Check List for Buying a Motorcycle

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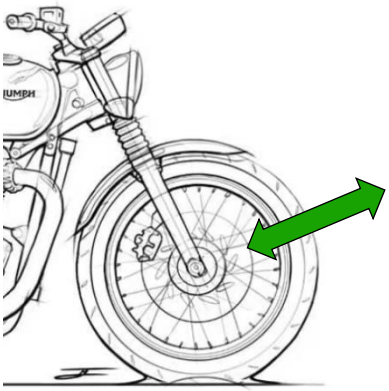
Before getting into it, check the paperwork. Verify that the Vehicle Identification Number on the frame matches the title or the latest registration and the engine as well. If the engine and frame numbers are *not* matching, is this type of engine correct for this frame and year of production? Check if the names of the seller on the Bill of Sale and the title or registration are matching. In case of a title, see if it is free of liens and not “Salvaged”. Ask for maintenance receipts, if available. A Bill of Sale alone is not sufficient to register a motorcycle in Connecticut, by the way.

1. Tires: Check tread for wear, and sidewalls for cracks or dry rot, date codes (If available), and tire pressure. No one should be driving on tires older than 10 years. Can’t register in CT without DOT marking on tires. DMV is indicating 10 yr old tires will fail registration, but it is not written. First 2 numbers are the week and second 2 are the year. This tire was made the 3rd week of 2024.

2. Front rim: Check if the rim is true by putting the motorcycle on the center stand if possible and turn the front wheel to see if there's a lateral or up and down wobble. Check the spokes using a screwdriver or a metal tool to listen to the sound they make. A sharp, high-pitched sound would be a tight spoke and the low pitch or dull sound would be a loose spoke.

3. Front brake: With the wheel off the ground, turn the wheel and engage the brake, there should be no play. Is the brake is dragging? Listen for bearing noise.

4. Fork: Check for leaks. Put the motorcycle on the center stand (If applicable), engage the front brake and move the front wheel forward and backward to see if there is play in the steering head. (If the motorcycle is on the ground, just actuate the front brake and push the motorcycle back and forth.) To check steering head bearings, turn the handlebar from lock to lock, it should be smooth without a hard spot (damaged races). Check for clunking noises when front end is pushed up and down.



5. Headlight: Check the headlight, low and high beam. Check the turn signals if applicable. Bring a charged battery and jumper cables if needed. Are the brackets straight?

6. Controls and cables: Check the front brake and clutch levers for play, bending, and adjustment. Look for fraying of cables. Check the mirrors. Check all electrical controls as far as turn signals, high beam, low beam, horn, etc.

7. Gauges: check glass, chrome rims, odometer reading, sunlight fading, needles are in place. If bike runs, check operation of tach and speedo.

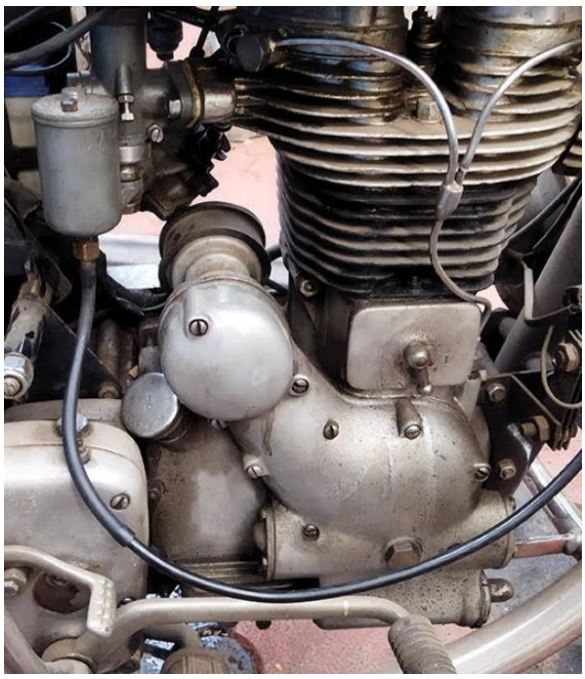
8. Fuel tank: Check for gas leaks, paint discoloration (yellowish) or bubbles. Check

inside the tank for rust using either a gun barrel inspection light or a scope. Fiberglass tanks are usually bad and need replacing unless coated inside. Beware of coatings inside the tank. Check fuel lines.

