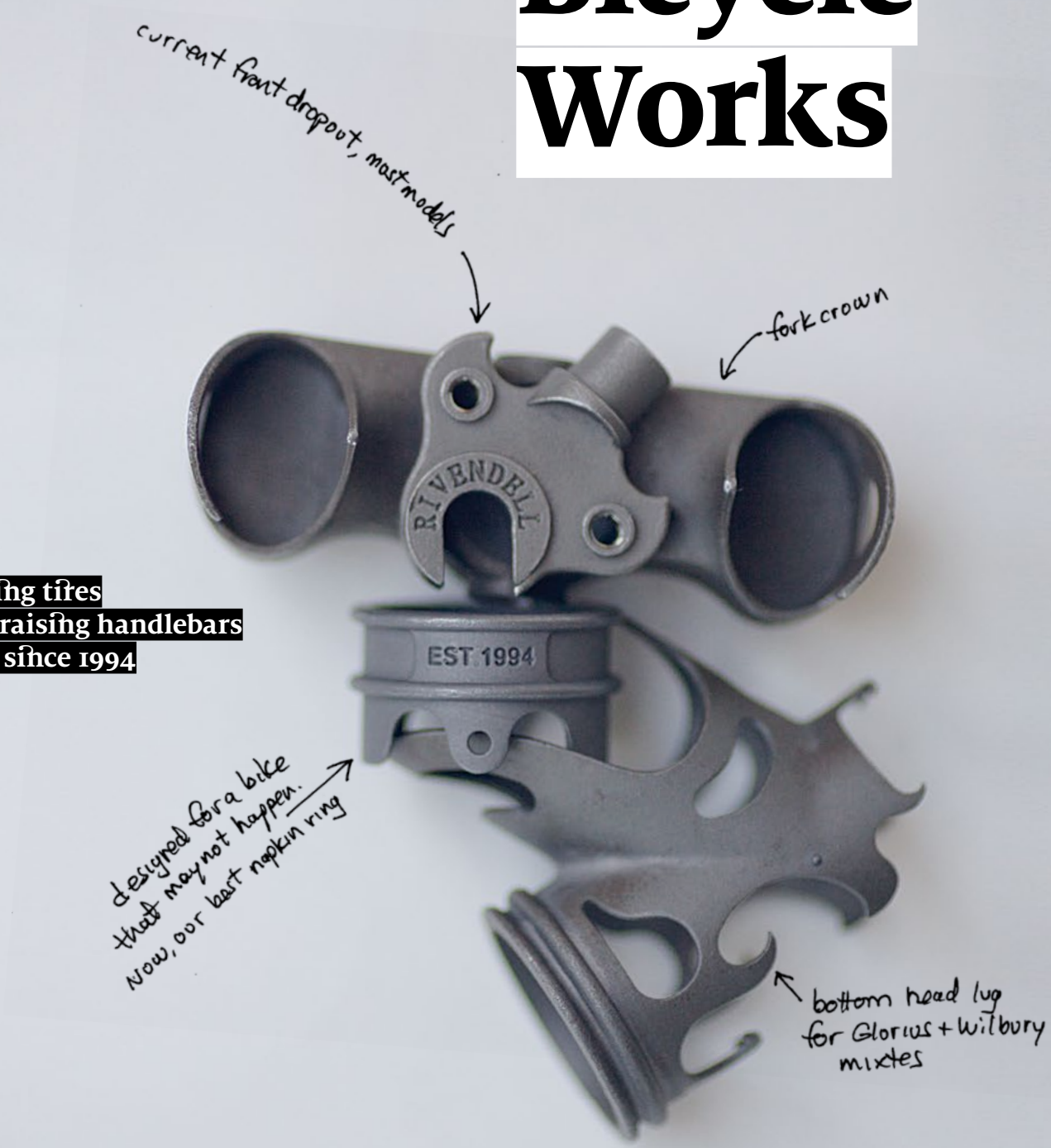
Rivendell Bicycle Works



Fatting tires and raising handlebars ever since 1994

The twentieth catalog

www.rivbike.com

Come to Riv

We're 28 miles east of San Francisco, and a six-minute amble or a three-minute bike ride from Walnut Creek BART. A block north of Ygnacio near the corner of Pringle and N. Main, behind Le Pho Noodlehaus. Go up the hill, down the left side of the building and look for bikes & tree stumps.

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RBW Headquarters

2040 N. Main St. #19
Walnut Creek, CA 94596
Phone 1: **1-800 345-3918**
Phone 2: **(925) 933-7304**
Fax: **(925) 933-7305**
Email: **miesha@rivbike.com**
(If she proves unhelpful, she will put you through to somebody else who may or may not be more helpful.)

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Hours

Mon to Fri: **9**am to **5**pm.
Sat: **10**am to **4**pm
(Subject to change due to worker strikes and sabotage.)

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About this catalogue ...and our site

We don't list prices on pages, but there should be a separate price list nearby. This is less convenient, sorry about that, but allows the catalogue a longer life, saving thousands of dollars in printing fees. Our website has more stuff and is in color.

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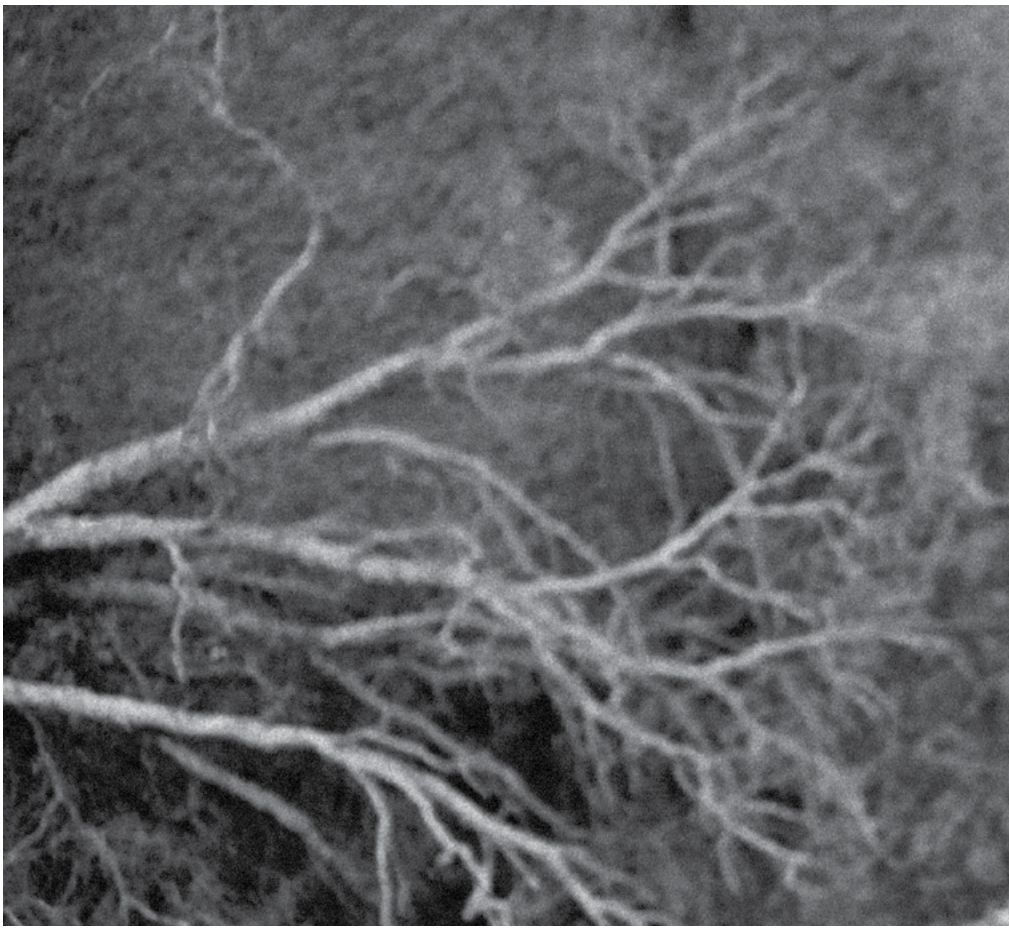
Weights and measures

There are 453.59 grams per pound, 28.35 grams per ounce, 25.4 millimeters per inch, and in this catalogue we're going to be inconsistent. Do Americans relate to grams, centimeters? To centimeters when the topic is stem length, sure. To grams, never, no. When a bike part is listed metrically, like a 9cm stem, we're not going to start calling it 3.54 inches. There will be a sincere attempt at logic and consistency, but at times you may need to use a calculator. There are 453.59 grams in a pound, 28.35 in an ounce, 2.54 centimeters in an inch, and the internet can tell you the rest.



Kevin, Shell Ridge, Bessa R w/75, Ilford 3200

A bad selection of good gear, & a new fake word

Our focus is bicycles & gear for a kind of riding we call *Unracing*. It's not anti-racing in the sense that we see racing as bad and those who do it dumb. Unracing is just culling from your bike life the clothing, gear, and notions that suggest you're not riding hard or long or aerodynamically enough. That your five-year-old bike isn't light enough. Unracing is basically riding your bike free of the influences of pro racing.

Pro racers are lousy role models. Even so, it's almost impossible to be a modern bicycle rider without copying their costumes, equipment, and riding habits. But if all you want is fun and exercise and transportation—and really, what else is there?—the best advice we can offer is to make note of racerly ways and do the opposite. The thing is, to a pro racer, riding a bike means training and racing and recovering. It's hard work and a job. For you it's play, which makes it even more important. So that's where Unracing comes in. Unracing values fun and utility over speed, distance, and stunts. Unracing unbinds you from the drudgery of posing and pain and lets riding your bike be as fun and satisfying as riding a bike can possibly be. It's riding your bike the way you did as a kid, for fun and just to get around.

Unracing can be adventurous, vigorous and sweaty, but unlike racing, it's not the kind of riding you suffer through for the relief or pride you'll feel when it's over. To the unracer, a cross-town commute counts as much as a romp on the trails or a tour down the coast. There's no hierarchy or score card. You don't get Unracer points for being car-free, or for pedaling your family across town at night in a sleet storm to go shopping. If it's miserable or treacherous out and you have a car, drive it. Unracing is practical, not a religion.

Consider the gear's influence on attitude. When you dress like a pro and ride basically the same kind of bike, you can start to see the bike as a workout device, and your fellow bicyclists as competitors in your fantasy world, so be careful. Don't underestimate clothing's influence on attitude, and attitude's influence on the ride. Both Mark Twain and Abraham Maslow are credited with saying something like, "To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail," and it works for riding, too. When you wear the clothes and ride the bike of a racer, you tend to ride like one. Mellow the gear and you'll mellow your head and the ride.

Everything in this catalogue is for the Unracer. We don't stock featherweight bike parts shaved to scary lightness for real or psychological advantages in the races no self-respecting Unracer would enter. We stock no one-upping "eye-candy" bike parts that take more out of your wallet than they contribute to your ride. But we also don't try to be the first stop for cheapskates, dumpster-divers, or those who are simply low on clover. A lot of what we sell is the best of its kind in the world, priced accordingly, and worth scraping for. We have a narrow selection in any category. A selection too big is too stressful.

this decal is the kind that needs
a clear coat, didn't get it.
OMER ILSEN
BY RIVEN

Abou' this biz

I started Rivendell in late 1994, and I'll tell you briefly how it came to be. I was born in 1954, and in my twenties I was riding and racing and rock climbing a lot while working at REI in Berkeley and going to college, with no career in mind, no more sure of a career than I was at ten. While at REI I wrote two regional where-to-ride-around-here books (*Roads To Ride and Roads To Ride-South*), and in the Bay Area bike community, I was one of the fast guys (bottom of Wildcat to the Kiosk at Inspiration Point in 9:21). A good friend was a salesrep for Bridgestone's U.S. division, and in 1984 he got me an interview there. I got the job, quit REI and school, and it seemed like a change in direction. After some early drama I got traction and wound up in the small marketing department, and—more famously—gained some influence on the bikes. My influence has always been exaggerated, but I did some things there.

Bridgestone's timing was unfortunate and horrible. About a year after opening the San Leandro, CA headquarters, the dollar fell against the Yen, which affected all Japanese manufacturers and exporters, not just bikes or Bstone. It cut Japanese exports by eighty percent and lead to a cheapening of materials and finishes, and a simplification of parts and elimination of strictly unnecessary artistic elements. For a new-to-the-U.S. Bridgestone, it was a real drag. After a decade of struggling, Bstone Japan closed the U.S. division, and I was out of work two weeks before my wife and I had our second and final baby, Anna. Katie was six. I got work offers for more money then (1995) than I'm making now, but by that time my bike-opinions had made me a fish out of water in the mainstream market, and the family didn't want to move, anyway. So I started Rivendell in October of 1994 with $89,000 that came from severance pay, 401K, and selling stock to friends. For nine or ten years we were incredibly underground. It's only been since about 2006 or so that we've managed to show up on the radar. Oddly, we now find ourselves a big fish in a small pond of homey bicycle companies that supply alternatives to the normal slick racing-oriented carbon, spandex, and nylon.

Sales are about $2.8 million a year. Profit, about $15,000 to $40,000, but it's tied up in inventory, never in the bank. I'm not a good businessman, and I don't mean that in a prideful way at all. I wish I were. We survive in spite of that because we have good people here and don't make huge stupid money mistakes. Most of this gear is hard to find in a regular bike shop or mail-order catalogue, and a lot of that gear—to us—is functional but bland. When your relationship with bikes goes beyond a quick trip to the liquor store or shredding in the hills with your homies, you end up wanting bike parts with something else, and that's what we try to provide here.

A lot of our gear is made in Japan. Due to high human labor costs and a strong Yen, Japan has priced itself out of the export market in nearly all products not made by robots. Your Nikon digital widget probably isn't made in Japan anymore, for instance, nor your Zojirushi rice cooker or Panasonic tape recorder. Most Japanese products still made for export have been stripped down or simplified to reduce manufacturing costs.

Nitto bicycle parts, made in the outskirts of Tokyo, are an exception. Nothing at Nitto has been redesigned, dropped, outsourced, or cheapened. Nitto's stems, handlebars, racks, and seat posts are made with all the exquisiteness of 35-year-old Japanese products. They're military + Tiffany, and expensive. We keep your costs down by buying and selling directly. Our close relationship with Nitto goes back a long way — we even share an employee — and they're the only handlebars, stems, and seat posts we stock. Even if it's only a tiny thing, put something Nitto on your bike.

Whether it's made in Japan or somewhere else, you won't have to wonder where your thing from us is made, because we identify the country of origin of everything we sell, as opposed to just saying "imported." The world's most popular widget-manufacturing country in the world is conspicuously absent here.

Many of our suppliers are small like us, sometimes smaller, and have material and supply problems we can well relate to (which only sometimes stops us from squawking when they're late delivering). In our defense, the supply droughts would get them fired by L.L. Bean, REI, or Orvis. We try to plan ahead, but often we have to pass on the temporary shortage to you. They're always worth the wait; but plan ahead, comrades!

Steering

No part of your bike is more common or more expensive or more of a hassle to monkey with than your handlebars, mainly because it also means messing up the grips or bar tape, the brake levers and cables, and probably the shifters and cables, too. You have to undo work and discard perfectly good bits...depressing. Whenever you change cabling, get new cables. Even the best are cheap enough, and new cables are easier to thread and deal with. The most common change is from drop bars (on an old road bike) or straight bars (old mtb) to Albatross bars, which means a new stem and brake levers at least. It costs $150 to $250, which is a lot of money to lose in a poker game among friends, but in this case you get what feels like a whole new life out of it. The right switch makes a bike that felt crappy feel great. Pains go away immediately. Doctor bills fly out the door. Suddenly you're rich. Let's say you have a relatively new road or city kind of bike. It cost you between $800 and $2500, and you bought it from the local high-end reputable bike shop, maybe even after having spent $200 on a fitting, partly refundable if you buy a bike there. The bike is probably (by our standards) too small, has a threadless headset and a clamp-on stem, and you just can't seem to get the bar high enough. There is a chance that you're screwed, meaning there are no non-funky ways to make it fit.

Bar life, strength, testing, safety considerations

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If you crash on your handlebar and damage it, replace it. If your aluminum handlebar is more than 15 years old and has been ridden regularly, replace it. Don't search the internet for an old 3TTT or Cinelli bar from the '70s unless it's for a show bike you won't ride.

