

what's up ahead...?

The headset is possibly the most neglected area of moving parts on your mountain bike. Why? Perhaps because it doesn't have any parts that move at speed and even if it is crusty and feeling rough the bike can still be ridden again and again...Then one day you try your mates bike that has a mega dollar XYZ brand fitted and you realise what you've been putting up with.

Here are the basic steps to keeping your steering feeling silky smooth and crud-free.

step one With the bike in a stand remove the front wheel and disconnect the front brake cable or unbolt the caliper from the fork. Cut all zip ties and remove any computer wiring from the fork.



step two Remove the top cap at the end of the fork steerer; loosen the stem pinch bolts whilst supporting the fork.



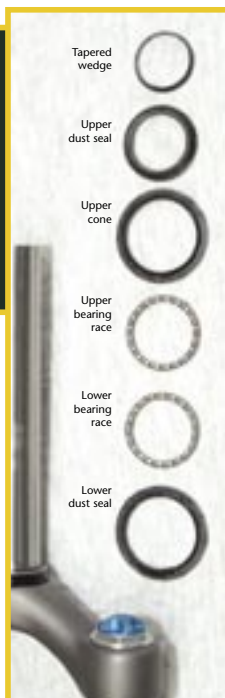
step three

Remove the stem/handle bar and tie to frame. If the headset is the older cup and cone type you will have to give the steerer tube a whack with a rubber hammer or piece of wood to break the seal of the wedge.



step four

Lower the fork from the frame, be careful not to allow the lower bearing to drop out on the floor. Take note of any difference in the bearing races and which goes where.



step five

Wash off any old grease and muck from the bearings and races with degreaser, check for wear and pitting. Wipe off cartridge type bearings and clean out the headset cups.



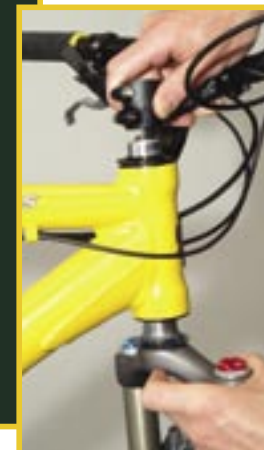
step six

Coat the bearings in fresh grease and fill the headset cups with enough to stick the bearings in. Fit the bearings and spread any excess grease over the balls, add more if they are not covered.



step seven

Making sure all the seals and parts are facing the right way and are in order, offer the fork up into the head tube. Fit the top race, tapered wedge, spacers and stem. Fit the top cap and just snug the centre bolt up.



step eight Refit the front brake cable/caliper and front wheel.

step nine

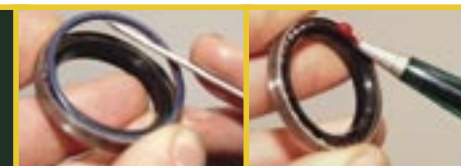
Remove the bike from the stand and hold the junction of the steerer/headset and rock the bike gently whilst holding the front brake on. Gently tighten the top cap bolt (using fingers only) until movement is gone, take your time and have a couple of goes to get the feel. Hold the front end of the bike off the ground and let the bars move through their range. If there is any rumbling or they are not smooth and free loosen the top cap slightly. Align the stem/bars with the front wheel and tighten the stem pinch bolts.



step ten Go for a ride.

regreasing cartridge bearings

It is possible to grease cartridge bearings if you are VERY CAREFUL with the seal. Use a sharp point to gently pry up the lip of the seal slowly working around the bearing until the seal pops out. Apply grease and press seal back into place.



ball or cartridge

Your headset will contain either ball bearings or cartridge bearings as shown. Hopefully if it is the ball bearing type they are held by a race, (see image) otherwise have a rag handy to catch those loose ball bearings!



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