



1: Preparation is key

Remove tank bags, luggage and any accessories you don't want to get wet such as a GPS. Also, get all your washing and cleaning products ready. You'll need a bucket, soap or liquid detergent, bug and tar remover, degreaser and/or engine cleaner, a toothbrush, your favorite product, a brush for wheel cleaning, tire cleaner, paint polish, metal polish, at least two micro fibre rags, 100% cotton sponges, a variety of soft cotton or microfibre towels.

2 Where and when you wash the bike is also important

Stay away from commercial washing facilities and do it yourself. Don't do it on the street or in a unit driveway as it's dangerous. Also, never wash straight after a long ride. Give the bike time to cool down, because you don't want to spray cold water on a hot engine. Also, avoid washing in the middle of the day or in direct sun as it can dry detergents on the bike's surface before you can rinse them off, leaving streaks and spots. Contaminants in water, such as mineral deposits, also become much more aggressive when warm and, if water is sprayed on a hot bike, those water spots are more difficult to remove.

3: Wash frequently, but don't overdo it

This is a bit of a balancing act. Frequent washing will alert you early to any developing problems such as oil or fluid leaks, loose or damaged parts etc. Leaving squashed bugs on your paintwork makes them difficult to remove later and can



leave behind a blemish in your clear coat. Also, squashed bugs in your radiator can cause overheating problems. However, if you wash too often, you can displace lubricants from cables and exposed grease points on old engines. If you've come back from the bush and your adventure bike is caked in mud, you will need a full wash straight away. If you've just had a short jaunt up to your favorite mountain cafe, then your bike might just need a gentle wipe over with some windscreen or bodywork spray and a soft cloth.

4: Wash with water and suitable cleaning agents

Don't use a lot of water. Use the right cleaning product for the job. There is a product for every use. But be careful of abrasive cleaners or general-purpose household cleaning products as these can damage paint or chrome. Detergents should have a pH balance between six and eight, so it's neither too acidic nor too alkaline as either could damage your paint. Check it's safe to use on all paint types. Don't use vinyl cleaners on the seat as it may look shiny but it will be slippery. If you are using any harsh compounds to tackle tough jobs you should probably think about wearing rubber gloves. Always check for Products SDS to make sure gloves are not required for useage.

5: High-pressure cleaning

It can be effective in removing caked-on mud and tough grime, but it can also force water into electrics and crevices where it can pool and cause corrosion or, at least, degreasing



of vital parts. If using a high-pressure cleaner, keep it away from the instruments, electronics, chain, brakes and vinyl seats which can be ripped by pressurized water. Concentrate on wheels and bodywork. Pressure cleaners will do a good job of cleaning mud off a chain, but you will have to re-grease the chain afterwards. (When applying chain lube use only enough to do the job. Excess lube flings off on to your wheels.) If you do use a pressure cleaner, use a domestic unit like the Karcher K2.180 that isn't too powerful that it can damage your finish. Nothing over 2000psi. It can also be environmental as they often use less water.

6: Make sure you have the right sponges, rags, chamois, brushes etc

Have separate cleaning rags and sponges for different areas. Don't use a sponge to clean grease off the wheels then attack the seat with the same sponge as you will leave grease on your seat. There is a wide variety of modern cleaning equipment available. Microfibre cloths are particularly effective while also protecting surfaces. However, don't dismiss the effectiveness of an old toothbrush for getting grit and grime out of hard-to reach areas such as radiators or for cleaning laced wheels. You can also use finest-grade steel wool to remove burnt-on grease and grime from chrome exhaust pipes. Test it first underneath the pipe where it can't be seen to check whether it leaves fine swirls as some pipes are not well chromed. You can also use plastic scourer as used on kitchen pots, or a brass wire brush as brass is softer metal and won't scratch, Follow up with metal polish.



7: Attention to detail

This makes the difference between a clean bike and concourse standard. When you've finished washing and polishing, spend time going over the bike one more time with a micro fibre cloth. Wipe the cables, clean the engine casings, rub the wheel hubs and lie down on the ground to see if you've missed any areas. If you are entering a concourse, judges will often wipe their fingers under the bike looking for grease and grime. Only you use tire shine on the tire walls if you are entering a show and shine and not riding, otherwise overspray can reach the tread area and adversely affect grip. After washing your bike, it may be a good idea to tip your bike upright to allow access water to run off the bike that was stuck in cracks and crevices. Then go over with a micro fiber one more time.

8: Waxing can make or break a bike

Don't use cutting compounds as they leave permanent swirls in the paintwork. Use a soft wax that adds a layer, rather than takes a layer off. Some modern bikes are actually covered in a layer of plastic or lacquer that can easily be damaged. Trial the product on a discrete area first then look at it in direct sunlight to see if it leaves swirls. Good quality wax will act as a sunscreen, leaving a UV barrier to protect your paint. Wax needs to be reapplied regularly to provide this protection. Put the polish on a clean rag, not directly on the bodywork. When dry, buff off the wax with a lint-free cloth.

9: Lube

WD40 is great for getting rid of excess water as well as gently removing built-up grease. Therefore, you shouldn't spray it where there is essential grease such as around the wheel axles as it will dilute the grease. WD stands for water displacement which is what it does. However, it's not a great lubricant, so buy some silicon or oil and spray the cables, hinges and levers that might have lost some lubrication in the wash. Use wax spray or dedicated chain lube to coat the chain and always follow the instructions on the can.

10: Drying off is the final step

Use a well-rinsed and squeezed micro-fibre cloth or chamois to thoroughly dry off your bike. NEVER allow any cloth, chamois or sponge to drop on the ground as it can pick up small pieces of grit that can scratch your bike. When you're finished drying your bike, ride it slowly around the block, squeezing the brakes to pump out excess water. Then go for a longer and faster ride on a highway to blow water out of deep nooks and crannies. If water is allowed to stay there it can cause corrosion. You can also use a leaf blower to do the same job, but isn't it nicer to go for a ride and show off your sparkling bike? When you get home, give you pride and joy another wipe down with a microfibre cloth to get rid of



streaks on the windscreen and bodywork caused by excess water running out of crevasses.

Source: Motorbike Rider