

CYCLOPEDIA

Knowhow

Making sense of commonly misunderstood subjects



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Bargain hunting

What to look for when buying a secondhand bike

There's little legal protection when it comes to secondhand bikes so it pays to take care: buyer beware! There are different things to look out for depending on the value of the bike you're after.

BUDGET: We sell basic-spec mountain bikes, town bikes, and hybrids from £45-£75. What you get for your money varies enormously even in that small price window. Any type of repair will be significant versus the buying price, so take the time to check things over.

Ride the bike to ensure everything works. Are the wheels true? Do the brakes rub? Do the gears work smoothly? Does it fit you? Take a few basic tools to adjust the seat height etc.

Consider getting an older bike with thin frame tubes; fat steel tubing can add a lot of weight. A quality-brand bike that's 20+ years old but came with what were then top-end components can be a bargain as it's more likely to be reliable

Avoid suspension as it adds a lot of weight. At this price level, it will be non-serviceable steel springs without damping, good only for the occasional pothole.



MID-RANGE: Secondhand bikes costing £100-£250 tend to have been owned by people who used them a lot so they often have worn out parts. Doing a lot of repairs can double the price of the bike. So it's worth checking things thoroughly or bringing along expert help.

HIGHER END: Most of the value here is in the frame and wheels, so take particular care checking these. If the drivetrain is worn out but the essentials of the bike are good, it's an opportunity to pick up a bargain – so long as you can do the servicing yourself.

Check if the bike has a lifetime frame warranty. If it does, get the paperwork from the seller. Top-end bikes follow fashion trends as much as cheap bikes, so they don't hold their value well: a bike even a few years old can be terrific value for money. ●

Where to buy

- The obvious place is a Cycling UK-affiliated recycling centre (cyclinguk.org/delivery-partners). Bikes will have been properly checked and repaired, and advice will be available. Charity shops and secondhand shops may sell bikes but these won't have been checked or serviced.
- For enthusiast-owned bikes, good online sources include the Cycling UK Forum (forum.cyclinguk.org), Singletrackworld (singletrackworld.com) and Pinkbike (pinkbike.com). Local cycling clubs are another option.
- Online listing sites such as eBay, Facebook Marketplace, and Gumtree require caution. Stolen bikes can crop up here. Watch for suspicious behaviour or prices, and check frame numbers at bikeregister.com. Pay by PayPal for some buyer protection.

Warning signs

Some of the most common problems include:



Frame damage

Steel: how deep is that rust? Aluminium: any cracking at welds? Avoid damaged carbon



Fork damage

Check suspension for rust, scoring, and travel. Rigid: bends/dents may be crash damage



Wheels

Check they spin smoothly with no wobble, and that the rim is not badly worn



Drivetrain

Take a chain checker. If it's too worn, you may need a new chain, cassette and chainrings!

Big Bike Revival

Resurrection Bikes is one of BBR's local partners. See cyclinguk.org/bigbikerevival for more.