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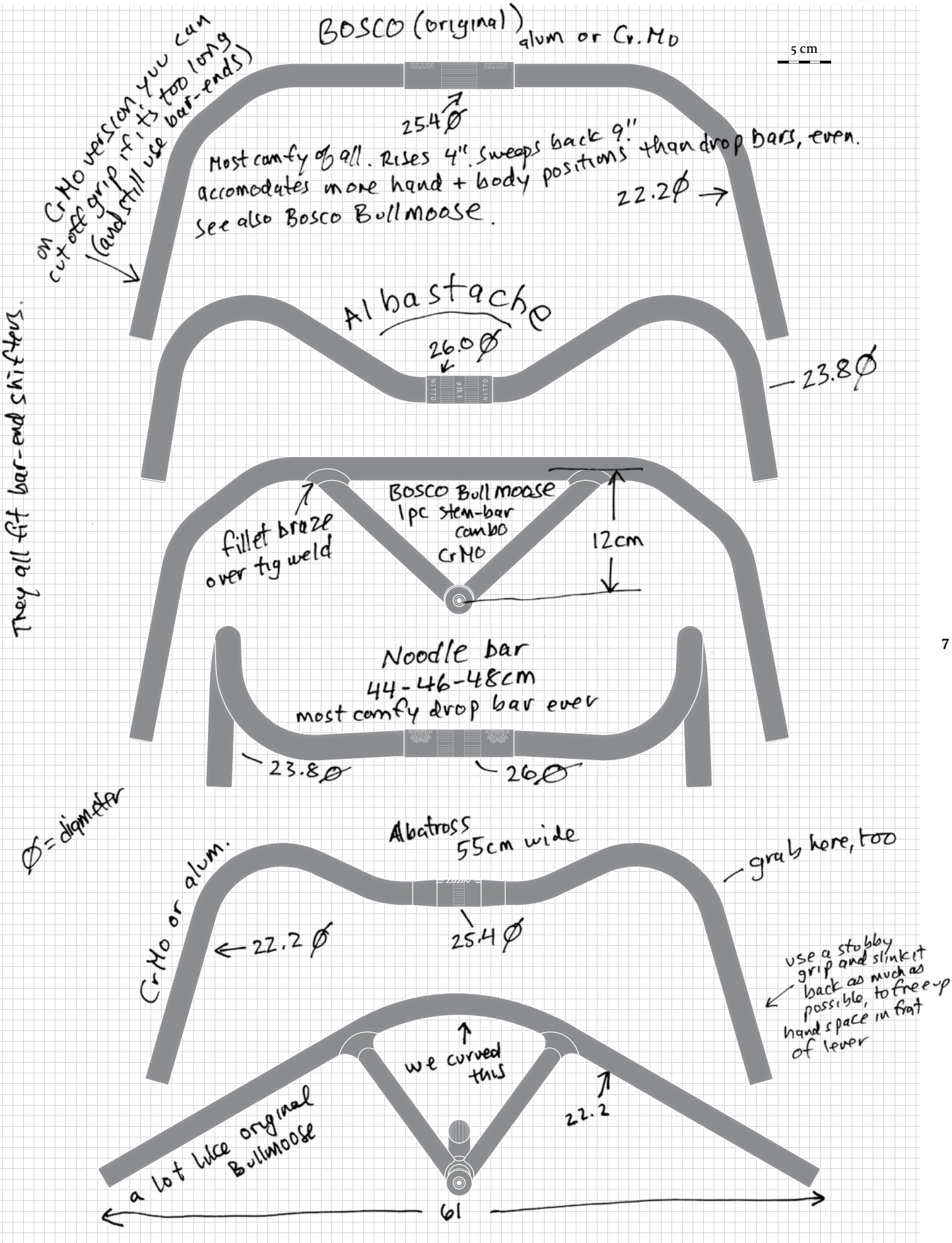
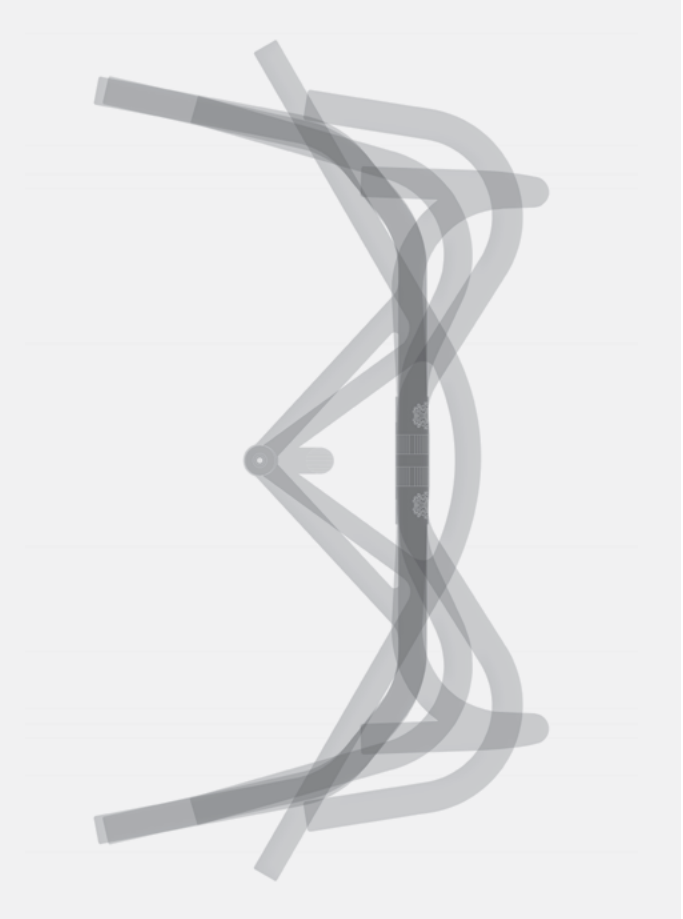
Don't grease the stem/bar connection. In the old days that was the way: "Grease all metal-to-metal contact points!". The idea was something to do with preventing the metals from melding, or stopping squeaks. Nobody has ever gotten a bar stuck in a stem, though, and there's probably another way to deal with a squeak if you get one. That may not be the source, anyway, and so keep the mating surfaces dry, for less slipping with looser clamping.

But we're good at fixing problems like that in the least funky ways possible. We've done it thousands of times (no exaggeration), and never tire of it, and never throw the boilerplate at you. Sometimes we ask that you email us a photo of your bike so we can see what we're up against, and sometimes we just can't help—or we can help, but you'd end up spending way too much on a bike that is still going to be wrong for you, and we say don't.


BOSCO (original)
alum or Cr.Mo
5 cm
on CrMo version you can cut off grip if it's too long (and still use bar-ends)
25.4Ø
Most comfy of all. Rises 4". Sweeps back 9". accomodates more hand + body positions than drop bars, even.
See also Bosco Bullmoose.
22.2Ø
Albastache
26.0Ø
23.8Ø
They all fit bar-end shifters.
fillet braze over tig weld
Bosco Bullmoose
1pc stem-bar combo
CrMo
12cm
Noodle bar
44-46-48cm
most comfy drop bar ever
23.8Ø
26Ø
Ø = diameter
Albatross
55cm wide
grab here, too
CrMo or alum.
22.2Ø
25.4Ø
use a stubby grip and slink it back as much as possible, to free up hand space in front of lever
we curved this
22.2
a lot like orginal Bullmoose
61

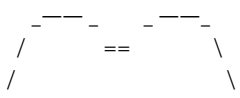
Picking a handlebar



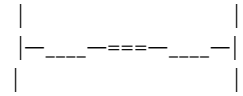
Racers typically ride bars three or more inches below the saddle, because when they're grunting hard and trying to get on a wheel or tuck under the wind, a low body makes temporary sense. Unracers like bars level with or above the saddle, where they're easier to reach and put less weight on your hands. A high bar is always easier to reach, because it has the effect of making your arms longer. To see how, just stand stiff-armed in front of a wall and move your hands from low to high. High hands reach walls and bars easier. It's a horizontality issue.

There are hundreds of different handlebar shapes, but three basic shapes cover 98 percent of them: Straight bars, drop bars, and sweepy-backs. Straight bars are the most common but the worst style, because they aim your wrists unnaturally downward, and in that position your wrists can't move as easily and naturally with the tilt of the bike (say, as you climb off the saddle). They're popular because their drawbacks don't flare up on short rides, and they look macho, like a jackhammer's handle. But drops and sweepies orient your wrists inward, which is better all around. (If you prefer straight bars, that is fine, stick to your guns, but...*really?*)

Get the Albatross bar if you want max comfort and want to sit upright and pedal. It is the ultimate Unracer bar, good for all-around riding.



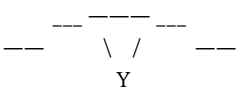
Get the Noodle bar if you want a super comfy all-around drop bar. Angle the ends down about ten degrees and revel in the flat ramp behind the brake lever. Get our other drop, Mark's Bar, if you spend more time down low on the bars. The Noodle certainly doesn't rule that out, but the upper curve of Mark's Bar clears your wrist more when you're low on the bars and thrashing the bike wildly side-to-side. Is that common?



Get the Albastache handlebar if you want the upright position & immediate access to the brakes (like a flat bar), but the multiple hand positions & more stretch. This is a great bar, but for crying out loud, get it high with a long-quill stem and bring it close with a short extension. Our DiftDrop stems are perfect.

Get the Bosco bar in any of its variations **if** you are almost ready for an Alba bar, but you simply must have more hand positions and body positions to go along. You're a recreational and trail rider who dabbles in time trials, for instance. The Bosco will accommodate you. It's also the perfect bar for retrofitting bikes that are too long and too small.

Get the Bullmoose bar if you're equipping a dedicated trail bike and want classic styling stuffed with off-road function. You'll never wish it were any different.



Don't fret or waffle too much picking a bar. Even if you get one that isn't your bar-for-life, you'll gain something from the experience. We don't offer any lousy bars.

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Each model was designed from scratch or tweaked to perfection by us. Our bar selection is tiny, with no losers. Mix them up on different bikes, have fun, hang on.

Albatross bar *(Japan)*
Before the Bosco bar, this was our favorite handlebar, and post-the-Bosco we'll just see. But the Bosco doesn't make the Albatross worse. The Albatross is great looking, extra comfortable, fantastic for all kinds of riding, and accepts bar-end shifters.
Almost every Riv employee has at least one Alba-bar bike, and it's usually the most-ridden one. The Albatross bar is perfect for converting stretchy, flat-bar mountain bikes and too-small drop bar road bikes to comfortable all-around bikes. Nobody ever puts it on, then takes it off.—it feels instantly natural on any bike. There is nothing not to love about the Albatross bar, and it is the most beautiful bar we stock. 55cm only.

******

Bar clamp: **25.4 mm.**
Bar diameter: **22.2 mm.**

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Fits mountain brake levers only, and yes on the bar-end shifters.

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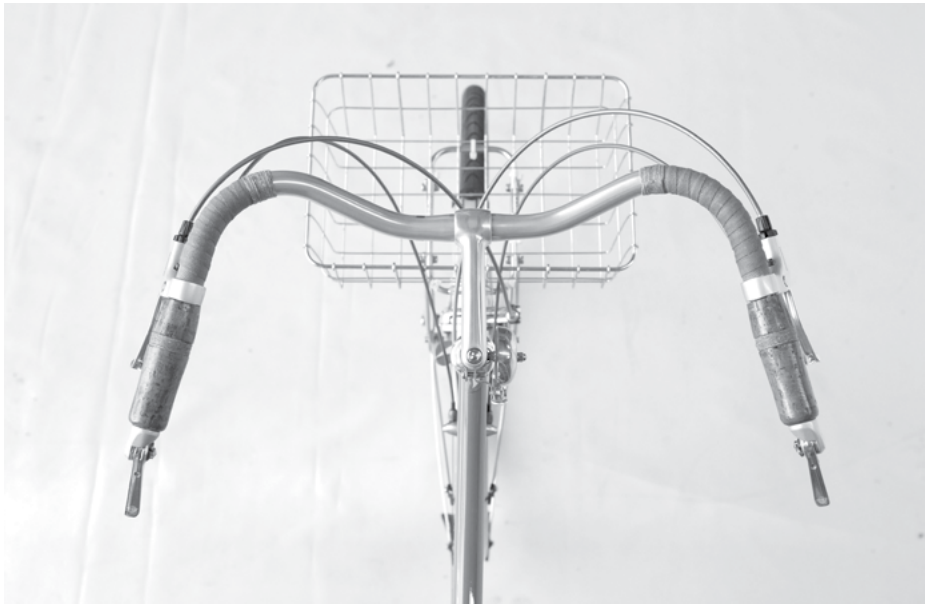
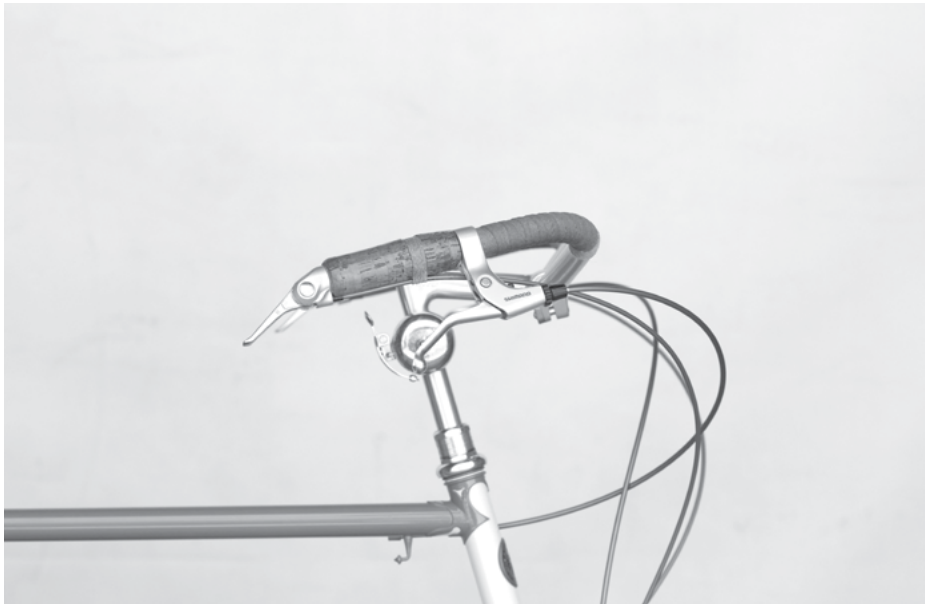
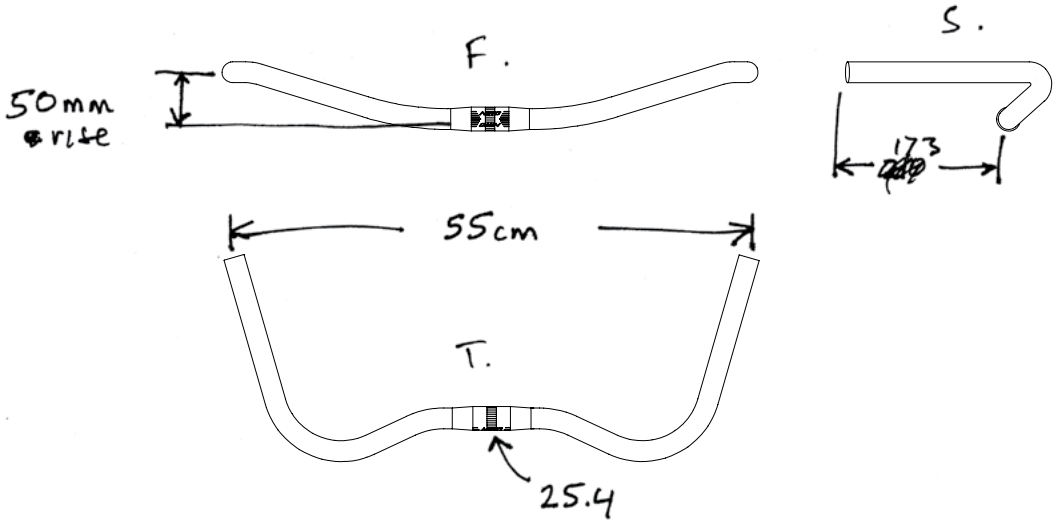
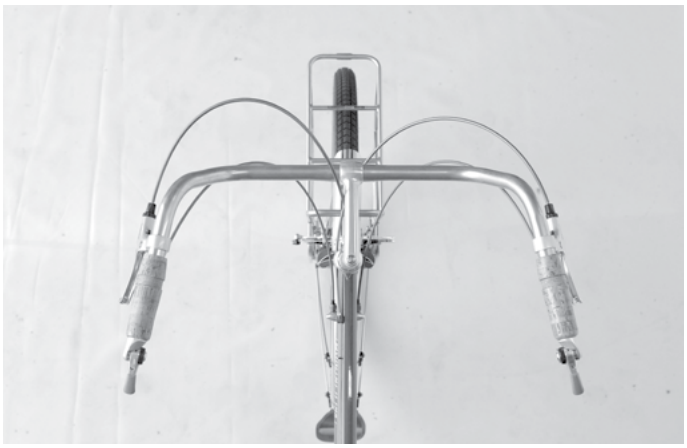
Available in CroMo *(steel)*
or 2014-T6 Aluminum









Nîtto Bosco bar *(Japan)*
It's our newest bar, and has more usable/comfortable hand space than any other handlebar in Middle Earth. The key is a front-to-back range of a whopping 9+ inches, and a 4-inch rise. These numbers mean you can sit up straight and smoke a pipe while reading Ann Patchett, and still accommodate your dying-but-not-dead inner racer when you spy a spandex spinner up the road and simply must chase it down. If you can't get comfortable and go fast with this handlebar, you're not letting it happen. It's you, not the bar. The high-rise and long sweep-back are ideal for bikes that are too small and long to begin with, so if you've got a mountain bike that hangs you out there, put a Bosco on it and feel warm and supple. The huge amount of sweep back is too much for most road bikes. If you're converting a road bike to uprights, go Albatross or Albastache.

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Bar clamp: **25.4 mm.**
Bar diameter: **22.2 mm**.

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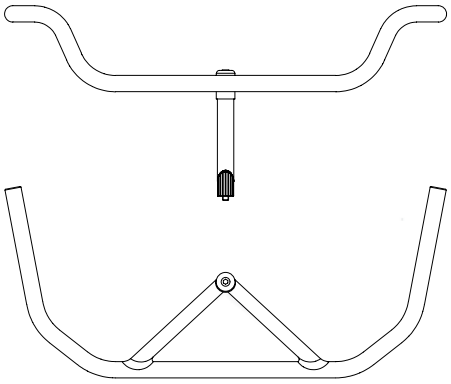
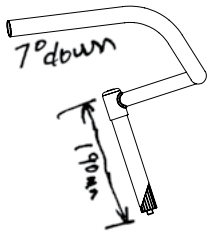
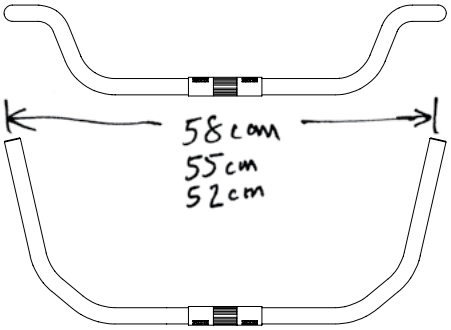
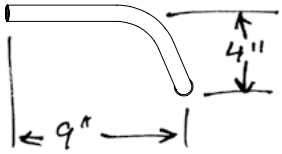
Fits mountain brake levers only, and yes on the bar-end shifters.









