

Maintaining your bike's battery

But my battery is “maintenance-free”- isn't it?

What this means to you is: no fluid level checks & no need to add water throughout the life of the battery. Batteries have come a long way, but they still require a “health check” on a regular basis.

Your battery can still run down & leave you with insufficient energy to perform a required start. Isn't this contradictory? It says “maintenance-free”, so it should work forever, right? Sorry - it doesn't work that way.

What kind of battery should I use?

Currently, you may have a choice. Some of the battery types available to you may be: lead acid (wet or flooded), sealed lead acid, AGM or dry cell. As long as the rating matches the specifications for your bike & it will fit where you want to put it, it should work.

I'm in a pinch, can I use whatever fits?

Be very careful here. If it starts your engine and gets you where you need to be, using a less than optimum battery may be okay - in the short term. Some bikes have sophisticated computers, ignition systems, ABS (anti-lock brakes) or other components that require a constant amperage to initialize or “start-up”. Using the wrong battery can compromise this & you could be worse off than if you had taken the time to get the correct replacement. Also, less than optimum batteries can lead to overcharging, overheating, explosions, damage or fires.

My battery is dead. Can it be “jumped”?

If it still has enough life left to operate your headlight - probably. If not, you will need to perform a health check and trickle charge the battery back to life. Boosting, or jumping, a dead battery can be extremely dangerous for you & your bike. If you don't know how - don't do it.

What is a health check?

- 1) Does the battery possess the ability to be charged?
- 2) Will it HOLD the charge once it receives it?
- 3) Will the battery still have enough life left to use it again?

(see next page)

(health check continued)

Once these factors have been determined & found to be adequate, you may be able to save your battery for another round. If you don't know how or don't feel comfortable doing so, have a shop check it for you, discuss it with your mechanic or give us a call.

Can I “BUMP” start it?

Probably not. Newer bikes with electronic or high energy ignitions require enough reserve power during startup that it may not be possible to push (bump) start since the cylinders will receive little or no spark.

How we see it...

One of the first things I encounter when trying to start an old bike that has been stored improperly for years is a dead battery. Sometimes, this happens after only a few months or days. Even when disconnected, the battery is still working inside.

Think of it this way. When you sleep, your heart rate may slow, but it doesn't quit (hopefully). It continues to work through the sleep period & is there when you are ready to start the day. If you don't exercise it regularly & keep it strong, it may fail sooner than you expected. Your battery is much the same. It has to be used or, at the very least, kept on a “float” charger to maintain it's ability to provide the needed power when you require it.

The newer style batteries are better in the area of shelf life (how long they will last while dormant), but they must still be maintained.

Today, motorcycles are increasingly complex & have multiple systems that may access or run on the battery - EVEN WITH THE IGNITION OFF. This may have an effect on how long the battery lasts and whether it will work after just a few days of inactivity.

Ignore or forget about your battery & it will do the same to you.

Count on it!

(Just the facts - Questions or concerns? Call or E-mail & we'll do our best to help.)