

Your Basic Little Black Bag (Tool Kit)

This article is in tribute to all the 'old school bikers' who've passed their knowledge down from one biker to the next. Thank you for taking the time to stop and help out a stranded biker; teaching a new biker some of the ropes; sharing a few hard lessons learned stories; and making it a safer ride for all of us! May the tradition continue!

All right! You know all the rules forwards and backwards. Heck, you probably can recite them in your sleep by now! You've taken all the required driving tests and possibly even taken the local motorcycle safety class. Your local ABATE may have even been a part of your safety training.

And to top it all off, you've got your bike. Maybe it's not the bike of your dreams. Or the one you've been putting pennies aside all these years yet. But it's your bike. You've put in your time, money, and a lot of hard work to get to this point. All that matters now is you've got your bike. You're ready to ride. Anywhere. Any time. And you do.

You ride it every chance you get. You ride it to work. You ride it after work. You ride it on weekends. Shoot, you're even riding it on runs and rallies now. Your confidence is growing in yourself and your bike. Solo rides no longer give you pause. It's time to hit the freeways and by-ways of America. And then it happens. You're flying with the wind down the road and you can't see in your mirror anymore because all those 'good vibrations' have loosened the nut. Or, you come out of the establishment refreshed and ready for the next jaunt of the run. You walk up to your bike and bingo! Your turn signal is hanging by a wire. Or your license plate is looking like a candidate for a ticket from your local state patrol 'cause it's hanging by a thread...literally. And guess what? You don't have one tool to fix any of it because no one ever told you what basic tools you should carry in your little black bag (tool kit). Always. Every ride. No matter how short or long the ride.

Not every one of us is blessed with riders who are good friends, family who ride, or that chance individual rider who'll take the time to tell you some of the basic things you should have in your tool bag; the things not covered in a class but gained through time and experience.

Basics for your tool bag:

4-way Screw Driver	Replacement Bulbs (tail light, turn signals)
Continuity (Light) Tester	Tire Pressure Gauge
Black Electrical Tape	Misc. washers, screws, bolts
Duct Tape	Wire Ties
Spark Plug Socket Wrench with Extension	Oil (won't fit it in your tool bag but pack it along—wrap in a plastic bag)
Spark Plug Spacer	Pen and Paper
Spark Plugs	Rag

If you have room in a saddlebag, it's a good idea to stash these too:

- Bike Manual (if it came with one) or a copy of your bike's specifications
- Jumper Cables
- Tire Repair Kit
- Tools to be able to remove your bike's front and rear tires
- 1st Aid Kit with protective gloves

One experienced old school rider suggested purchasing a roll up open-end wrench set. Add to that two (2) spark plugs, one (1) feeler gauge, one (1) 12" crescent plug wrench, one (1) roll of black tape, some wire ties, a multi-head screw driver, and a pen and paper to write phone numbers on.

Another suggested maybe some allen wrenches and a torque wrench if you bought the bike used.

Continuity Tester: A tool in which you touch one end on one end of the wire and one end on the other and it will tell you if there is a break or short in the two points.

There are some other things you need to keep in mind besides just packing all those handy tools. You need to know your bike. Not just how it handles or how many miles you can go on a tank of gas. You need to know what is the right way to jump your bike if you have a need to do that some day. If you have your manual, read it. If you don't, look it up on the Internet and see if there's a copy available. Another thing to keep in mind is a lot of the newer bikes are built with computers and unless you're a computer wiz kid/mechanic, it probably would better to let the shop take care of matters especially if it involves electronics. Don't try to fix things that are beyond your expertise. Fix what you yourself can fix. Leave the rest. If you have absolutely no mechanical ability at all, make sure you have "Road Side Assistance" coverage and a cell phone.

If you ever do break down, chances are someone will stop and give you a hand and boy, will they be impressed with you that you've got the tools to fix your bike! Now all you need is a little know-how on how to apply those tools for what needs fixing. So pay close attention when that old school biker stops and takes the time to explain it to you. Someday you'll be that old school biker passing it down.

I'd like to acknowledge Greg Raschke of ID, Badger of Hermiston, OR, Lowryder of Iowa, Lone Wolf of Tigard, OR, and Springer Soul, CO for their invaluable input. I'd also like to thank Karen for the suggestion 'hey! Why don't you write this up?'

Ride safe y'all!

LittleSisterWA