Nîtto Bullmoose bar *(Japan)*
In the beginning of mountain bikes the sages thought a bar made for tough use should be triangulated—braced against the pulling & twisting forces suffered by a wide bar clamped only in the middle. So Tom designed this model, and Charlie named it Bullmoose. It reigned for only two years—1982 thru 1984, and then less expensive, normal non-triangulated bars took over. They were lighter, cheaper, and in retrospect maybe the original Bullmoose was overkill, but in these insane underkill times, we find the overkill of the Bullmoose comforting and as sensible now as ever. We minorly tweaked the geometry of the original to suit our tastes, and for a pure mountain bike, where you do a lot of bumpety-thumpety, it is as good as any bar alive. The effective extension is 15cm. It's fillet brazed of CrMo, in the normal 22.2mm diameter, and fits one-inch (old standard) headsets and all of our bikes. Is 61cm too wide for you? Try 58cm, or even 56cm. Saw, saw away.

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Bar clamp: **25.4 mm.**
Bar diameter: **22.2 mm.**

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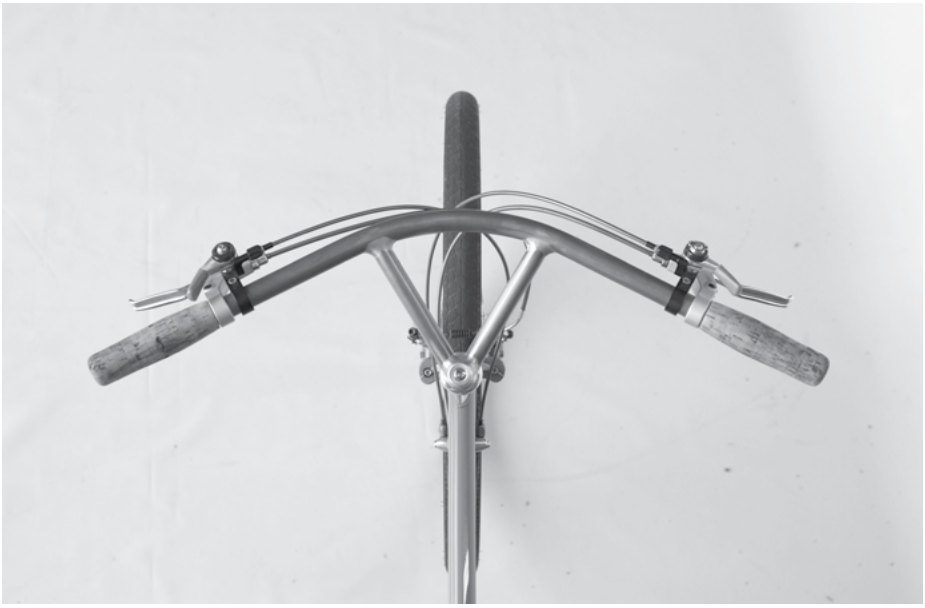
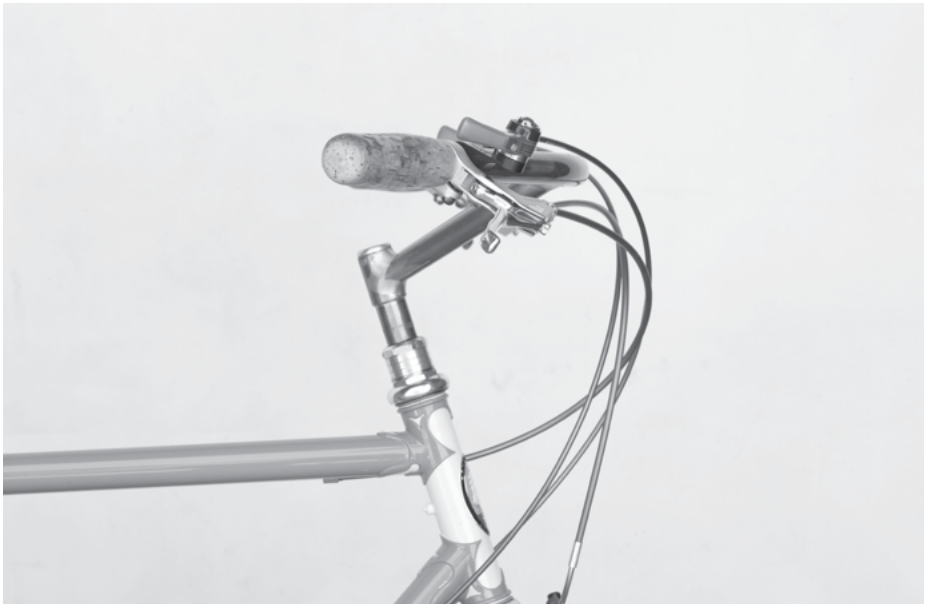
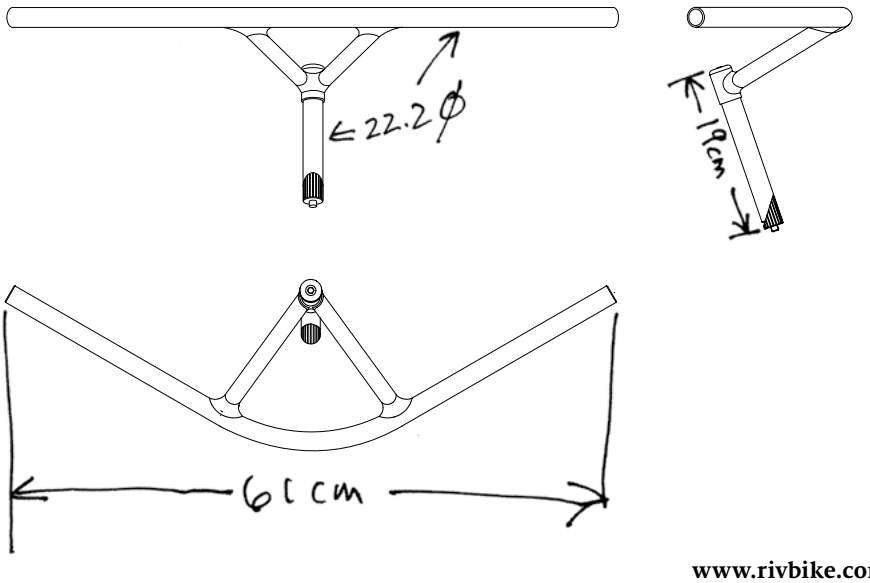
Fîts mountaîh brake levers only, and thumbshifters.







Nitto Noodle bar *(Japan)*
If you already like drop bars, you'll go insane over the Noodle, and if it's your first drop bar and later on you try another, prepare to be disappointed. It has three features that are a little different from general drops, and they all make it better: (1) The 4-degree flare to the drops (small deal); (2) A top flat portion that curves back toward you a little (small deal); and (3) The low-angle ramp (huge deal). The ramp is the part of the bar immediately behind the brake lever. On most drops the ramp is about 24-to-32-degrees, which makes you grip tighter to keep from sliding down the slope. When you angle the Noodle bars downward 10-degrees, its mere 15-degree ramp becomes an even merer 5-degrees, so you can rest your hands there relaxedly without feeling like they're going to slip down. It's the way to go, drop-bar wise.

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Width: Get the widest bar your head can stand. Most women do fine with the 44, guys like the 46 & 48. If 48 sounds too wide, consider that most non-drop bars are 52 to 70cm wide, and the 38-44 normal range harkens to starved, pre-war Italian racers. For unracing, wider is better.

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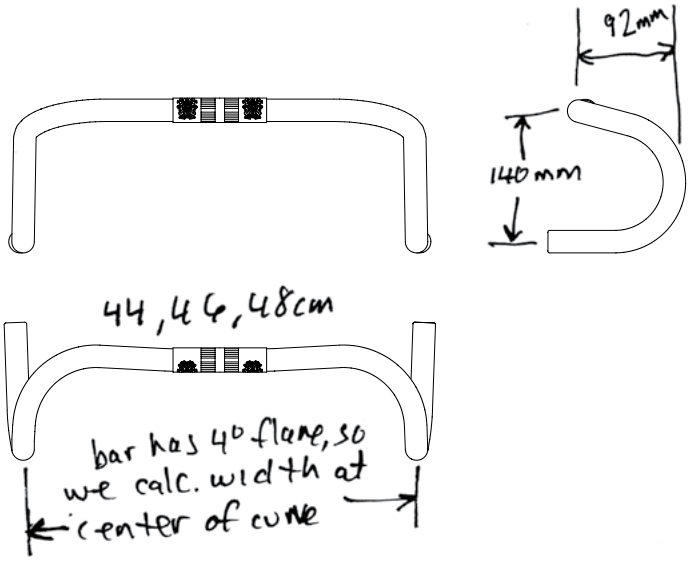
Sizes: 41cm, 44cm, 46cm, 48cm.
2014-T6 Aluminum. 46 & 48cm are Heat Treated



Nitto Albastache bar *(Japan)*
It's our replacement for the original Moustache Handlebar. It's the Albastache because it was heavily influenced by the Albatross handlebar. Like the original Moustache Handlebar, it has the grip and clamp diameter of a drop bar, and takes road brake levers. Compared to the original Moustache Handlebar, the reach (how far forward it goes) is about an inch less. It drops an inch less, too, and it comes back about two inches more. You can still climb and sprint as comfortably, and you can sit up even more. The original was a great bar, and so is this. If the Albatross and Bosco are too upright for you or you can't come to grips with riding such old lady bars after decades on drops...but drops stretch you out a hair too much, this is the perfect solution. Use it with either a Dirtdrop stem or an 8cm to 10cm Tallux.

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Bar clamp: **26.0mm.**
Bar diameter: **23.8mm.**

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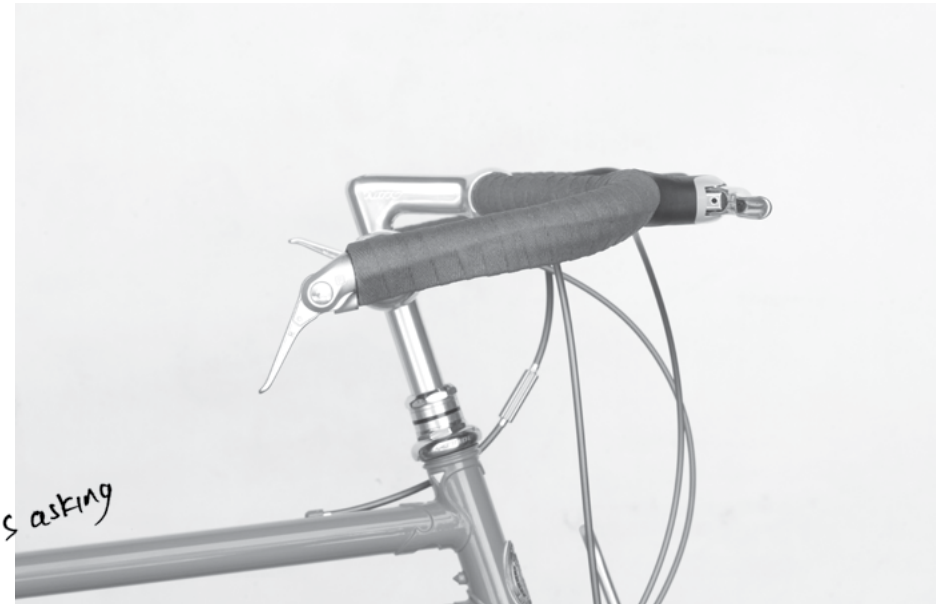
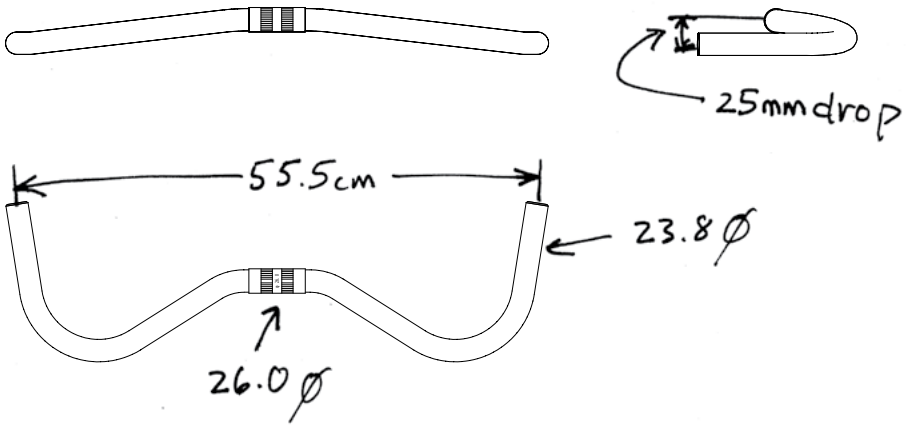
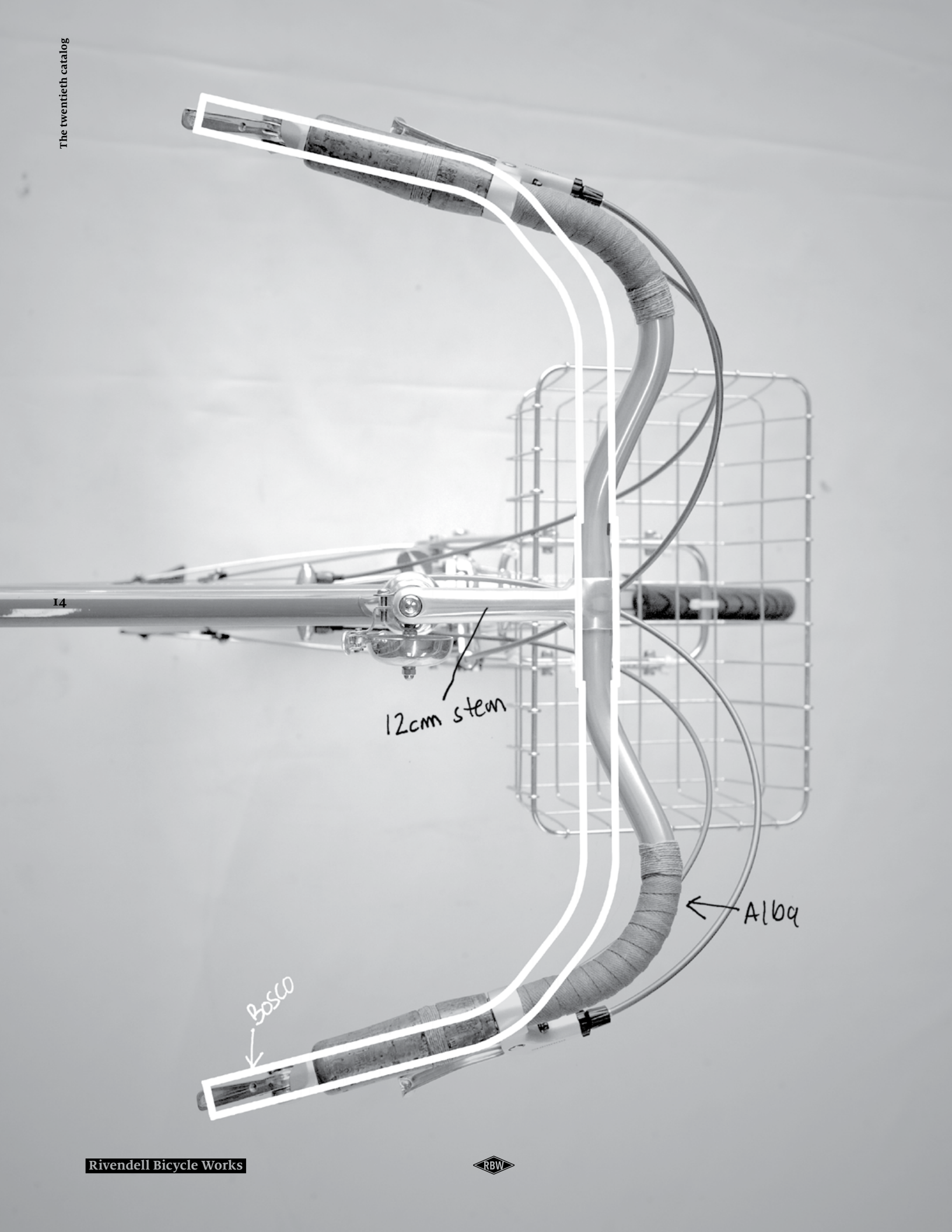
Fits road brake levers only, and yes on the bar-end shifters.



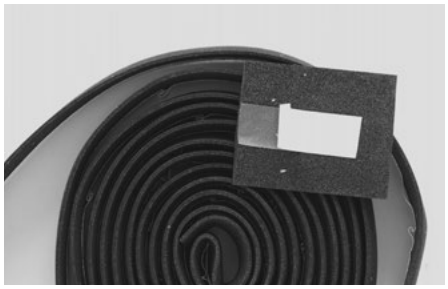
please do not lament the passing of the original Moustache Hibar. It was and is a great bar, but the Albastache addresses some minor issues (not problems) of it... and so it works better for more people. If you contact us asking "can I get an original?", be prepared with a credit card, because we have a few around... for a while.




12cm stem
Alloy
Bosco

1.

2.



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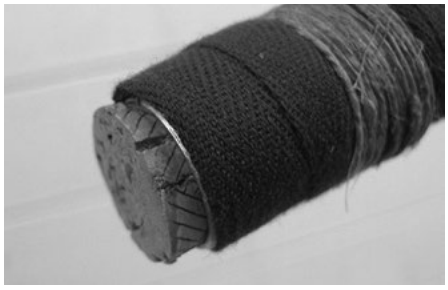


6.

