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Tyres

Usually (and preferably) your tyres are the only point of contact, between you and the surface you're riding on. This means that you need to choose a suitable type of tyre for:

- the surface on which you ride;
- the style of bike you ride; and
- your riding style

Whether you are a road racer, a mountain biker, commuter, touring, social rider, or a combination of these, there is a tyre for you.

Mountain bike tyres

Mountain bikes usually have 26 inch diameter wheels. There are a wide variety of tyres available for 26 inch wheels.

If you are going to do most of your riding off road then a knobby tyre is for you. These have a broad profile and an aggressive tread pattern – a combination that will give you stability for tackling the mountains and the traction required to get you through muddy, dusty and rocky conditions that you might encounter.
Knobbies can be used for commuting on roads but they make you work harder, and do not corner as well as smooth tread tyres (slicks).

Slicks and Semi-slicks

Smooth treaded or slick tyres can be used on mountain bike wheels (26 inch diameter) and road or hybrid bike wheels (70 cm diameter or "700cc")
Slick tyres are more appropriate for commuters, or urban bicyclists, who spend most of their time on sealed roads. A slick tyre has a much smoother tread pattern than a knobby. This means it's easier for you to turn, and there is less friction between you and the road, allowing you to go faster, but still having a good grip on the road. Slicks allow for a much smoother ride compared to knobbies.
Semi-slicks are also available. They have an indented tread pattern allowing for a smooth on-road ride but also has better grip on gravel, or rough roads. Semi slicks also comer well on wet roads.
'Low-end' tyres are more likely to puncture. And they can only be inflated to a maximum of 40 PSI (pounds per square inch), causing a lot of drag, meaning a slower ride. You can expect to pay around $35 for a tyre of this quality. At the higher end of the market you will get a tyre with a better quality casing in the wall of the tyre. These stronger tyres are much less likely to get punctures and are able to be inflated to higher pressures (about 65 PSI).

Road Bike tyres

Road bike wheels are usually 70 cm diameter and take "700cc" tyres.
Road riding requires a tyre that offers low rolling resistance, is light weight and has maximum puncture resistance. You can expect to pay around $18 - $45 for a low-end road tyre. These will take up to 70 PSI, are generally heavier and are best suited to somebody who rides occasionally. The more expensive tyres are made from more durable rubber compound in the centre, giving greater traction, while the outer sidewalls are made from a softer rubber allowing more grip when cornering.

High-end road tyres can be inflated to 120 PSI (more for racing tyres). This ability to take such high pressure will give the rider less drag, much more speed, and will help prevent sharp objects from being embedded in the tyre.

Long distance riding

Foldable tyres are ideal if you are going to be doing any kind of touring. They have a flexible bead that allows them to be rolled up and tucked away.

Airless tyres

Airless tyres are heavy but never go flat. Unless you plan to ride in very remote areas we do not recommend them as they require special tools.

Punctures resistant features

Some tyres come with features to help prevent the dreaded puncture. These include:

- an extra layer of casing that makes it harder for objects to penetrate
- a band of puncture resistant material in the tyre eg Kevlar
- Tyre liners – a puncture resistant band that fits between the tyre and the tube can also help prevent punctures.

Keeping your tyres inflated to the correct pressure and avoiding glass and nails also helps.

Tubes

Make sure you get the correct size tube for your tyre. There are two types of valve – presta (or French) and Schrader (car tyre valve). Make sure you get the type you want. Most pumps can be reversed to work with either valve. You can also get presta valve adapters, which let you pump up presta valve tubes at the petrol station.

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