9. Carburetor: Check for leaks and stains indicating previous leaks. Check petcocks for leaks and free movement. Check air cleaners for traces of rodent nests. Motor should run smoothly when warm and start easily.

10. Exhaust: Check for soot traces indicating small leaks. Check nuts or screw-in collars, to make sure they are tight. Check silencers for perforations, rust, and if they are tightly fastened to the frame. Oily tips might indicate oil consumption.

11. Spark plugs wires: Check for general condition, tightness and traces of external sparking between wire and engine (grey spot).



12. Engine/gearbox: Check for the gear selector. It should operate on all gears. In gear, turn the rear wheel if it's on the center stand, or move the motorcycle back and forth to see if all the gears are engaging. Check for oil leaks all around, including oil tank and lines. Check for compression using the kickstart. If the motorcycle is not equipped with a kickstart, check the compression by using second or third gear and pushing the motorcycle to see if every cylinder has a similar compression (with the key off!). Make sure the engine is cold and try to start it. Listen for internal noises. A high pitch noise on the top most likely indicate tappets' excessive gap. A heavy low pitch noise down below would indicate a connecting rod bearing gap or play. A mechanic's stethoscope or long screwdriver is very handy to listen to internal engine noises. Check for smoke at the exhaust; blue is oil burning by the engine and black means that the mixture is too rich. White usually is condensation, especially if the weather is cold or humid.

13. Foot pegs: Check if they are tight and the rubbers are in good condition.

14. Seat: Original or custom? Check the cover for cuts. Determine if the seat can be repaired or needs to be replaced. Check brackets, hinges, and lock.

15. Electrical: Check for clean and tight battery connections. Check the electrolyte level (If applicable). The voltage should be 12.4 volts with the engine off. With the engine running at about 2000 rpm, the voltage should be around 13.5 - 14 volts. If the battery is new the charging system will not charge a lot because the regulator senses that the battery doesn't need to be charged. In that case put the high beam, a turn signal and brake to see if the voltage is maintained at higher than 12.5 volts.

16. Shock absorbers: Check for leaks and that the chrome is in good condition. Check the rubber bushings condition.

17. Rear rim: See #2, Front Rim

18. Rear brake: See #3, Front Brake

19. Speedometer drive: Check for condition and connection at cable. Sometimes they are in the front. Oil leaks in cable could indicate a bad seal or O-ring.

20. Taillight and turn signals: Check the quality of the plastic lenses, also check taillight, stoplight and turn signals are working properly. The brake light should be brighter; might be obvious but sometime it is reversed. If the turn signals are slow the flasher might be the culprit. If they are fast, a wrong bulb might be installed, offering less load to the flasher; the flasher could be bad as well. Check for the rear and side reflectors.

21. Swing arm: Check for play on the swing arm moving the rear wheel left and right. This will show a loose swing arm pivot or wheel axle.

22. Chain: Pull the chain in the rear where it hugs the sprocket, the chain should not be moving far from the sprocket. Look for the sprocket teeth if they are asymmetrical or sharp. If they are, both front and rear sprockets should be replaced as well as the chain.

23. Cush drive rubbers (If applicable): Turn the rear wheel as fast as possible and actuate the rear brake, the wheel should stop without going back and forth. If there's a play that means the silent-blocks (aka cush drive rubbers) need to be replaced. You can also check that by pushing the motorcycle back and forth with the rear brake engaged, the rear wheel should be united to the brake drum/sprocket assembly, there should not be any play between the wheel and the brake hub.

24. Brake pedal: Check for axial play and bent pedal, indicating an accident. Check for the rubber condition on all controls (brake pedal, shifter, kick start and foot pegs).

25. Master cylinders: if the motorcycle is equipped with hydraulic brakes and/or hydraulic clutch, check for leaks at the master and slave cylinders, as well as the hoses. Check for the brake fluid color inside the master cylinder(s). DOT 3, 4 and 5.1 are hydrophilic fluids (attracting water). If the bike is using DOT 5, it is less of an issue since it is a silicone-based fluid (purple). Hold brake handle tight, it should not slowly compress more once tight, or feel spongy.