Fashion accessories for handlebars

1. Cotton tape *(USA)*
If the velvetness of cork tape makes your handlebar feel like a woman's hammer, then go with thin hard cotton. Cotton keeps the bar slenderly grabbable, and with two layers of shellac it'll be heavenly grippy, too. And, if you're too cheap to buy cork grips and don't like rubbery ones, use cotton to build up grips of your dream fatness and length. To match a Brooks Honey brown, shellac amber over yellow, grey, or white.

2. Corklike Tape *(Taiwan)*
Real cork is too brittle to wrap, but NASA & Boeing collaborated to develop wrappable tape that looks nearly corklike enough to fool almost half of the people some of the time. We stock tannish (cork-colored) and black. The tannish, under two layers of amber shellac, looks like golden buckskin. It's...what we usually recommend in those rare instances when we recommend cork.

3. Big Ball of Hemp Twine *(USA)*
Cover the last 3/4-inch or so of the tape with hemp twine. It looks great, and takes only ten minutes. Then shellac or glue over it. Big ball = 385 feet, and if your creative juices are flowing you'll find other uses for it, too. Like, if you crash and tear your tape, you patch it with twine.
As a bonus, this is the best string for tying up brown paper packages, bar none.

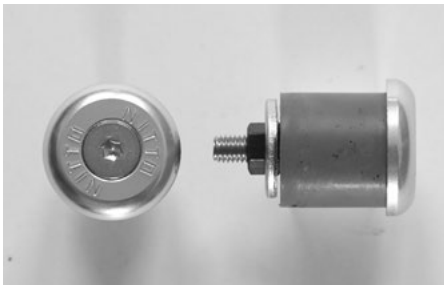
4. German Mirror *(Germany)*
It mounts on any bar, reveals the vast road behind you at a glance, weighs nothing, takes a whacking, never breaks. Shop for mirrors all you like, but this mirror is as good as a mirror needs to be.

5. Wine Cork Bar Plugs *(USA)*
It doesn't take a rocket scientist to explain why these are the most popular item in our inventory: They are genuine corks from actual bottles of wine certified to be authentic, with an alcohol content averaging roughly 12 percent, and never less than 9. They fit most road bars, but now and then you may need to shave them. They're light, waterproof and free, but if you order nothing else we're still going to charge you shipping. One pair free per bar order on request.

6. Brass bells *(Japan)*
Brass rings rich & mellow, loses its shine beautifully, and shouldn't a bell *be* brass? The hammerbell is bigger and louder than the springbell, but they both work great. A wrap of cloth bar tape protects your fine Nitto bar or stem from scratches.

7. Nitto Bar Plugs *(Japan)*
If you don't fill your bars with shifters or our free wine corks, these will do fine. They're made by Nitto in Tokyo, and are classy overkill.

7.



4.

Finish your bar tape with hemp twine, don't just hold the end down with more tape. *Anybody can do that.*

It's not a shame if you don't or romantic if you do, but fastening down the end of your handlebar tape with hemp twine is one of few opportunities to leave your own mark on your own bike, and with a plant, no less.

Start with two lengths of twine. One 8-inches, the other five feet (you won't use it all, but this is an easy length to handle)

—

1. Start about 3/4-inch from the end of the tape and start winding toward the stem.

—

2. With four wraps to go, make a loop of the short piece and continue wrapping over it.

—

3. After four wraps, stick the free end through the loop and keep tension on the free end until it starts to snake under the last four wraps.

4. Pull the loop and it'll drag the loose twine under the last four wraps.

—

5. Of course you can snip it off.

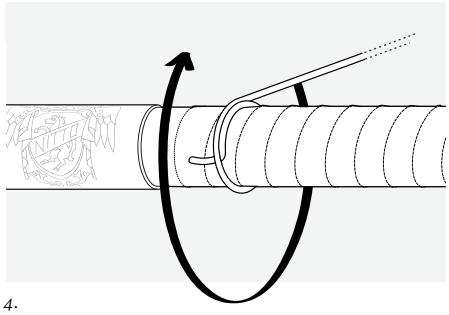
—

6. But why? Leave a few inches hanging. It won't get in the way, and if it still bothers you in a week, then snip. You'll have been cool for a week, which is better than not at all. In any case, shellac it to seal it all in.

—

If you use our hemp twine, it'll take about thirteen to fifteen wraps.

1.



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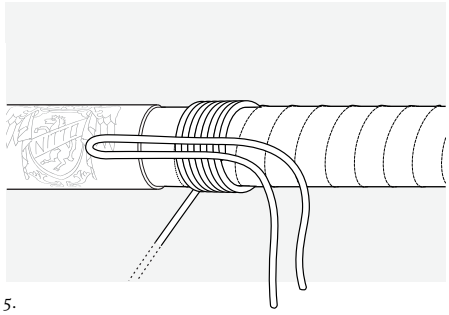

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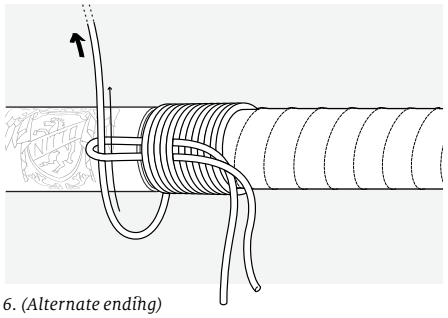

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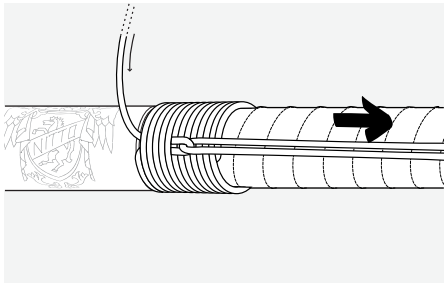

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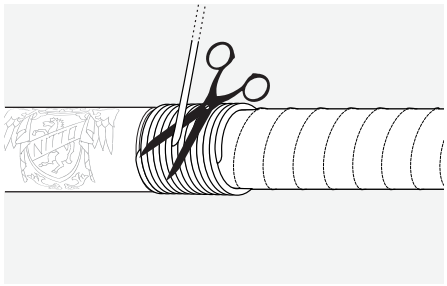
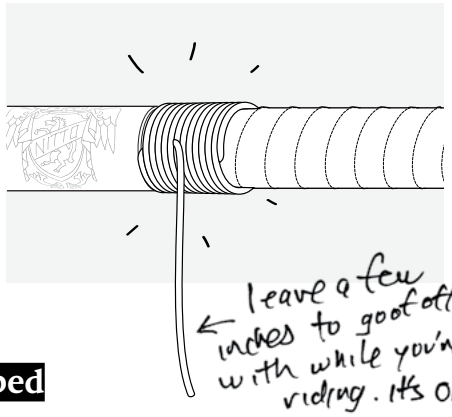
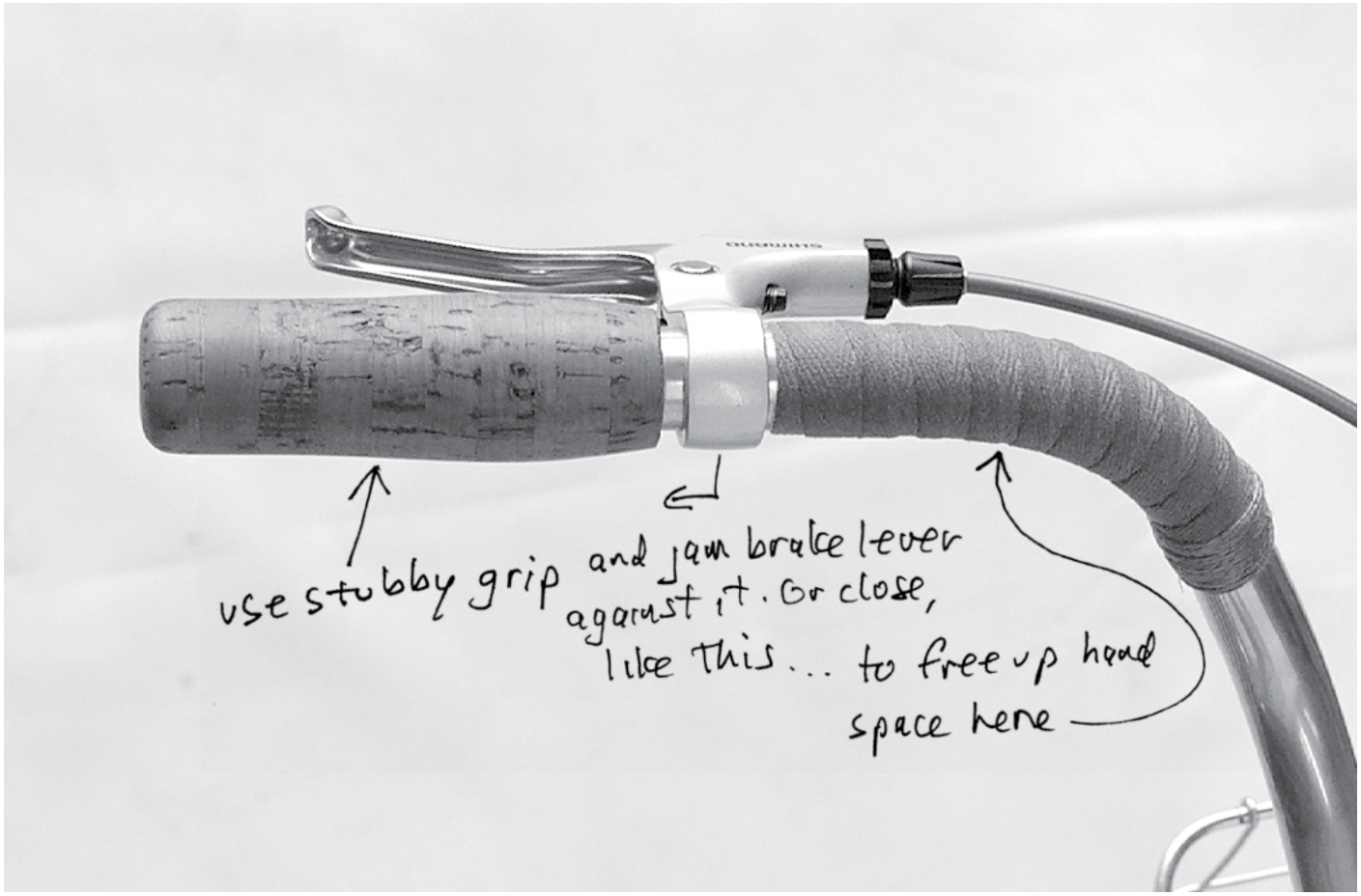


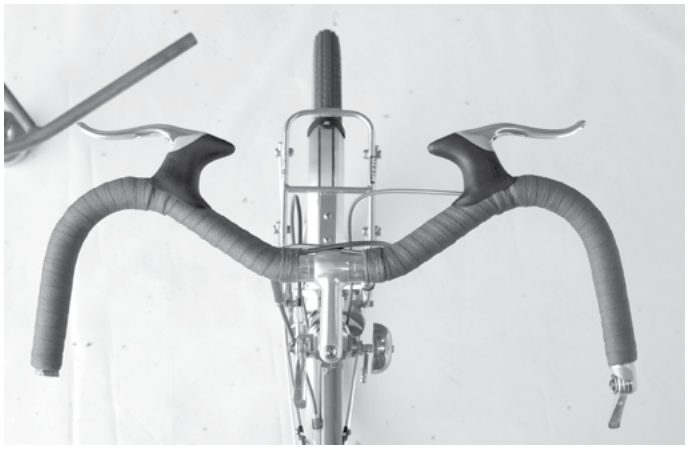
6. (Alternate ending)



Grab cork or twine-wrapped wool felt

On upright bars like the Albatross and Bosco, you need a handgrip. You don't just grab onto metal. Do you want generic rubber molded in China and one of a million identical? Honestly? How unspecial are them? Consider these special cork grips made only for us in Portugal by cork farmers who are losing their wine bottle market to synthetics and screw caps; or 100 percent wool felt partly or fully overwrapped with cloth or twine. Go to town, get creative, have fun.

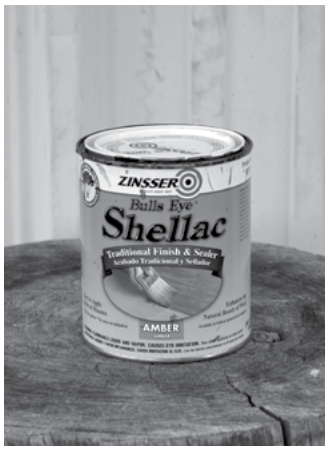




Grab liquified and resolidified bug mausoleums!

Shellac your bar tape & cork grips!

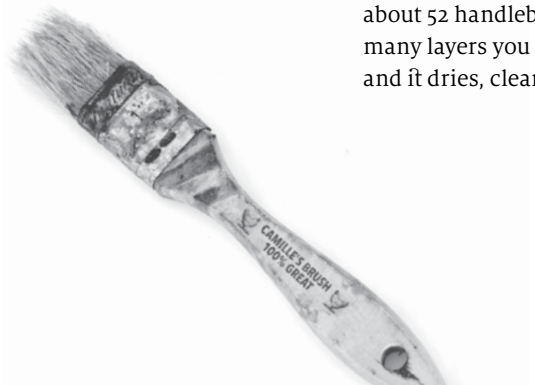
Shellac is bug excrement, but not poop, and it comes from a Latin bug called *Laccifer lacca*. When a lady one is pregnant, she lands on a tree—usually in India—and excretes a goop that flows all over her and hardens into a baby hatching house and her own tomb. She dies, her eggs hatch and the bugs make their way out, and the next thing you know there are hundreds of thousands of empty tombs on the trees, just begging to get knocked off, dissolved in denatured alcohol, put in a can that you can buy for $20 at a paint or hardware store, and eventually make their way onto your handlebar tape or cork grips. Shellac has been used this way for more than sixty years. It increases durability, deepens weak colors, and two to three layers over cloth tape seem to make it grippier for a while, until the bristles get smooth with wear. Applying shellac is easy—just dip the brush and brush it on. Amber shellac is the natural color, and turns blues to olives, white or grey to buckskin, yellow to goldenrodish, bright red to oxblood, and so on. The clear doesn't do much. One can does about 52 handlebars or 260 pairs of cork grips, depending on how many layers you brush on. If you spill or slop it on the frame and it dries, clean it up with denatured alcohol. That's its solvent.



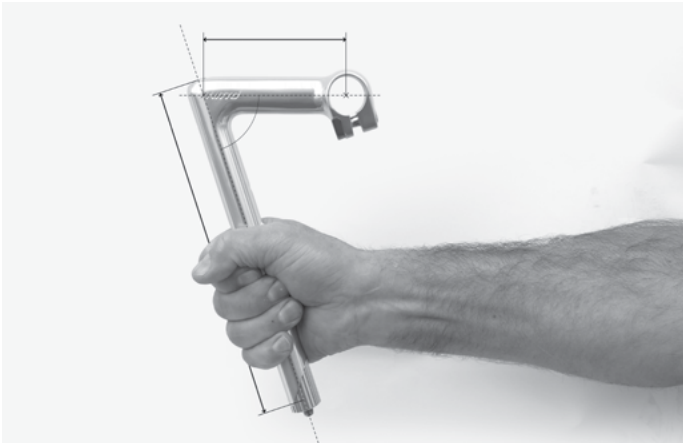
Brush it on the left side, then the right side, then the left again, then the right, and it's over. Cover the underside—it's easy to miss. Do it outside or in the garage, because you will drip.

—

You need a can of shellac and a cheap brush. All paint stores sell both.



Nailing the right size stem...

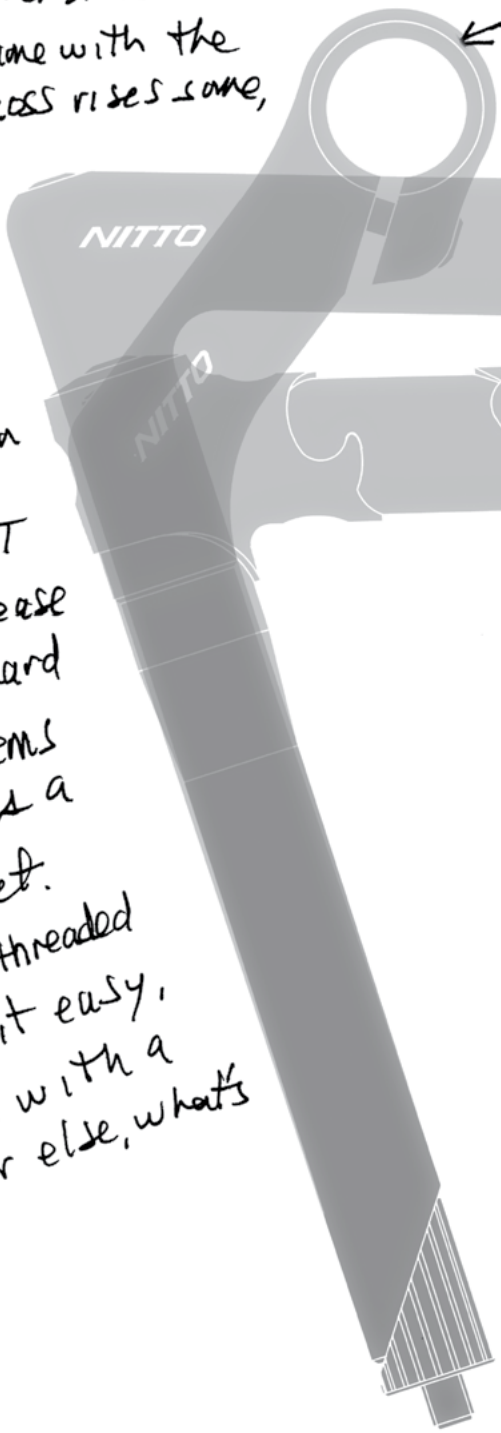


Just because you like an 11cm stem on one road bike doesn't mean you'll like it on another, even if both frames are the same size and have the same length top tube. It also depends on seat tube angle, top tube slope and length, and handlebar style. Also, there's this: When you ride a bike the distance to the handlebar changes constantly and a lot. Climb a hill and the bar gets higher. On a steep hill, maybe three inches! On a descent, the bar gets lower. When you pedal off the seat, you lean foward almost a foot closer to the handlebar. Even sitting down, you slide forward and scooch back, which changes the distance to the handlebar. Your body is rubbery and articulated and adapts remarkably flexibly.

