

## *Mechanical & Product Advice*

### **Silence Is Golden**

This is the time of year that I update my popular [Jim Langley Bicycle Aficionado](#) website. It's been online since 1999, and among my most popular bike-repair feature articles is the one I call [Keep it Quiet](#), Silencing Clicks, Squeaks, Clunks, Rattles and Other Annoying Noises.

Almost since the day I made this encyclopedic reference live I've received new bicycle noises and suggestions from riders around the world and added them to the list. This past week, I went through the most recent ones and added a bunch more. Some came from RBR readers, some from riders who used my article to solve noises and some came from cycling friends I ride with. There were some good ones.

Since all it takes is one persistent click, clunk or creak to completely ruin an otherwise wonderful ride (and drive your riding buddies nuts, too), I want to thank you for sending tips and urge you to keep sending them my way so I can share them. I hope that, slowly but surely, by working together we'll figure out every possible ride-ruining noise and shut them up for good. Be sure to share your best noise-stopping tips with fellow RBR readers on the [Comments](#) page.

In the meantime, I've selected 4 fun noise-busters to share with you this week. Maybe one will solve your mystery noise.

**Tip:** One of the best ways to track down bike noises is to substitute parts and take a test ride to see if the noise disappears. That way, you've isolated the noise to the part you removed and can more easily find it and fix it.

#### **Noise: Rattling and or clicking from the wheel(s).**

**Solution:** John Zalman and Dan Butler had this issue and figured out that the valve hole in their rim was slightly oversized and letting their Presta valve stem vibrate when they hit bumps, making a little rattle and click. Tightening the valve nut would secure the valve and stop the noise. But the nuts would loosen, and the noise would return. They then placed a small rubber O-ring (available at hardware stores) beneath the valve nut and wrapped a little electrical tape around the valve to end the noise once and for all. Another reader suggested cutting a small piece of a drinking straw and slipping that over the Presta valve as a buffer.

**Tip:** Don't overtighten valve nuts because it can pull the valve down too tightly inside the rim, possibly causing tire seating issues. Plus, it can make it hard to get the nut off when you get a flat.

#### **Noise: Squeaking from the wheels.**

**Solution:** Joey Korkames from Phoenix wrote me: "I had new wheel quick-releases that were the exposed-cam style and the delrin (plastic) cam-washer would squeak against the quick-release lever surface when rolling over rougher roads (pedaling or not, sitting or not). I tightened

the thing far beyond practical but the brittle plastic and polished-aluminum interface would just always squeak with enough vibration. I didn't think to try greasing the washer instead of oiling it at the time, but just outright replaced it with a conventional two-piece quick-release and the squeaking was gone!"

**Tip:** Usually, grease works better than oil; however, there are plenty of inferior quick releases out there on the market. And because wheel quick releases perform such an important job, if yours is making noise and seems to be a poor design, I would recommend getting a second opinion and making sure you have quality QRs on your bike.

**Noise: Dave Elkow from Kentucky described his noise as a creak that he'd get when standing to climb steep hills. It was on his Raleigh, which is equipped with the typical modern threadless carbon fork.**

**Solution:** Dave says, "I went through many potential causes and fixes with no change. Then one evening the old light bulb went off. Surely, I thought, there must be some amount of deflection in the fork steerer tube when I stand and climb a steep grade. Could this deflection be causing the noise? I removed the stem and spacers and lightly lubed the steerer and each contact surface of the spacers as I reassembled. I also snugged the assembly down a bit more than I had in the past, being careful not to preload the bearings too much. And, YES, the noise has gone away!" Nice job, Dave!

**Tip:** Many components today have the recommended torque written on them (or you can often find it in the manual or online). That way, if you have a torque wrench you can get the tightness just right.

**Noise: An intermittent click on each pedal revolution.**

**Solution:** According to **Peter** in Perth, Western Australia, this click "was driving me and my riding companions a little crazy. I was told it might be related to my cranks and/or pedals. Both were inspected by me and found not to be a problem. Various adjustments were made to the rear derailleur too, to no avail. The local bike shop only managed to suggest that I was cross-gearing - - which I was certain I was not, having been warned not to do that previously. So, I thought I may simply have to put up with this. I then noticed that when I took off my Nike shoes they rattled (and they hadn't always done this). The shoes are equipped with several attachment points for cleats, one set of which wasn't being used by my Look cleats — and the bracket/plate for the unused attachments was moving backwards and forwards through the pedaling motion. So, some modeling clay stuffed into the bottom of the shoe to hold the spare plate fixed the problem. There was no other way to tighten or remove the unused plate." Great one, Peter. Thanks!

**Tip:** Some clipless shoes come with separate screws that are installed in any unused cleat-bolt inserts in the shoes to lock them in place and keep them quiet. So look for those. Don't recycle them with the box. You can also sometimes glue noisy shoe parts in place. And some shoes have a way to remove them. See if the innersoles are removable. If so, you might find an access point beneath them.