

# The big clean up

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## STEP 1

The key to a bike-friendly wash is to avoid using a high pressure water source to remove the crud. I'll make that even clearer: no Wash World, no high pressure garden spray gun. Temptation to use these will result in all the bearings, bushes and moving parts being filled with water and dirt; within a few more rides you will be facing a large repair bill.

Saying that, it's ok to use a gentle flow of water and a brush to remove the bulk of mud...the most important thing is to stay away from any bearings that hide in the parts of your bike that rotate. If the bike is caked, leave the wheels on before washing off the big bits. Then take them off and put the bike in an old work stand or on the car rack, now you can get in the tight spots.



## STEP 2

The next step is to use some sort of detergent mixed with warm water to dissolve the hard to shift stuff. There are a variety of choices here; a stiff brew of common washing powder and hot water can be very effective, one of the citrus or natural cleaners (Simple Green, Lightning Tuff, etc) available from hardware and auto shops, or the specific bike cleaning formulas found in cycle shops. Whatever you use, spray or brush it on to your bike (if the shifters aren't too dirty, stay away with the soap) and give it a scrub with your arsenal of brushes.

Clean your derailleurs in both extremes of their travel so all the nooks and crannies are exposed. Remember to get underneath your bottom bracket, behind the fork brace, and up under the seat where it's easy to miss the tight spots. GT 1 drive owners will have to be extra careful to clean the bottom housing, a very low pressure flow of water can be used to wash out any muck still inside (resist the urge to blast!). If necessary or you are really keen, shift the derailleurs to the position where the cable is slackest and then unhook the cables from the guides in the frame. Let the cables hang free while you clean in and around the areas that are normally obscured.



## STEP 3

Scrub the chain if it doesn't have a removing link, and if you have a chain cleaning machine do it with the rear wheel in the bike (easier). While you're cleaning the chain, backpedal the bike and use an old tooth brush to clean the jockey wheels in the rear derailleur. If there is a link in the chain, unsnap it and put the link in a safe place while you clean the chain off the bike. If the chain is oily, soak it in either a degreaser or a petroleum product like kerosene or white spirits. If reapplying a dry lube however, you will need to remove all oily residues before this will be effective. Whether the chain is left on the bike or not, if a water-based cleaner is used it's now ok to give the chain a good blasting with the hose. That's right, dial up the pressure because it's one of the only times it's ok to use the hose like this. Be very careful not to nail other parts of the bike while doing this.

Now gently wash off all the soap and dirt with the hose at low pressure, and leave to drain a little while you do the wheels.



## STEP 4

Give the tyres a good squirt, a bit of pressure doesn't hurt here either (watch the hub axle area though). Now the tyres require a good stiff brush like a kitchen hand's 'Gong' brush (supermarket or plastics store), these have bristles long enough to get in between knobs and are good for spokes as well. To get inside the spokes and clean the hubs use a bottle brush (any supermarket), although some dish washing brushes can do at a pinch. For the rear wheel you'll need a gear cleaning brush like the Park Tool model with the toothed claw that can get down in between the gears. Give the cassette a spray with citrus-based degreaser and scrub off the excess oily crud with the brush; a very light spray off making sure that you don't spray in between the gears and the spokes. This is a sure fire way to ruin a free hub body; same goes for the front end of the cassette/axle area - no pressure.



## STEP 5

Now wipe the excess water off your steed, it pays to up-end it and let the water drain out of all the areas where it can pool. If you really love your bike it's a good time to give it a lick of a protective spray like Armor All or a silicon spray - if you have discs do not go near them or the calipers with any of these. In fact even if you have rim brakes this is an area to avoid, also a wipe down with Brakeleen after a wash is always a good idea. To dry the chain wipe it down with rag; chances are there's not much sun around so to dry it thoroughly use a hair dryer, heat gun, or even pop it in the oven at low heat. This will stop it rusting and make sure it's dry for the lube to go on. Apply some lube to the top side of the bottom level of the chain - this way the gears get some lube and the centrifugal force will force the lube through the links in the chain. Wipe off any excess with a rag as this will only collect dirt.

If you are riding in very wet conditions regularly, give the derailleur pivots and pedals a squirt with a wet style lube that displaces water (wipe off excess). If there is a chance that the conditions will be sandy or dusty, wait until the bike dries out and apply a dry lube.



Congratulations, you've cleaned your bike without creating a time bomb of rusting parts that will rob you of all your cash the next visit to the bike shop.

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