And also: Compare holding your handlebar to being on a medieval rack, the kind controlled by a hand-cranked wheel that somehow attaches indirectly to the board on which the shackles that hold your ankles and wrists are mounted. When the shackles are close, you can bend your knees and elbows to maybe 90-degrees, and except for not being able to escape or swat flies, life is good. When the shackles are spread three inches more apart, your range of motion is less, but your joints are still loose, so you can still shaka the passersby. Another three inches, same thing. But once your arms are straight, every additional half-inch of separation smarts like the devil himself.

The handlebar analogy is: When you're comfortable but on the edge of comfort, a centimeter of change makes a huge difference. When your back and arms and shoulders operate near the center of your exhilaratingly plush and comfortable range, a few inches of change is no big deal.

when you get the bars high enough, small diffs in stem extension don't matter. Are inconsequential!
In general, a Bosco bar can have a lower stem height than other bars because it rises four inches. Got a too-small mtn bike? Put on a Bosco.
Drop bars need higher stems because they don't rise at all. Same with the Albastache. AlbaTROSS rises some, so it does ok with a lower stem.



← DirtDrop stem rises the most.

Tallux is next

even tho the lugged stem rises least of all of ours, by real-world standards, it still jacks the bars way up there.

By far the most influential-thing-in bar comfort is
☞ GRIP HEIGHT

Raise d'bars, increase d'comfort. It's hard to raise bars/stems if your bike has a threadless headset. Quill stems (for threaded headsets) make it easy, but use a stem with a long quill.. or else, what's the point?

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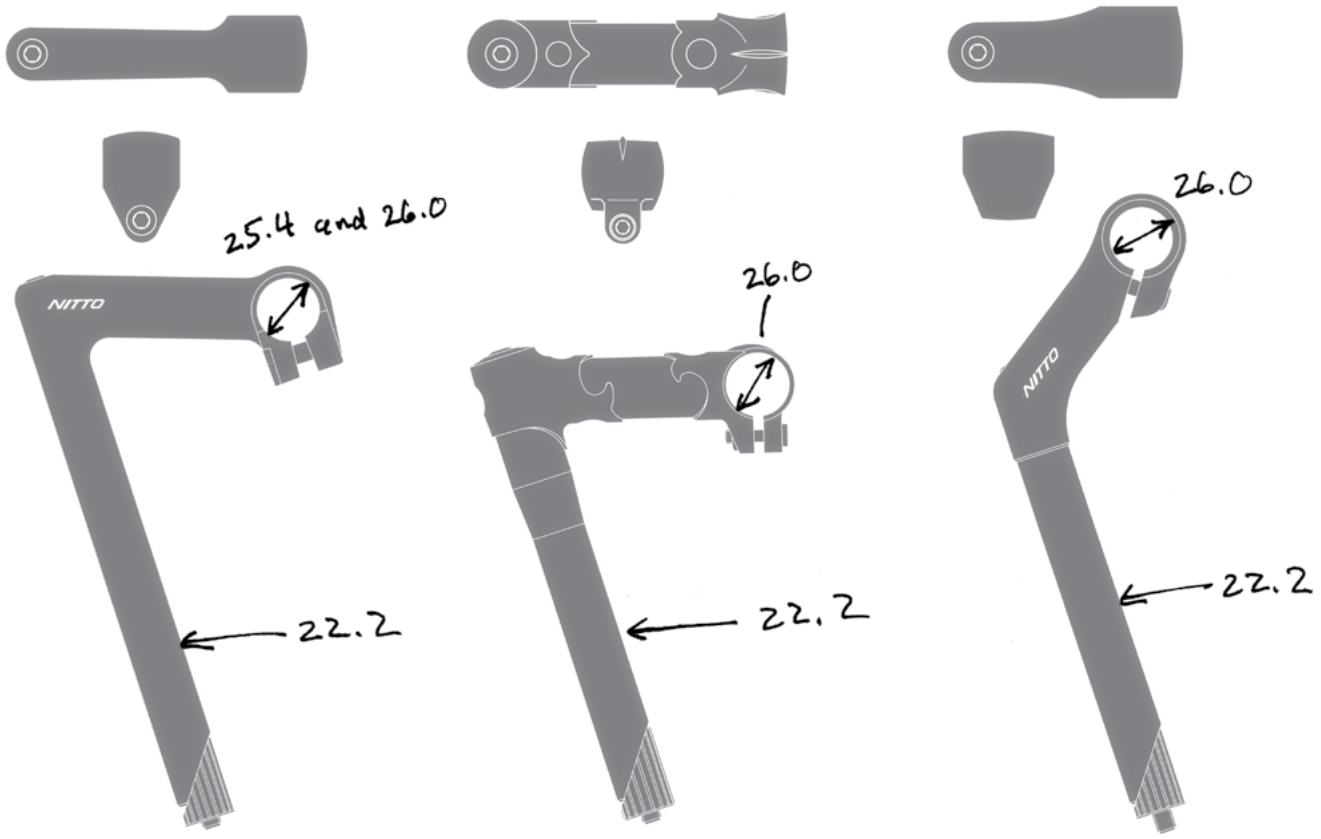


Nitto Tallux *(Japan)*
Classic looks & ten times the classic comfort. This stem is core to all we do and believe about bikes, fit, position, comfort —our icon, our emblem, and the altar before which we genuflect. With only a 6mm hex wrench you can raise or lower your handlebar four and a half inches in less than seven seconds. If your frame is way too small, the Tallux will give you a shot at comfort. If your frame is just a little too small, it will nearly guarantee it. If your frame fits fine, then its main contribution will be loveliness, although you may find yourself raising the bars maximally, anyway. If your head tube is short, you may not be able to slam it down as low as you want...but if you're after low bars, this isn't the stem for you, anyway. It's made for one-inch threaded steer tubes.

Nitto Lugged Stem *(Japan)*
It costs three times as much as other stems that do the job excellently and look good, too, but considering the stem's importance and how much you end up looking at it, the weak U.S. dollar, the high price of some way more crummy stems, the $150 for this lugged one is far from a rip-off.
We get them in once or twice a year, not in big quantities, so there may be a wait.
It's lugged CrMo steel, clad in electroless nickel, the same "dull-bright" finish as other magnificent & magnetic Nitto products.

Nitto DirtDrop *(Japan)*
When not even the Tallux can jack your bars up high enough, get this loading crane. It is perfect for any bike that needs drop bars higher and closer (and was designed for the 1987 drop-bar MB-1), but is equally useful with the Albastache (or especially it's predecessor, the Moustache Handlebar). Dave here sports it on Albatross bars. When close-and-up bars are what the doctor recommends, this will do it. One customer even reversed the short (8cm) one and the bike steers just fine.

Tall rider with long arms, get the 10cm; medium height riders with Moustache H'bars, get the 8cm. Short riders, get the 8cm. The 26mm clamp fits most trad-sized road bars, but not the new fatties.
If your bar is 25.4mm you need shims, and we have them. Make sure the stem bolt is loose, put the shims into the stem (a spot of Super Glue keeps them in place, then slide the bar in).

Easy living with leather

Crotch-&-Butt comfort & netherworld arterial health depend more on a saddle's shape than its material. Leather is cool because it looks the best and comes from a cow—not because it breathes. (Dead skin impregnated with wax and oil can't breathe.) Brooks makes the best leather saddles. There are leather saddles that are 125 percent as comfortable, but they cost as much and last 30 percent as long. They stretch and sag too soon. This may change, but there's a trail of failed Brooks challengers, suggesting that making a good saddle is trickier that it looks.

We've ridden and sold Brooks for nearly two decades, and the models we offer work for almost everybutty.

There are reasons experienced riders grudgingly to happily pay $100 to $200 for a heavy saddle. Some do it just because leather saddles are far and away the best looking saddles out there, but most do it for comfort.

Being leather doesn't guarantee comfort in a saddle any more than a lugged steel bicycle guarantees a comfortable position. There are lots of uncomfortable leather saddles. But it's easy to get a saddle that appeals equally to your bottom, crotch, and aesthetics. A leather saddle looks good partly because all non-leather saddles look like skinny snively noses, always too small for the task of butt support, too skinny to work well for most butts.

To make your Brooks leather saddle last roughly 5x longer than normal:

I. Don't lube it too much or you'll make it stretch and sag. A thimbleful of either Brooks Proofide or Obenauf's Leather Preservative (our favorite) is enough for a whole saddle, top and bottom. Don't use Neatsfoot Oil, Snow Seal, etc. Just Proofide or Obenauf's. Borrow a thimble from your mother to measure.

—

II. Don't ride it wet. Wet leather stretches easily, and if you're a big guy pounding down the road on a saturated saddle, you'll kill it in a few hours. Leather saddles are for year-round riding, but only if you protect them from getting soaked. Plastic bags or saddle covers are necessary for sweaty or rain rides. If it gets wet, let it air dry.

—

III. Don't store your bike outside for weeks at a time in Tuscon in August. A shaved cow wouldn't stand in the sun at all, even with the internal lubrication system the cow has going for it.

IV. If the side flaps start to flare, drill four to six holes in the lower part of each flap and lace them together with a shoe lace or zip ties.

—

V. The best tip ever, but it takes some creativity: Stuff the empty space between the rails and leather with firm foam or something else, so the leather is supported from underneath. This is great stretch-prevention, but most people wait until the saddle is already swayback ed. Stuffing and lacing can resurrect a wrecked saddle. You're on your own sourcing the foam. It's not special magic foam. Anything firm works fine.

—

VI. Fenders and to a lesser extent saddlebags and some racks keep road spray off the underside of the saddle.

A leather saddle requires more care than a plastic one, but if you follow these tips and weigh less than 220 pounds and own a few bikes that can share the load, a Brooks will at last least five to twenty years. It depends on you, the cow, preventing damage in the first place, and weather. It's a crapshoot.

What to look for in a bike seat

1. Enough width
The sitting part should be wide enough to support your sit bones. The Brooks B.17 is about 6.7 inches wide, which seems to be about minimum width for most riders. Most racing saddles are 6 inches, but racers are light and lean over and pedal hard all the time, and all those things reduce pressure on the soft spots. For a normal rider a wider saddle is better.

Narrow ⟶ 14cm to 16cm wide.
Medium ⟶ Right around 17cm wide.
Wide ⟶ 18cm and wider.

2. A flattish rear...
...so your sit bones don't slide off and exert upward pressure on your arteries. The B.17 is flat enough. The old Concor, Turbos, and Unicanitors were rounded. Most modern saddles are flattish, good.

3. A higher rear than middle
When the back of the saddle is higher than the middle, it takes weight off your plumbing, Ideally, the saddle will be this way without nosing the whole thing down. That just makes you slide forward and puts more weight on your hands.

B.17 flyer with copper rivets

Brooks B.17 *(UK)*
Brooks has made the B.17 for more than a century, and it used to be the only saddle we offered because it works for nineteen in twenty men and seven in ten women. It's as hard as a wooden park bench when new, and like a bench, the shape is so good it works even hard. Unlike the bench, with time and use it'll soften and conform so you feel even better, though even at its best it's no bench. There are many B.17 variants, all similar. TRIVIA: There are more benches in the world (780 million) than there are B.17s (374,000).

We stock these:

› **Standard:** Small silver rivets, no carved (tapered) lower edge flap. Black rails w/black or brown leather.

› **Special:** 13mm hand-hammered copper rivets, skived flap, copper rails, honey brown only.

› **Select:** Organic and thick pale leather. Should last longer, no difference in comfort. Darkens with exposure to methane.

B.17 standard w steel rivets

B.17 special with copper rivets

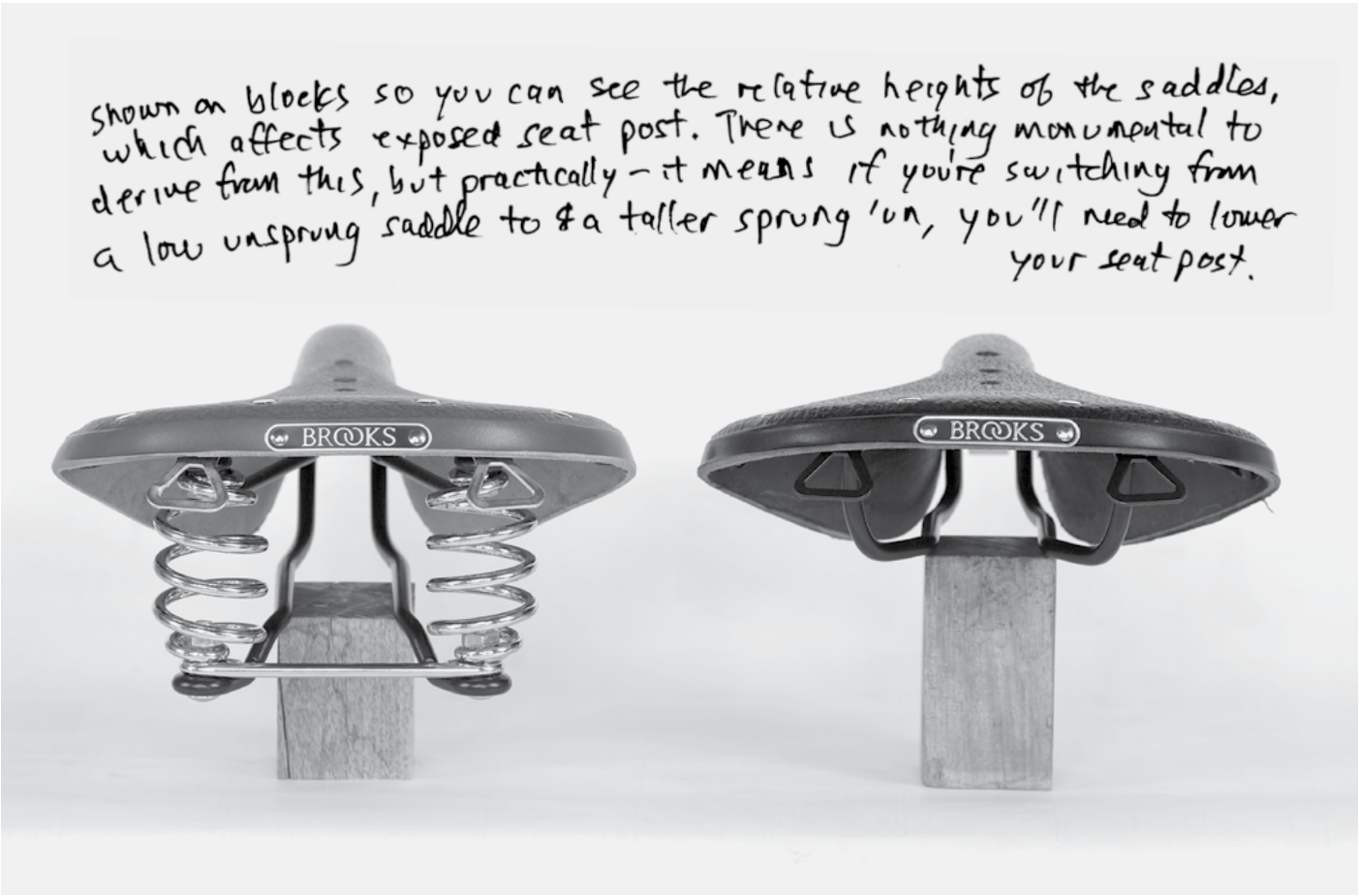
B.17 flyer with copper rivets

B.17s (snubnose)

B.17 standard w steel rivets, special with copper rivets

Left: B.17 regular; right: B.17s (snubnose)

B.67 standard honey and B.68s black

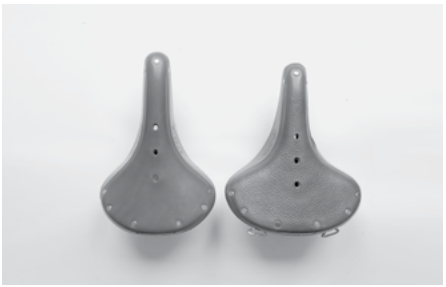


B.67 standard

B68s

B.68s black and B.67 standard honey

B.17 standard and B.67



Brooks B.67 & B.68 *(UK)*

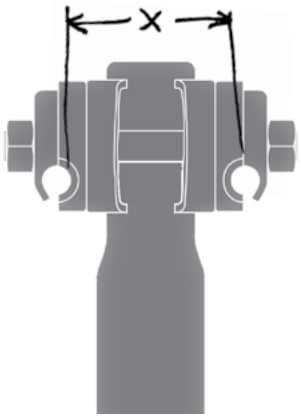
Two models designed more than a century ago when seat tube angles were commonly 66° to 68°, or five to seven degrees shallower than they are now. Both are a hair under eight inches wide, so an inch and a quarter wider than the B.17, which in theory is better for straight-up pedaling, although most riders do fine with a B.17 sitting that way, anyway.

