
☒ Motorcycle Chain Maintenance & Adjustment – Printable Checklist

Before You Begin

- ☐ Park bike on a **level surface**
 - ☐ Place motorcycle in **neutral gear**
 - ☐ Support bike upright with **center stand / paddock stand** (optional but recommended)
 - ☐ Gather tools:
 - Tape measure or chain gauge
 - Wrench/socket set (for axle & adjusters)
 - Torque wrench
 - Chain cleaner + brush
 - Motorcycle-specific chain lube
 - ☐ Put on **work gloves**
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1) Inspect Chain Condition

- ☐ Rotate rear wheel and check entire chain length for:
 - Rust or corrosion
 - Stiff or binding links
 - Severe dirt or debris
 - ☐ Inspect *sprocket teeth*:
 - No hooked ("shark-fin") shapes
 - No missing or broken teeth
 - ☐ Look for wear on rollers and side plates
 - ☐ If chain or sprockets are excessively worn, plan replacement (chain & sprockets as a set)

Tip: Inspect both **chain and sprockets together** — wear in one accelerates wear in the other.

2) Measure Chain Slack

- ☐ Find the midpoint between front and rear sprockets
 - ☐ Gently push chain **upward** then **downward**
 - ☐ Record vertical movement (free play)
 - ☐ Compare with manufacturer's recommended slack (common: ~20–30 mm / 0.8–1.2 in)
 - ☐ Check slack at **multiple points** (tightest spot governs)
 - ☒ Chain should move smoothly with no excessive play
 - ☒ Too tight → binds bearings / stresses drivetrain
 - ☒ Too loose → risk of skipping, noise, or derailment
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3) Chain Tension Adjustment

- ☐ Loosen **rear axle nut** just enough to move the wheel
- ☐ Loosen adjuster **lock nuts** on both sides
- ☐ Turn **adjuster bolts** in **equal increments** on each side:
 - Clockwise → tightens chain (pulls wheel back)
 - Counter-clockwise → loosens chain (pushes wheel forward)
 - ☐ After each adjustment, **re-measure slack**
 - ☐ Repeat until chain slack is within spec
- ☒ Make adjustments in small steps — don't over-tighten.

4) Wheel Alignment

- ☐ Use swingarm alignment marks, tape, or straightedge
- ☐ Ensure **both sides match** — misalignment causes uneven wear
- ☐ Verify chain path looks straight from front to rear
- ☐ Check alignment again **after** setting tension

Tip: Proper alignment helps handling, braking stability, and extends component life.

5) Torque & Lock

- ☐ After correct tension & alignment:
 - Torque **rear axle nut** to manufacturer spec
 - Tighten **adjuster lock nuts** securely
 - ☐ Re-check slack one last time after torquing
 - ☐ Replace any cotter pins or safety fasteners removed earlier
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6) Cleaning & Lubricating

- ☐ Clean chain with a **chain cleaner or degreaser**
- ☐ Use a small brush to remove stuck debris
- ☐ Wipe chain dry
- ☐ Spray or apply **chain-specific lubricant**:
 - Inner side (contact area with sprockets)
 - Spin rear wheel slowly while applying
 - ☐ Wait 10–15 minutes for lube penetration
 - ☐ Wipe off excess to prevent grit buildup

Note: Do **not use engine oil or household oils** — they lack proper lubrication properties.

7) Final Safety Check

- ☐ Spin rear wheel by hand — smooth motion
 - ☐ No binding, catching, or uneven resistance
 - ☐ No chain rubbing against guards or sliders
 - ☐ Sprockets and chain move in harmony
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