



## 14 Tips for Preparing for Motorcycle Season

<https://www.sparefoot.com/self-storage/blog/3633-motorcycle-tips/>

The sun is out, the birds are singing and the open road beckons. You've been waiting all winter to take your motorcycle out for the first ride of the year, and the time has finally come. But wait—not so fast. Even if you winterized your motorcycle for off-season storage you'll want to check out this 14-point checklist before you take to the open road.

**Dust Off Your Bike.** Remove the cover and any blocks used to keep your bike in place during winter storage and lower the bike onto its side stand. Remove any plugs, rags or covers from the exhaust pipes and air intakes meant to keep out animals and foreign objects. Wash away any coating you may have applied to protect the frame, rims and chain.

**Look Over the Fuel System.** Replace the fuel filter and examine the fuel tank, fuel lines and fittings for cracks and leaks. If you used fuel stabilizer, your fuel should be in good shape. Make sure by opening the filler cap and looking inside for gunk or stratification. If the fuel is consistent and clean, you can go to the next step. If not, you're better off draining the tank and fuel lines before running the engine. You also should check and clean your carburetor. Add a fuel system cleaner the next few times you fill your tank.

**Make Sure It's Well-Oiled.** Many motorcycle manufacturers recommend that you change the engine oil and filter before storage and again in the spring. During storage, the oil can separate, causing a condensation build up that may harm your engine. Whether or not you changed your engine oil before storage, you'll still want to check the oil level before riding.

**Check the Fluids.** Check the fluid hose connections for looseness or signs of leakage. Check for cracks in all hoses and replace as needed. Check the levels and consistency of all of the fluids. Change any fluid that looks suspicious and top off any that need refilling. Always use a new sealed container when topping off fluids. Flush and replace the old antifreeze with proper coolant. You also should replace the air filter.

**Charge the Battery.** If you removed the battery for storage and kept it charged, just clean the cables and terminals with a wire brush, then grease and reconnect. If you kept your battery trickle-charged or hooked up to a tender, it's probably in good shape. However, if the bike was stored without disconnecting the battery or without using a smart charger, the battery will need to be fully charged or replaced if it won't hold a charge. In either case, check the leads for corrosion and make sure they're attached snugly. Depending on your battery, you may have to fill the cells with distilled water. Be sure the vent tube is connected and properly routed.

**Kick the Tires.** If the weight was off your motorcycle's wheels during storage, chances are your tires are in good shape, but you still should inspect them thoroughly before riding. Check for cracks, bulges, punctures, stress marks or flat spots. Using a tire pressure gauge, check air pressure in both tires to ensure they're properly inflated. If needed, refill your tires to the manufacturer's recommended pressure. Inspect the wheels for dents and carefully tighten any loose spokes. Grease the wheel bearings.

**Hit the Brakes.** Check and fill the brake fluid level, and replace it if it's dirty. Examine the brake lines for cracks and leaks. Inspect the brake pads and discs or shoes for wear. If they're thin, you may want to get new ones. Thoroughly clean the brake rotors with brake cleaner. Lubricate the front-brake hand lever and throttle cables.

**Rev the Engine.** If you didn't spray fogging oil or lubricate the top of the cylinder before storage, remove the spark plugs and pour 2 tablespoons of oil into the spark plug ports. This will lubricate the top portion of the cylinder walls before you start the bike. When you pull the plugs, check the gaps; if needed, use a gap-setting tool to set them to the manufacturer's specifications.

**Inspect the Frame, Suspension and Steering.** Inspect the frame and fairing for hairline cracks. Pay close attention to areas around the engine and transmission brackets. Move the forks forward and back to feel for looseness. If there's any movement or clunking from the steering head, tighten it properly. Inspect the handlebars for cracks and lubricate the cable connections. Pay particular attention to brake-lever pivot bolts, axle nuts and drain plugs. Lubricate all bearings and grease the kickstand. Check the condition of every nut and fastener, and tighten as necessary.

**Double-Check the Chain and Sprockets.** Check the sprocket for missing teeth or uneven wear. Test the amount of slack in the motorcycle's chain and adjust the tension to the manufacturer's specification. Then lubricate the chain.

**Take a Look at the Electrical System.** Check your electronics, switches, lights and gauges for proper operation. Test your regular and high-beam headlamps, and front and rear turn signals. Test your rear brake light and ensure it lights up when you engage the brakes. Test the horn to ensure its working.

**Test the Controls.** Examine the cables and hoses for cracks, kinks or other damage. Test the levers and pedals to make sure they're well-lubricated. Test the throttle to ensure it flows smoothly and does not jam or spring closed when released.

**Update Your Insurance Policy.** Make sure insurance policy is up to date. If you've added any custom parts or equipment, you'll want to be sure they're covered.

**Hit the Road.** Let the bike idle for a few minutes to get its fluids circulating. Check to see whether it idles smoothly and at the correct RPM after reaching normal operating temperature. Use the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's ([http://www.msf-usa.org/downloads/t-clocs\\_inspection\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.msf-usa.org/downloads/t-clocs_inspection_checklist.pdf)) checklist before you hop on the motorcycle.

Now you're ready to enjoy your ride!