These two are wide close to the nose, so if you scoot back far on the saddle, the wide part gently presses into your rear thighs. So either ride a bike with a seat tube angle less than 72-degrees or use a seat post with tons of set-back, like our Lugger. Either solution moves the saddle back more behind the crank, lessening the need to try to force your bottom way back on the saddle to achieve a relaxed perch. The B.67's stiff springs suggest more bounce than they provide, especially if you weigh less than fifteen stone. If you're down around eleven, forget it. The springs probably help more if you're heavy and pedaling a long stretch of flat bumpy road sitting down. They were no doubt popular among the Birmingham coal miners way back then. But on most modern roads, springs have more style than bounce, and they confound saddlebag mounting. In 2015 Brooks may reconfigure the rails on these to make them better with modern seat tube angles. All they'd need to do is extend the parallel rails an inch forward. This is our open suggestion to Brooks, who might not read this. If you're ever eating lunch with a Brooks guy, suggest they move the parallel section of the rails about an inch and a half toward the nose. Thanks.

1.

"You never actually own a Nitto seat post... you merely look after it for the next generation."

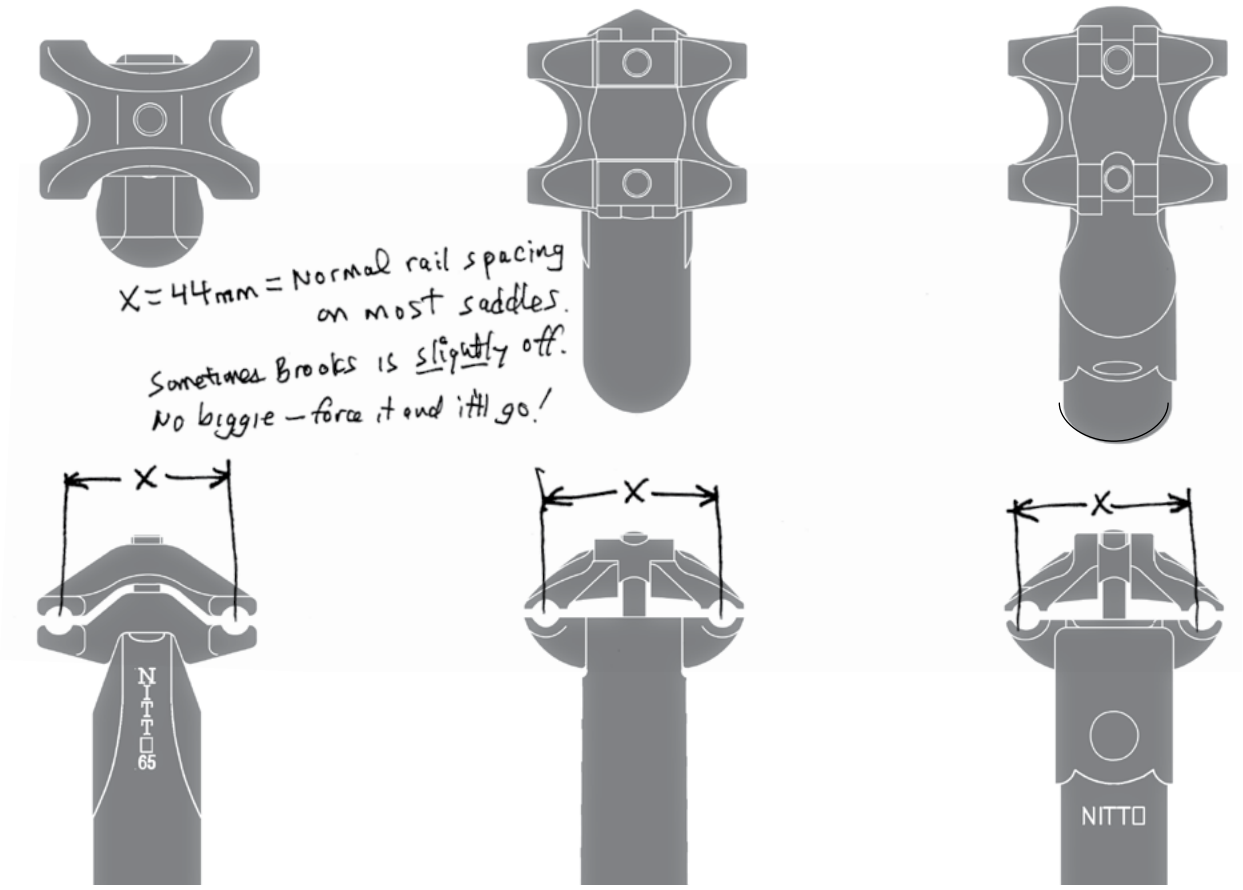
—Phil Patek



Rivendell Bicycle Works

1. Nitto Humble Post *(Japan)*
This is a cheap *style* post without the cheapness. It's the kind bike books and bike people used to warn you not to get, until eventually no good bikes came with them. But this one grabs and holds. It's kind of a hassle to mount a saddle to it. It's takes up to four hands, two of which should have strong fingers, and the patience of a Buddha. Nobody has failed yet, so don't return this saying it can't be done. It can be, we've done it, and you can, too. Not everything's easy.

2.



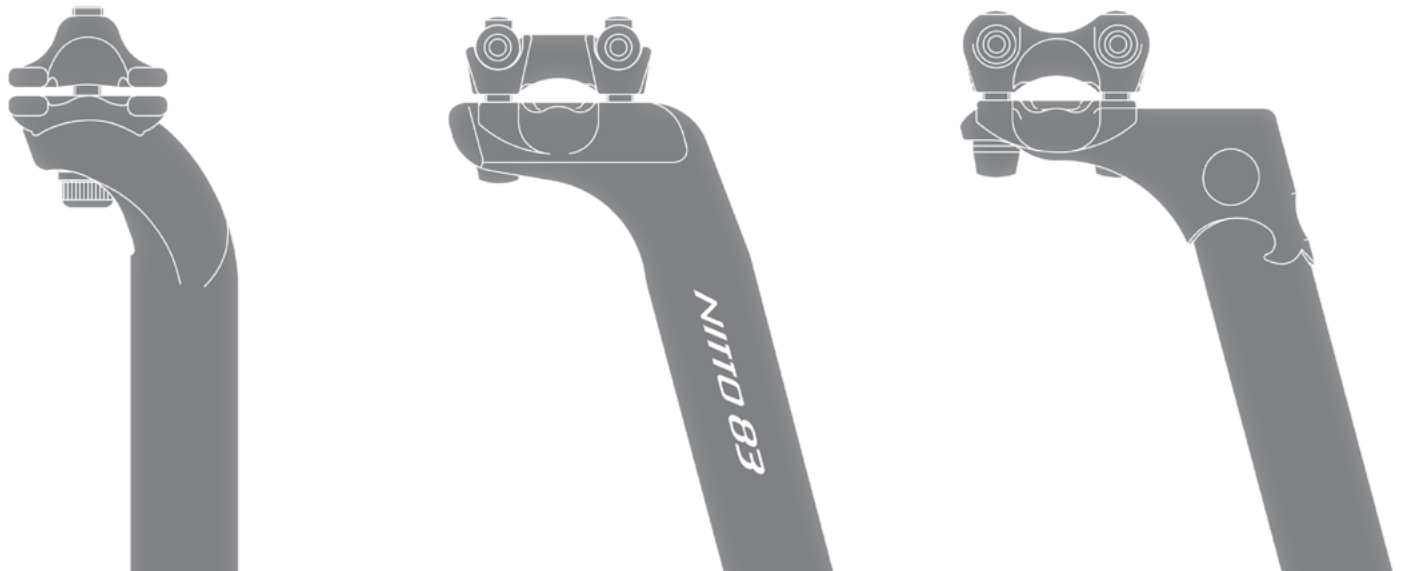
2. Crystal Fellow *(Japan)*
It's been the standard Nitto super-post for decades. Slightly lighter than the S-83, and more than enough post for road riding at weights under about 13st.

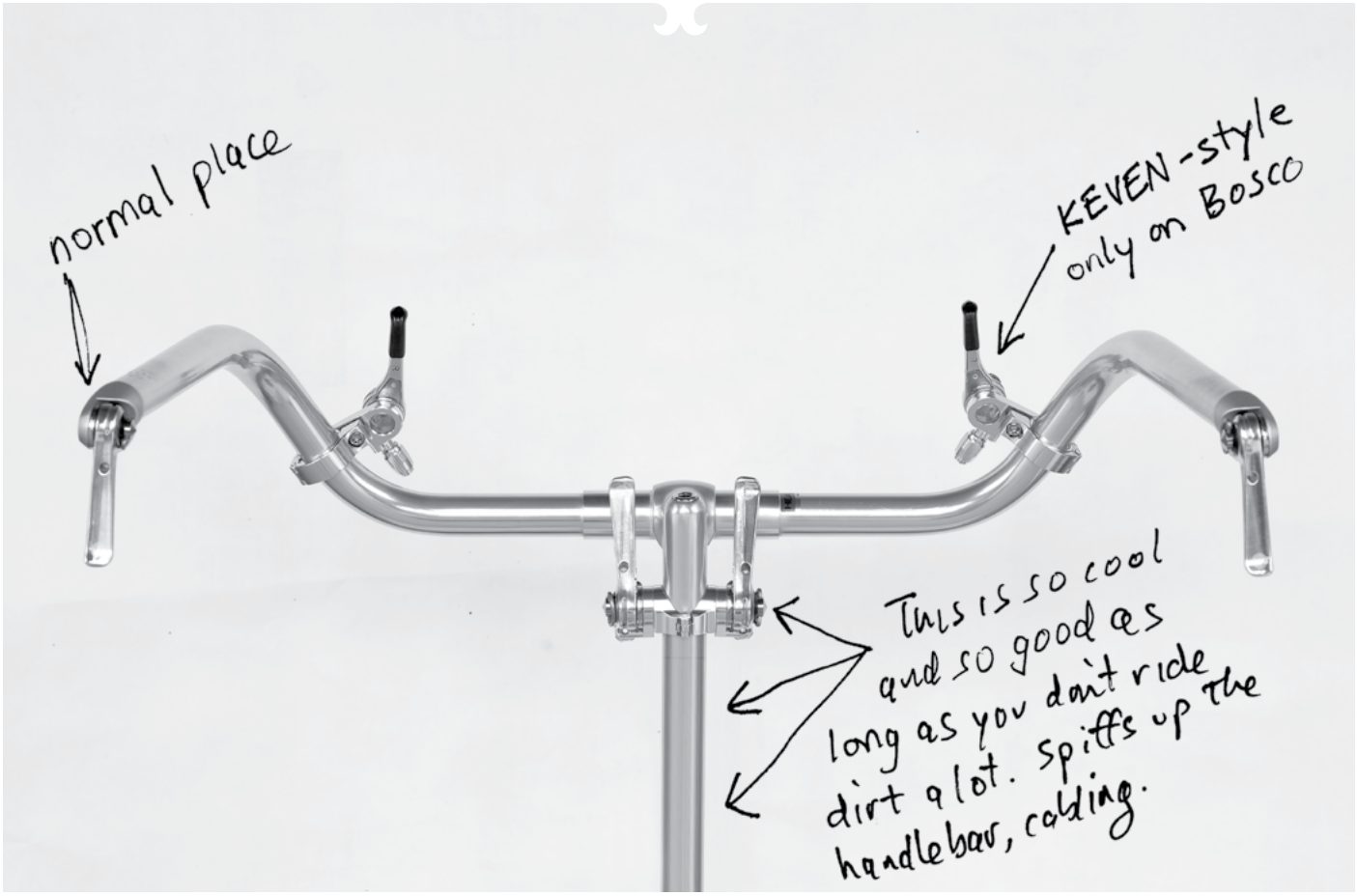
3.

3. Nitto S-83, Frog *(Japan)*
Two rail-clamping bolts make this post great for riders 15 stone and up. It works as well for lightweights who plan on gaining several stone in the coming years.

4.

4. Nitto Lugged Seat Post *(Japan)*
There have been "wayback" posts in the past that let you sit back more, but they all broke or were ugly. So we pitched Nitto the idea of a lugged one, and they knocked it out of the park with this one. It thrusts the saddle rearward almost 20mm/three quarters of an inch more than any other Nitto post. It's plated in electroless nickel for supreme resistance to corrosion, but if a small spot of rust appears down the road, it's all part of the charm. For rearward sitters, this is the best seat post ever made, and is the best choice in the world for a B.67 or B.68 saddle. It's neither tank nor fairy, but especially not fairy. 250mm long x 27.2mm x 2 bolts x 120z.





Shifting

Modern riders tend to shift whenever the road gradient changes by two percent. They're told to. But another way to think of shifting is as a last resort, after pedaling a little harder or a little faster. The idea of constantly shifting to maintain a cadence of 95 to 100 rpms...is a racer's baggage, makes no sense for Unracers and hobos. When you pedal without thinking about cadence, you'll end up at 60 to 80 rpms. Just don't shoot for a particular cadence.
If you grunt a little more, great—it's good for your muscles. If you spin a little faster, no harm—you look a bit silly, but who cares? Find what works and stay flexible, and smash your cadence monitor.

Friction shifting in an indexing world

—

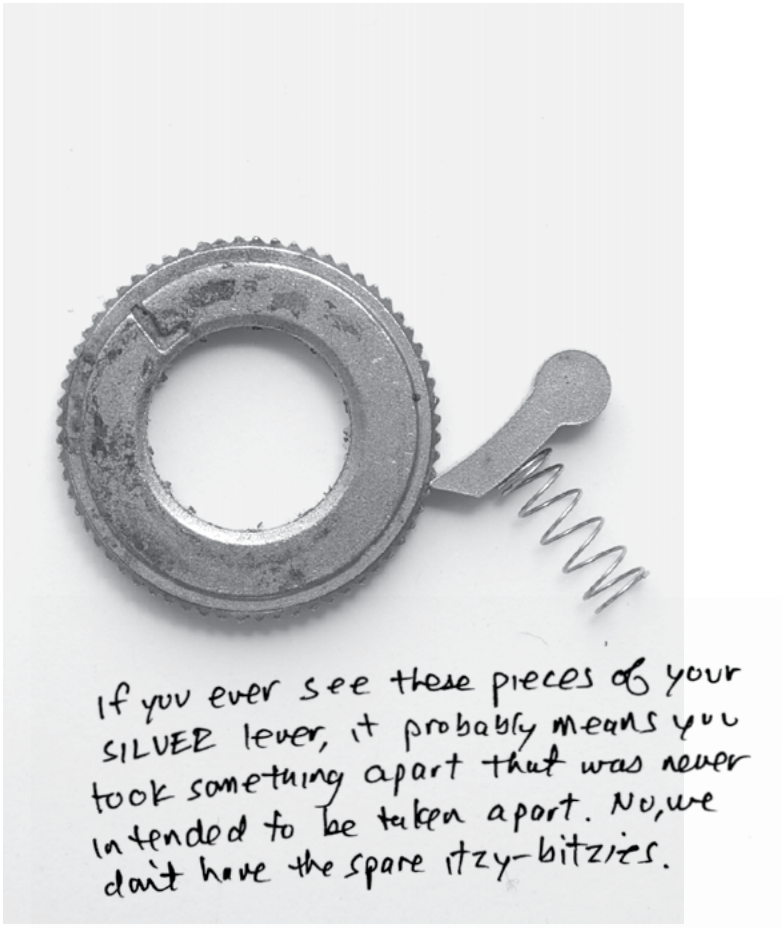
Friction shifting is shifting without controlled click-stops in the shifter. It's you-dependent, rather than (as is the case with indexing), design-dependent. Indexing took over in 1986, and most bike riders who started riding after that have never shifted any other way. That's not a crying shame, but it is half a shame in the same way that not knowing how to operate a manual can-opener or tie a shoelace is.

—

Until 1985 everybody friction-shifted. Now and then somebody would forget to trim the gear and they'd ride with the chain a bit off, and sometimes you have to tighten the wingbolt that keeps the lever from slipping, but it's so easy. There is a learning curve, and given the choice of a learning curve or instant success, 9,999 people out of 10,000 will take the latter. We're here to suggest that you at least try shifting in friction (non-indexed).

—

You will need a shifter with a friction mode, and no modern, integrated shifters have that. The only friction-optional shifters Shimano makes are the bar-ends, which allow you to flip from indexed to friction in one second.
The Silver shifters are our own doing, and don't even give you an indexed option. They force you to man-up, but man, are they smooth and easy.



A short history on and effusive praise of the power ratchet

The best shifting mechanism of all time has to be SunTour's Power Ratchet, first inserted into cheap mountain bike shifters in the late '70s. It lets you set the wind-up tension light without the shifter slipping under the tension of the derailer springs. In those pre-index years this was huge, because until then you had to balance the tension between too hard to pull and too weak to prevent the derailer from shifting by itself. The power ratchet fixed that.
Then in 1986 SunTour introduced a new, improved version with a lighter action, and used it in its Sprint and Superbe Pro models—a finer-toothed power ratchet that should have made the epoch. It made moving a shift lever feel as smooth, light, and precise as advancing the film on a '70s Japanese rangefinder. Indexing feels clunky in comparison, but a year later this superb refinement was unceremoniously killed by indexing, which promised first timers success without skill, no learning required. In exchange, it required (and still does) a perfect shifting environment, more maintenance, and is still less reliable, noisier, and clunkier.
So there was SunTour with this perfect shifter and awful timing.

In 1996 we bought about three hundred shifters, ten-year-old leftovers, and ran out in 2000. We asked SunTour to make them again, but by that time SunTour had shifted gears to suspension forks. They did, however, agree to assist Dia-Compe with the small parts sourcing and technical stuff that a brake maker wouldn't automatically know, and so the Silver shifter was born—with the exact mechanism we've been raving about here.
Our timing is no better than SunTour's was in 1986, but our needs are smaller and we have a generally better-educated pool of customers. So for more than a decade it has been our most popular shifter.
Like any non-indexed shifter, the Silver requires skill, but my youngest daughter mastered it in a few days when she was eight, with no coaching or strife. You will learn faster than she did, and great things will follow. You'll shift more quietly.
You won't have to match drivetrain parts. You can put it on any bike and shift away. It gives you more control, and is more satisfying to use. We can't guarantee you'll love them as much as we and thousands of others do, but Silver shifters are really, really good shifters. So are the Shimanos and Microshifts. They're all good, man.

