

## SAFETY AND EDUCATION (S&E) VOL. 19/23

### - Caring For Your Drivetrain -



### INTRODUCTION

I rode in the Hilton Head Island PEDAL event last week. I recommend it highly if you haven't yet had the experience. So, I'm riding along and a guy rides up next to me on a very expensive machine. I didn't need to see him to know that he was there. I could hear his bike. The squeaking, complaining chain was screaming to be lubricated. I hope he has lots of money cuz he's gonna need some replacement parts in the near future.

Yeah, I know, I keep bugging you about chain maintenance. I have OCD....*Obsessive Chain Disorder*. And yeah, maybe so, but I feel justified because hundreds of bikes are depending on me for good advice. (Yep, OCD?)

Your chain is only one part of the drivetrain, and probably the least costly component of the drive train to replace. If you don't keep it in good order, it will wreck the more expensive parts. Besides that, the previous articles in this column focused on "what to do." The other side of the same coin is what not to do.

Here is an article that identifies some behaviors that you may be doing that are contributing to pre-mature drivetrain breakdown.

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## 5 Ways You're Wrecking Your Bike Drivetrain

STOP DOING THESE THINGS—ESPECIALLY THE ONES YOU THINK ARE GOOD FOR YOUR BIKE—IF YOU WANT TO PROLONG THE LIFE OF YOUR PRICEY PARTS.

BY SELENE YEAGER/PUBLISHED FEB 21, 2023/BICYCLING.COM



Silky-smooth [pedaling](#). Seamless [shifting](#). The sweet sound of silence as you're churning down the road. These are all signs of a healthy, well-loved drivetrain.

The problem is that sometimes love hurts—like when you [lube](#) your chain to death and wreck your chainrings and [cassette](#) in the process. Doug Sumi, a pro bike mechanic, offers his pro tips for avoiding this and other common mistakes and keeping the parts that keep you in motion in top shape.

### 1. Death by Lubrication



**The Foul:** In your mind, there's nothing worse than a dry chain. The thing emits a caterwaul that begs for lube from anyone within earshot, so it's gotta be terrible, right? Not as much as you'd think. Dry chains, though not ideal, are actually pretty efficient. Lubrication does help overcome mechanical friction and prevent rust and wear. But too much lubrication is actually worse, says Sumi. "Extra lube on the outside of the chain attracts dirt and grime that wears down your drivetrain," he says.

**The Fix:** To the best extent possible, use a [lube that matches your riding conditions](#); wet lube for muddy, sloppy riding; dry lube for arid terrain. And lube your chain less often. Sound—a little squeak before you reach squeal—is actually the best way to determine when your chain needs a little lube.

## 2. Ride, Stash, and Dash



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**The Foul:** You saddle up, hammer out a brisk 30, and rack the bike until the next ride. As you ride, lube makes its way to the outside of your chain, where it acts as a magnet for dust, dirt, and grime. Repeat that cycle over and over and you'll have a tar-coated drivetrain in no time.

**The Fix:** Wipe that bad boy down after every ride! Seriously, if you develop only one habit to prolong the life of your drivetrain, this is the one to choose. Simply keep some rags handy and wipe down your chain after every ride. Ten seconds or less is all it takes.

### 3. Hose Aversion



**The Foul:** “People are afraid to use a hose on their bike,” says Sumi. Blame the power washer phenomenon, where bottom brackets seize after every ounce of grease is blasted from the bearings. The result: Bikes go uncleaned. Drivetrains suffer the consequences.

**The Fix:** Go ahead and hose down your ride. So long as you don’t turn the pressure up to 11 and blast into the bottom bracket you’ll be fine. “If you ride a lot, take a bucket, hose, and some Dawn detergent or degreaser to your drivetrain every two weeks—it’ll pay dividends,” Sumi says. Simply apply degreaser along the length of your chain. Use an old toothbrush to remove the caked-on grit and grime. Gently hose off the degreaser, and let the chain dry for five to 10 minutes before applying fresh lube.

#### 4. The Endless (Unfortunate) Chain of Events

**The Foul:** When was the last time you [changed your chain](#)? *Exactly.* It’s super easy to forget until a year goes by, and your cassette and chainrings are ground down to shark teeth.

**The Fix:** Replace your chain more often than you think you should, says Sumi. “At least every 2,500 miles.” Buy a chain checker and check your chain regularly. “Chains are relatively cheap; cassettes are not,” says Sumi. The higher-end your components, the more important chain replacement becomes. “You’d rather pay for three 20-dollar chains than have to replace an 80-dollar cassette.”

#### 5. The Rain Delay

**The Foul:** You come in from a [rainy ride](#) and leave your bike on its own as you seek a hot shower and dry clothes. Meanwhile, the rain has driven the lube from your chain, leaving it vulnerable to rust, which can become problematic.

**The Fix:** Spare your chain the Tin Man fate and dry it as much as you can and as quickly as you can after coming in from the wet weather. “Wipe the chain down, add lube, and then wipe your chain down before your next ride,” says Sumi. As the water inside the chain evaporates, the lube will displace it. You’ll just want to remove the excess lube before you roll out again.

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OK riders, a clean, well-lubricated and well-maintained drive chain is a happy drivetrain and will make for a happy rider long into the future. That’s all for now, and until next time,

Make every ride epic,

Darryl