of our club members have had out of storage issues, so keep in mind that no matter how good the service is from your dealer, people make mistakes and remembering it is your rump on that seat, maybe a loved one riding with you as well, and let's not forget about a whole group of club members you may be riding with for your first ride... That's not a risk I would like to take or have taken with me riding in the group.

First. Let's talk about your bike and getting your bike out of storage and ready to ride I do not dealer store/prep, so this is what I need to do to get my bike ready.

By the way, some of the items in the "Obvious" list are part of T-CLOC(S/K), which is a great tool for getting and keeping your bike in top riding condition throughout the season, but I added important notes here in case you didn't get that far down in the article ☺

Addressing your bike -

Start off with some obvious items like:

Coverings – Remove all covers or plugs you may have used to keep dust off and pests out

Look for leaks – Check for leaks BEFORE you move your bike from it's winter storage area. If you noticed any spots on the floor you may want to trace the leak to it's origin and repair the cause. Look over the shocks and forks as well.

Tip: If you think you have a leak but it is hard to determine new spots from old spots on your floor, place a cut open brown paper bag under your bike to help highlight new leaks.

Battery – Install if needed and check if the charge level is good. Charge, "jump" or replace as needed.



Reset electronics as needed. I would recommend Battery + for help with your battery. They will test the old one and install the new one for free (won't take a tip either)

Gas – Top off if not already and run some fresh fuel into the fuel system

Oil and lubes – Check levels and/or change as needed

Wash – A good time to wash as you may have items that you remove for storage (I do)

Inspect for loose parts – You can do this as you wash as you are touching all the parts anyway

Replace add-ons – Now that the wash is done... But I would not recommend adding new things at this point. Wait until after you have had a chance to ride the bike first and make sure nothing is broken. Then when you add the new thing, if something does not work, you can somewhat safely assume it is because of the new thing or the work to get the new thing on, rather than an out of storage issue.

After you have your bike out of storage but before ride:

Performing a T-CLOCS or T-CLOCK review is a great way to start examining your bike. As all bikes are different, you must look up the proper specs and adjustments for your bike. There is a lot of online help if you need a hand getting started.



T-CLOCS/T-CLOCK (with some key points):

Tires or Wheels -Inspect your tires for damage such as cracks or dry rot. Check the tread – are both tires in good shape or do they need replacing? Worn tread can make your bike harder to handle, so don't overlook this important safety check. Look for flat spots from storage.

Controls - Test all of your controls to ensure that your bike is road ready. Check your steering, clutch, throttle and other key controls. This is the time to address any problems.

Lights - Make sure that you can see and others can see you by checking your lights. Make sure your headlight (high and low beams), taillights, brake light, turn signals and flashers are all in working order. Replace any bulbs that are burned out.

Oils - If you didn't change your oil and oil filter at the end of last season, this is the ideal time to take care of this key maintenance step. Consult your owner's manual for the proper oil filter and oil to use.

Check and top off all the other fluids in your engine including brake fluid, coolant, transmission oil, hydraulic clutch fluid and fork oil. Look for any changes in consistency and color of the fluids. If you suspect that any of the fluids have degraded, you may need to perform a system-specific flush like a coolant flush or a flush of the brake system. Check your owner's manual for the recommended service schedule.

Chassis - Look for rust, crack in welds, dents, wear marks

Stands / Kick-Stands - Inspect and lubricate

A few additional items to review:

Because you never know when you'll need to apply your **brakes**, this is the perfect time to take a close look at your bike's braking system. Start by checking the brake pads: if they show signs of excessive wear, replace them. Take a look at the brake lines, keeping an eye out for any cracks or leaks. Finally, perform a test on both the front and rear brakes to make sure they are working properly. If you hear any squealing, scraping or growling noises, have your mechanic check it out before you take your bike out on the road.



Prevent problems down the road by checking your motorcycle's **spark plugs**. If any are dirty or show signs of damage, replace them before you are left stranded on the side of the road.

Take a moment to inspect your **drive chain or drive belt** for cracks or signs of wear that could cause it to malfunction. Also check the tension to ensure that it's at manufacturer specs. Take care of any issues now before it ruins a day of riding.

This is also a good time to look over and try on your **gear** so you don't find a "gotcha's" when getting ready for or out on, your first group ride. Finally, don't neglect your riding gear. Check your helmet for cracks or other signs of damage that could compromise it. If you see any issues, replace it immediately. Many manufacturers recommend getting a new helmet every five years regardless of whether you see any visible damage.

Replace gloves and boots that have become worn and invest in a new visor if yours is scratched. Also look at your emergency road kit – is it complete? Replace any items that may have been taken out.



Now to get yourself ready-

After you have your bike in riding shape, take your bike out for a short ride (alone and without the bike loaded down) to see if anything seems out of place or adjustment and address. When all is ready, you need to take some time ramping up your riding complexity to get really reacquainted with your bike. Then add your normal load and then a passenger if you want, all before you dedicate yourself to a group ride.

I know this sounds like a lot to do before getting out on your (our) first group ride but keep in mind that this is as important as having everyone in our club (and for that matter, as many other folks in the riding community) attend G.R.A.S.S. on a regular basis for the safety of the group, and I believe you would expect this same level of preparation from other folks attending our (or any other) rides you would attend.

Looking forward to seeing you there....
Gene "Lucky" Rigsby

Source: [Starting a Motorcycle After Winter Inspection Checklist | Champion Auto Parts](#)