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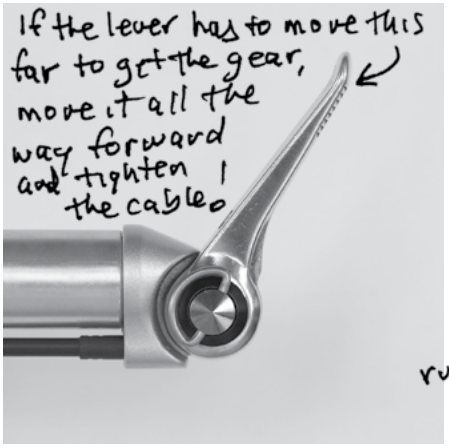

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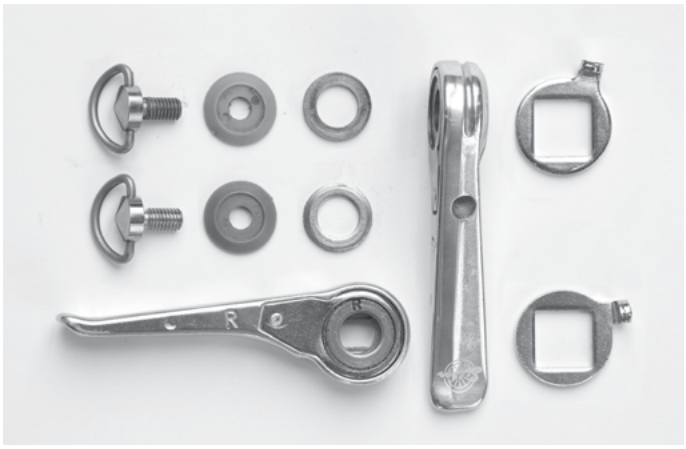


5.

Silver shifters. How to buy them

If our pro-Silver/power ratchet diatribe doesn't have you convinced, please read it again. If it does, here are your options:

1. Silver Bar-end shifters *(Taiwan)*
Down-tube shifters plus bar-end pods. You mount the pods into the end of any handlebar with an opening 18.9mm or bigger. These work great, and are the most common way to shift Silver shifters. Left & right. Buy cables separately.

2. Silver Thumbshifters *(Taiwan)*
These are modified Silver downtube shifters (shortened and with rublastic covers) mounted on Soma thumbshifter mounts. You can't buy the thumby mounts separately, because we can't. Left & right. Cables are extra.

3. Silver stem-shifters mount *(Taiwan)*
In the old days most snobby riders regarded stem shifters with disdain, suitable only for rookies and cheap bikes and rookies and cheap bikes and more rookies and more cheap bikes. But we've seen the light, and we adore these ones. If you don't have to shift constantly in traffic, they're a great way to go. Easy. B*oom!* This mount (it's a mount only, no shifters) fits any stem with a with a 22.2mm diameter quill, and turns Silver downtubers into stemmers. Boom. Left & right. Boom. Boom. You've shifted!

4. Silver Down-tube shifters *(Taiwan)*
Just the shifters and hardware required to mount them onto conventional down-tube shifter bosses. Got a half-decent, not-too-ancient made-of-metal road bike that already has or used to have direct-mount down-tube shifters? These can replace them. Left & right.

5. Silver bar-end shifter pods *(Taiwan)*
These fit into the ends of most drops, Albatross, Bosco, Albastache and Moustache Handlebars—or any bar with an opening of 18.898989mm or a bit more. Then you mount the Downtubers and you've got Barenders. In any case, the price of the downtube shifter kit plus the bar-ends is the same as the Bar-end shifter kit.
We don't jab it to you for buying separately.

6.

7.

8.

Learn to shift

—

A. Find a flat, open area and pedal any cadence, and every two or three seconds, shift across the full range of cogs. Up and down, up and down, idiotically. Shift like there's no tomorrow, or like you don't know when you're supposed to shift.
B. *Try* to mis-shift. If you succeed you'll hear the chain clicking and clacking between adjacent cogs. Once you do that, either push it back the way it came, or push it more the other way, until you're perfectly in a gear. That's called "trim-ming." Why try to mis-shift? To see how hard it is to mess up.

You'll find it's a lot easier to hit the gear than to miss it; and if you miss, it's easy to correct. You'll master it within a week, and keep your skills forever.

Shifting on hills

—

Shift before you start grunting. But if you forget and are grinding up in too hard of a gear and need to shift:
A. Point your bike across the road to lessen the slope.
B. Pedal hard for a stroke to get up a small bit of speed.
C. Pedal lightly & shift.

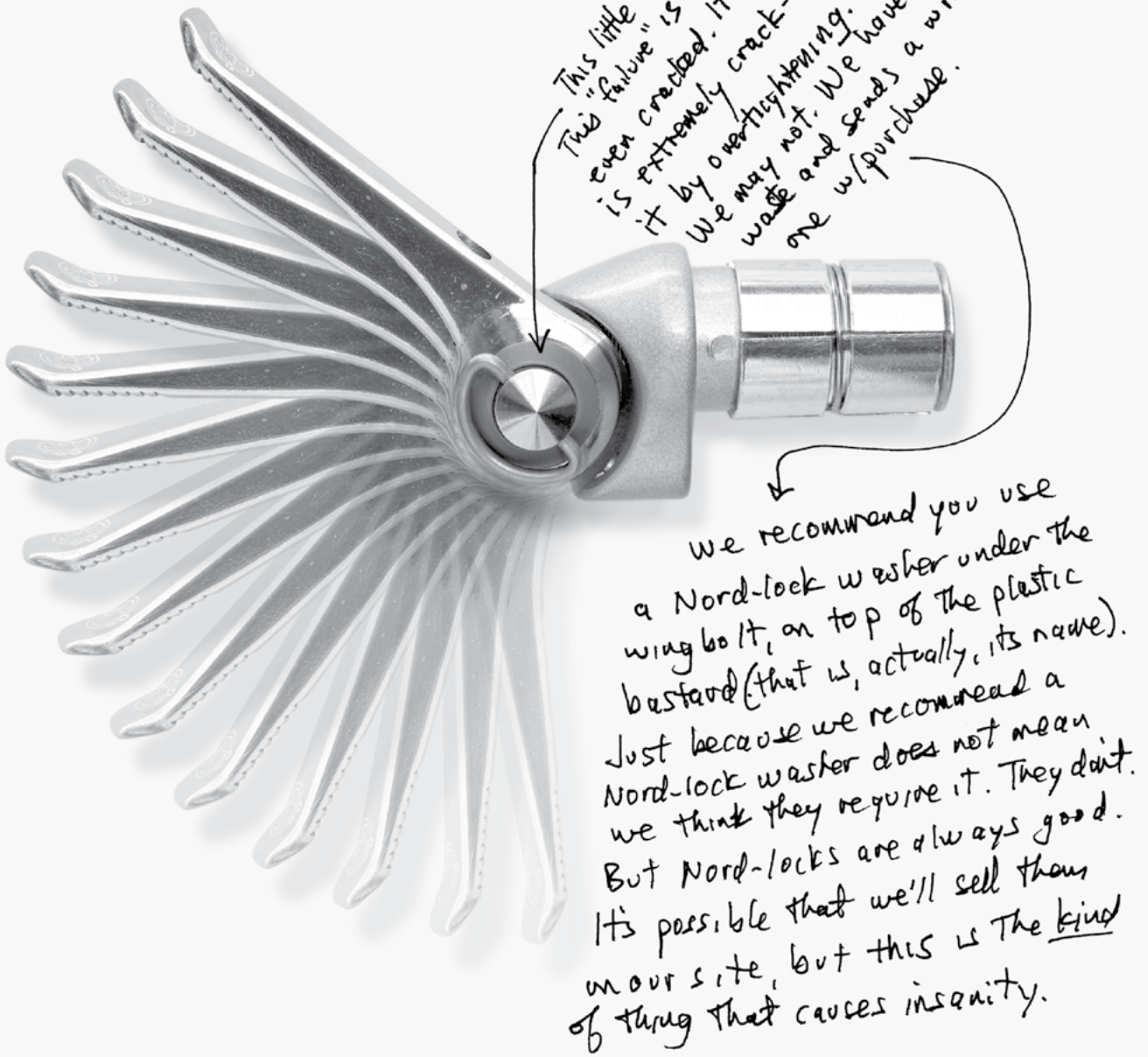
With indexed shifting you can just grind up the hill like an ox and shift late successfully skilllessly. For racing, it may be an advantage to shift brainlessly, but outside of racing, friction is a good way to go, because it works and it is fun.

Other bar ends

6. Shimano Bar-End Shifters
8 or 9sp (Japan)
Shimano's best bar-end shifters, indexable with 8- or 9-speed cassettes, and with a friction mode, too. If later you want Silver shifters, just remove these and bolt the Silver downtubers onto the Shimano pods. Great for touring, commuting, anything, and they also convert to thumb-shifters when you mount them onto Paul's Thumb-ies. Get them if you want indexing, and they have a friction option, too. The fric-tion isn't as camera-like as Silvers, but it works great forerver, no problem. A pair.

7. Microshift Bar-End Shifters *(Taiwan)*
Microshift is a Taiwan shifter-derailer maker, top quality, and we're delighted to offer this single left/front shifter that works equally well on the right, since it doesn't index. I/Grant have been using these for more than a year, and they're as good as any. If you want just one shifter, it's the way to go. Two on a bike is fine, too. Requires a 4mm hex to snug.
Sold singly, no cables or nothin'. You get what you see in this photo minus cable housing and handlbar.

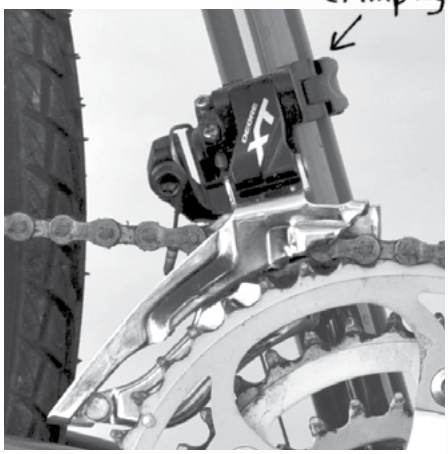
8. Downtube Cable Stops *(Japan)*
They fit over downtube shifter bosses to hold the housing. Usually made by Shimano, but you'll get what we can get.


plastic
This little bastard can be broken if you overtighten.
This "failure" is not a catastrophe. It serves a function
even created. It is replaceable. The latest compound
is extremely crack-resistant, but strong men can break
it by overtightening. We may include a spare.
We may not. We have spares, but it seems a
waste and sends a wrong message to include
one w/purchase.
We recommend you use
a Nord-lock washer under the
wing bolt, on top of the plastic
bastard (that is, actually, its name).
Just because we recommend a
Nord-lock washer does not mean
we think they require it. They don't.
But Nord-locks are always good.
It's possible that we'll sell them
on our site, but this is the kind
of thing that causes insanity.

Frank Lee, you shift too much, but don't feel bad—we all do.

—

Frequent shifting makes sense only if you buy the notion of maintaining a steady pedal cadence over changing terrain. Racers do it, because they have to be as efficient as possible, and are always squeezing every last drop out of their muscles and fuel. That's a curse, not a model. If you ride Unracerly — for fun and health and transportation—look at cadence and shifting differently. Your first shift should be with your legs, not your fingers. You will automatically shift when pedaling gets too hard or too easy. Let your cadence vary. Don't get hung up on the notions of "too fast" and "too slow" or "inefficient" pedaling cadences. Your body will tell you when to shift, the same as it tells you when to wear mittens, sunglasses, boots, or flip flops.



Brazed-on front derailers: one of the all-time worst ideas *(in bikes)*

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Brazed-on front derailers are almost always positioned for 50-to-55t chainrings, so they force too-high gears on you. Big chainrings for Unracers shouldn't have more than 48 teeth, and even that's pushing it. Clamp-on front derailers let you pick your chainrings willy-nilly.

Ligatures combine 2 letters into 1 when without doing that, they'd slightly collide, or just for the sake of efficiency in handwriting. Cursive writing has something in common with ligatures in that way. Google it or otherwise do further research if you're interested, but our point in bringing them up here is to acknowledge that this catalogue is rife with them, and they may take some getting used to. We had the option of no ligatures, but opted to keep 'em.

The typeface is MILO, designed by MIKE ABBINK. With or without the ligatures, it's a good-looking typeface. The catalogue was designed and largely photographed by Olivier Chételat, who also suggested final additions be by hand.

Shimano's XT rear derailer is great, but big makers are gearing up for 10-11 speed casettes now, and it's possible that some future version of this fine mechanism be incompatible with the 8/9 speed cassettes we like. Our site has the latest info, or you can call.

All you need to know 'bout rear derailers

ligatures

They move the chain from cog to cog, taking up or releasing chain links as needed as the chain wraps around bigger or smaller cogs and chainrings. How well they do that depends on design —the dimensions of the cage, placement of the pivots, and relative position of the pulleys to the cage and to each other. Once that's settled, the maker can make cheap derailers that work as well as expensive ones, the same way that cheap spoons work as well as Tiffany spoons. The expensive ones are lighter and better finished and made with better materials, but cheapies offer better shifting per buck and are never a bad deal.

Long cage derailers take up more chain slack than short-cagers, so they are better for wide-range gearing in front and back. ("Wide range?" It's all tooth-count. Subtract the small chainring from the big and call the difference X. Then subtract the small rear cog from the big and call it Y. If X+Y is 34 or bigger, that's "wide range" and requires a long cage rear derailer.) Some Shimano cheap derailers have huge pulleys that wrap more chain, so the cage doesn't have to be as long to take up the slack. Smart! But Shimano introduced it at the low-end, and never trickles technology upward, only down. Too bad. It allows a shorter, less dangly and vulnerable derailer cage and I think they look cool, once you see the function behind them.

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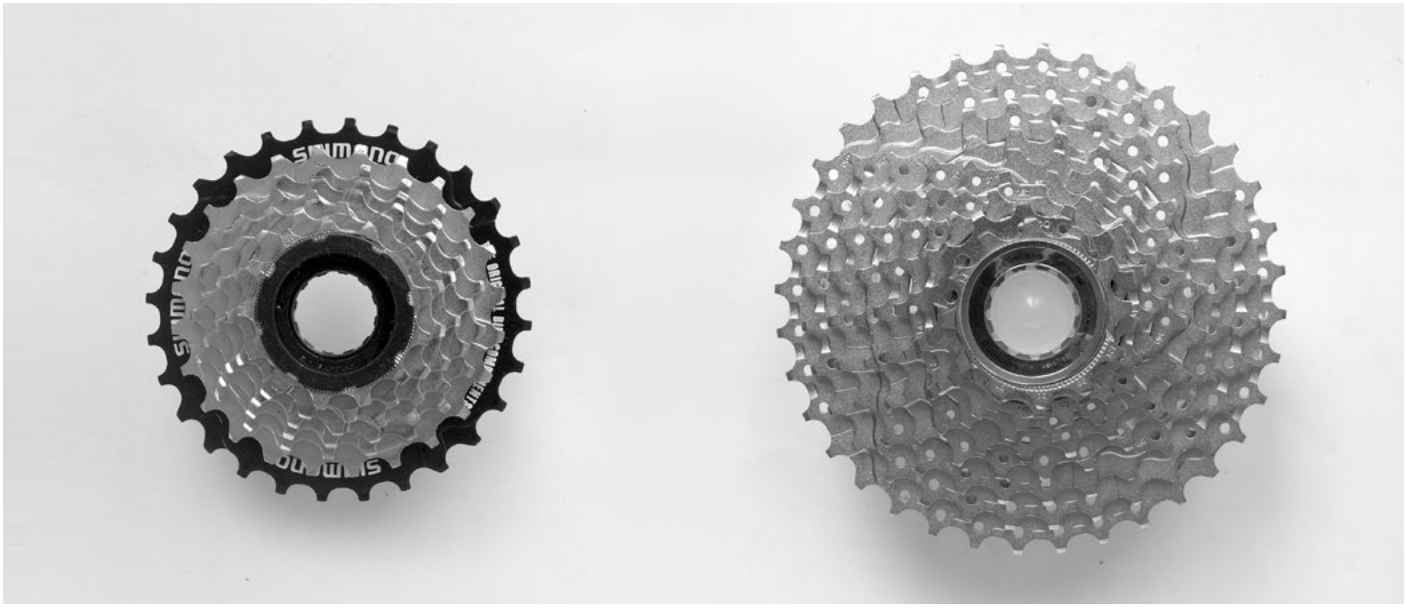

1. Freewheels—*to keep ancient bikes alive*
The best reason to ride a freewheel is a bike that requires one. We have 6sp and 7sp freewheels, ratios to 28t and 32t. Generally Shimano, but now and then an IRD.
They're all fine. Check online for what we actually have in stock. If you're starting from scratch, go with a cassette.

2. Cassettes—*the smarter way to add rear gears*
Cassettes are the rear gears that slide onto a splined rear hub. We stock 8- and 9-speed cassettes by SRAM, Shimano or IRD, and are slightly partial to IRD models, mainly because we got to pick the cogs on 'em, so you can bet they're super-smart. See the website for the current selection, and if we're out of the IRD, don't fret, just get one of the others, good enough.

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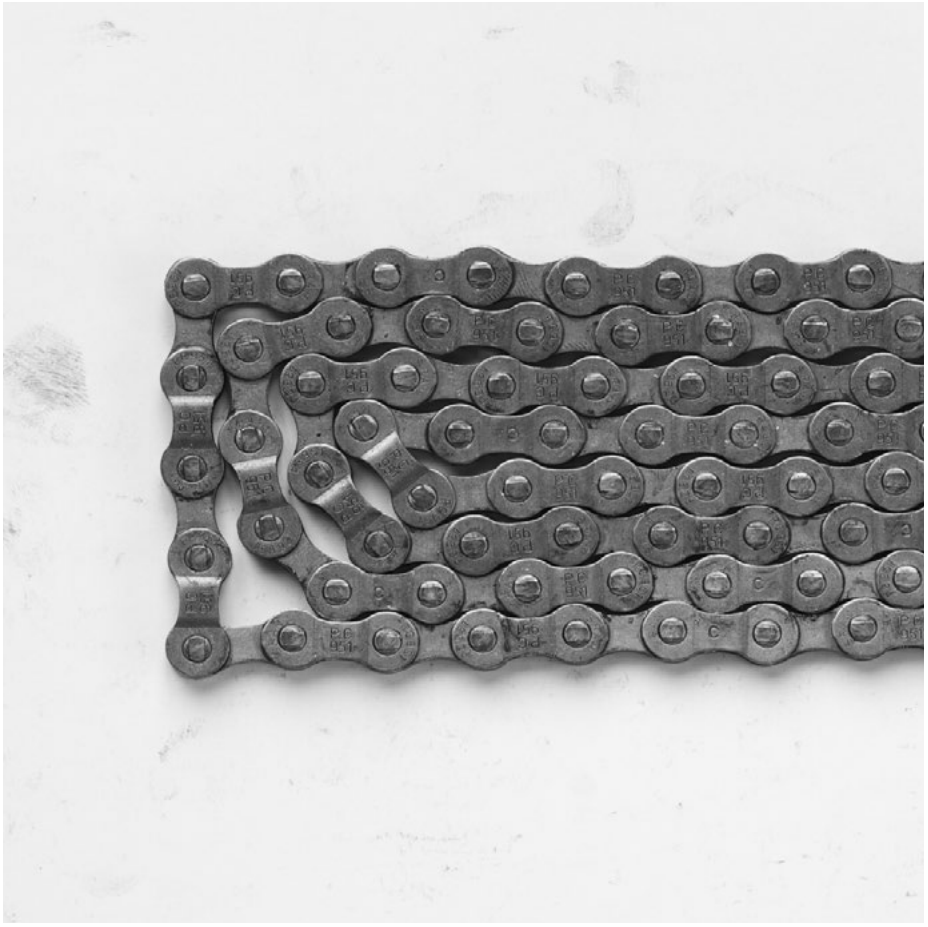

3. Chains *(Portugal & Germany)*
We carry chains to fit eight and 9-speed cassettes. The eight-speeder chains also work with six- and seven-speed gears. They come from a variety of makers (Shimano, SRAM, IRD) and now and then a Wippperman. They're all fungible, except the German Wippperman. It's the best, costs the most, and seems to last about twice as long, which makes the $80+ cost more swallowable.

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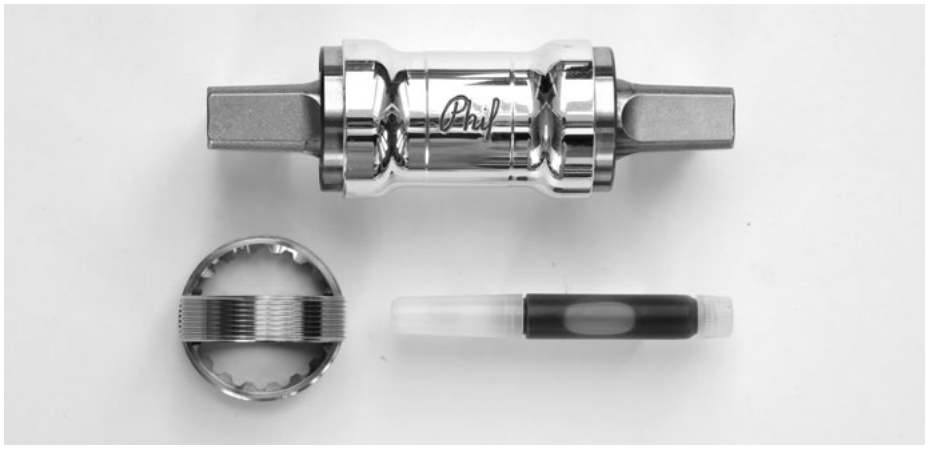

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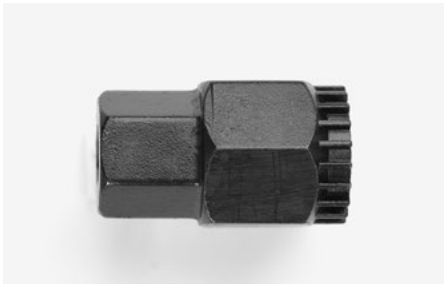

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4. Cartridge Bottom Brackets *(Singapore)*
for Sugino cranks
Made by Tange, Shimano, or IRD. They're smooth, sealed, trouble-free, and both the 107mm and 110mm are ideal for the XD-2 crank. Is it as luscious as a Phil? Of course not, but most riders get at least 10,000 miles out of it, and twice that is common. What a deal.

5. BB Tool *(USA)*
for the above bottom brackets
It fits into the recessed splines of the Shimano and Tange bottom brackets we sell, so you can work on them yourself. You'll need a big adjustable or socket wrench.

6. Phil Wood BB & rings *(USA)*
Phil has been at the top of the bottom bracket heap for more than thirty years, and has always been a better bottom bracket than mortal pedalers require. It's a simple design using the best materials and the best bearings. We stock the square taper models in 108, 119, 123, but can get anything Phil makes.
Got a Sugino XD crank? Get a Phil 108mm. Buy the retaining rings separately, to match your frame's bb threads: British rings for American and Japanese and most non-Italian frames, and although we can get you French or Swiss rings, too, we'd really super rather not. The rings come with Phil's version of locktite.

7. Phil Ring tool *(USA)*
The Phil rings won't thread in by hand, so get this tool and put a big wrench on it. Two makes it easier and when we do it here we use two, but a cheapskate home mechanic can do fine with one.
With instructions.

8. Boeshield anti-rust spray & chain lube *(USA)*
1. Spray it inside steel frame tubes, and it forms an unsmelly waxy coating that prevents rust. Works great.
2. It's our favorite chain lube: Shift to a middle rear cog. Turn the crank backward, spraying the chain on the cassette, so it doesn't get all over. It takes forty sec. max.

Crank design and gearing

1. The least incredibly helpful feature on modern road cranks is their huge chainrings. Instead of 53t/52t big rings and 42t/39t inner rings, try something like 46t/44t big rings and 36t/34t inners. Skip over the 50t rings, even. The smaller rings are better for anybody who doesn't race. For hills & dirt, add a 24t or 26t inner ring. Combine them with a 28t to 34t cassette, and you're ready for anything.

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2. The small big and middle rings give a lower gear, so you stay in them longer before shifting to the granny, and when you go to the granny (the inner ring on a triple), it's low enough.

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3. A 30t inner ring on a triple is nutso. "Racing triples" were a bad idea from the start, and will likely die soon. The makers do it because the front derailer's capacity is 22t (52 minus 30), and they feel market pressure to use the 52.

4. The media sometimes calls square-taper cranks obsolete, old-fashioned, inferior. Bullshit. They were standard on decent bikes for more than fifty years, and nobody squawked. The newer, external-bearing bottom brackets are mainly for super heavy riders, but if you're less than a 250-pound high mileage, hill-attacking, city-limit-sign-spurning monster, you won't be held back by a square taper. This isn't a knock on the external bearing type. Those are clever, groovy. But their existence doesn't make square-taper worse, or a worse choice.

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5. Mountain bike cranks are too wide (Q-Factor is too high), because crank makers want to accommodate all frames, even poorly designed ones that are often way too wide for reasonable cranks.

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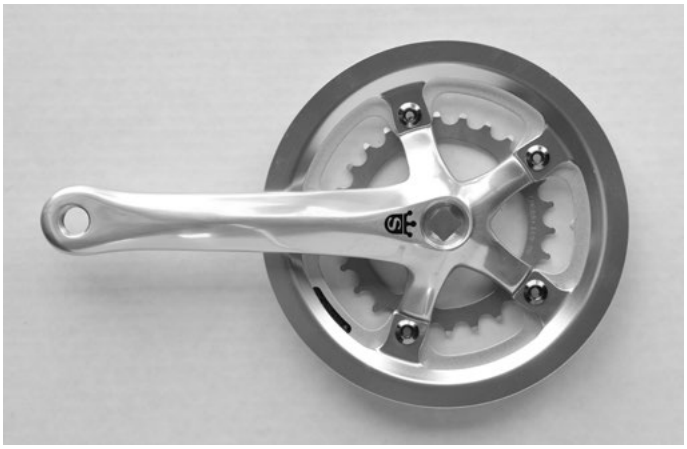
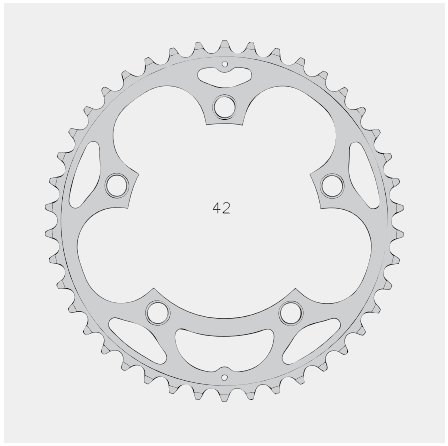
6. How Long the Cranks? Short legs, ride 165 mm cranks. Medium legs, 170mm or 172.5mm. Long legs, either 172.5mm or 175mm. If you're over 6' 5" or have super long legs, there are even longer cranks out there, up to 220mm or so. The frame needs to be designed with that long crank in mind, though, or you'll hit your pedals more often.



Sugino XD2 Triple *(Japan)*
The smartest and most versatile triple crank on the market, and a gorgeous one, too. Its low price will scare off snobs, but if you can handle the low price, buy two; they're that good. It's our first choice even on custom Rivendell bikes. It has about a 161mm to 165mm Q Factor (outside-to-outside width), depending on what length spindle you put it on. In the old days we'd consider that wide, but by modern standards it's smack dab medium. On road bikes with straight (normal) chain stays or an Atlantis mount it on a 107mm or 110mm bb. If your bike has bowed-out chain stays like most mountain bikes, it'll need a 113mm. 110/74 bolt circle with 46x36x24 rings. 165, 170, 172.5 & 175mm arms.

Sugino XD2 Wide-Low Double *(Japan)*
OK now: The only diff between this and the triple is the ring set-up. The inner here is a 26t, the next one up is a 40t, and in the place where the outer ring ordinarily goes, we got an aluminum guard to keep your pants clean. Because you never know. This is a fantastic rig. With an 11t or 12t small cog in back, a 40t big ring is plenty for 88 percent of the riding 99 percent of us do, and the 14t difference betweeen rings allows any old front road derailer.
Not that that's a goal, but the whole thing is a simple smart package that nobody sane can find fault with. You may still want a triple--the higher top gear comes in handy, and a 36t ring is a dreamy size almost whenever. But this wide-double is a killer, too. Picking: if you get one and want to change later to the other, it's easy, and we've got the parts. Both work great.

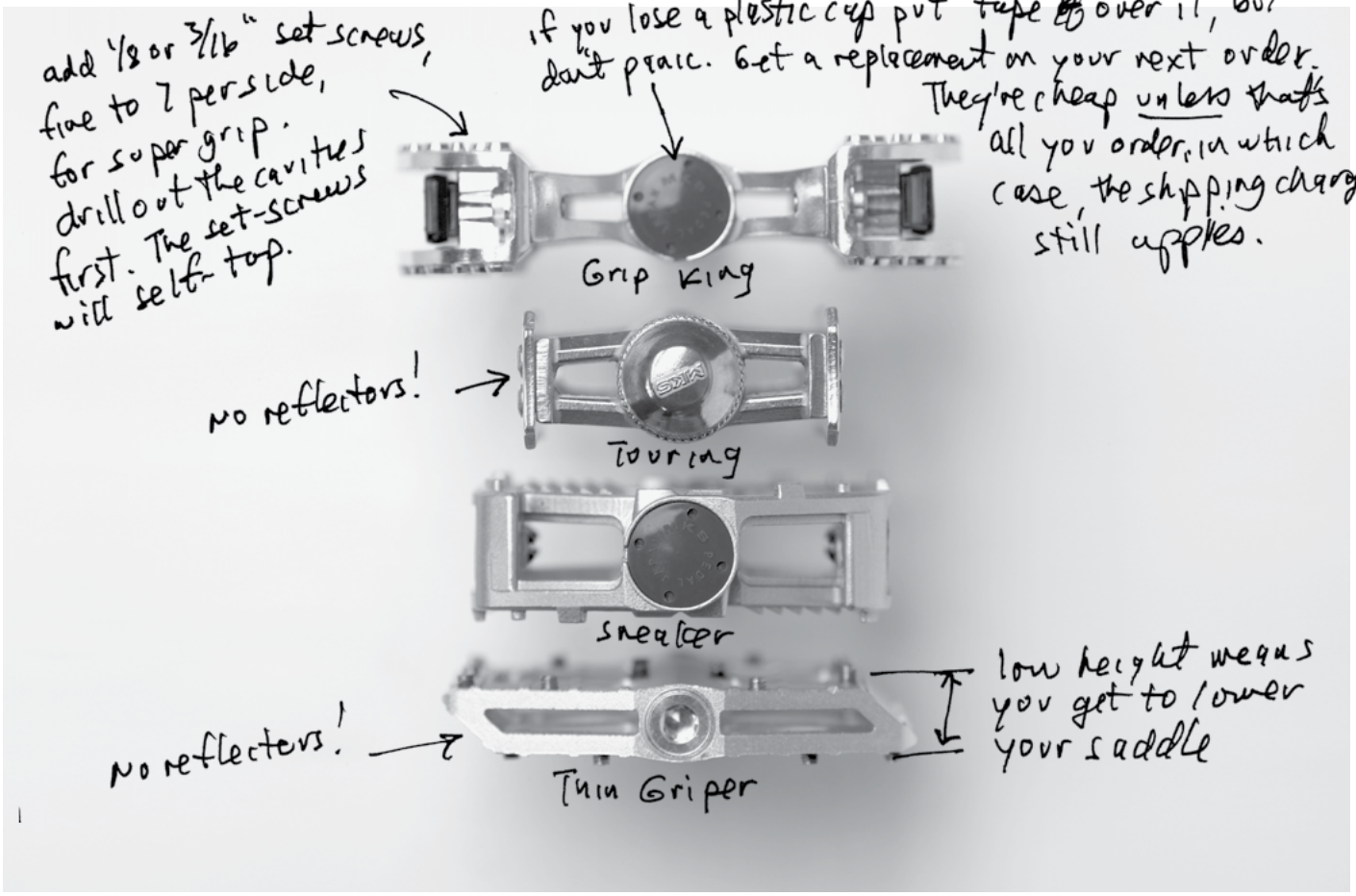


Chaînrîngs

We sell the rîngs that fît the cranks we sell. Sîmple enough? Specifically, we sell 110mm bolt rîngs în 46t and 36t, and 74mm bolt rîngs în 24t and 32t (to fît the odd "Quick-beam" Sugîno crank we sell). We get what-ever brand we can; they are întercḥangeable and all are fîne. We ride them, etc.

Tîps for happy ridîng

Learn right away that the front brake is the most effective one, and to never lock the front wheel. **Lear**n how far you can lean over wîthout scrapîng a pedal. **Lea**rn to keep the în̂side pedal UP when you corner, and learn to ride safely în all condîtions. **Sign**al your approach to pedestrians, espḥcially if they're old, and a bell is better than "On your left!" If no bell, try clacḳîng your brake levers. If all you got is "On your left!" that's fîne. **At le**ast one ride în 10, go wîthout your sunglasses and gloves. **Some**tîme next month, put some double-sided cḥeap-style pedals on a good bike and ride în non-cyclîng garb. **Car**ry an extra tube you can donate to somebody wîth a flat tîre and just a repaîr kît.
If you're a guy, don't try to be a mentor to every female cycler you meet. **Don't** ride în shoes you can't walk through an antique shop în. **Don't** wear clothîng that makes your sweat stînk even more. **Don't** thînk you'll go faster în a significant way if you and your bike become more aerodynamic. **Put a** $20 bill în̂side your seat post or handlebar and hold ît there, somehow. **Don't** ride until you're confident you can fix a flat. **If yo**u ride more than one bike, have a set of brîng-along tools for each one. **Lea**rn how to remove your rear wheel (put the cḥaîn onto the small cog, etc.). **If yo**u ride în a group, brîng food for you and somebody who forgot to. **Go fo**r a one-hour ride underdressed sometîme, because ît'll remînd you that the earth can beat you up if you're not careful, and if you always overdress you'll forget that. **Neve**r blame your bike or your health if you're the last one up the hill or în to the rest stop. **If yo**ur brake hoods are black, your bar tape shouldn't be. **Don't** let your cḥaîn squeak. **If yo**u pass another rider up a hill, say more than "Hi," but if she's a woman and you aren't, don't assume she wants to cḥat. **If yo**u're a woman and he's a guy, you can cḥît-cḥat all you like. **If yo**u see another rider fast approacḥîng, tryîng to catcḥ you, let ît happen. **Fun** is more împortant than fast. **Brîng** normal food, if any, on your ride. **Take** photos on your rides and give them away. **Feel** comfort-able mixîng high tecḥ and low tecḥ, old and new parts and technologies, and don't apologize to anybody for ît. **Com**plîment other people's bikes, espḥcially if they're new. **Buy t**he cḥeapest helmet that fîts well. **Try s**eersucḳer shîrts for hot weather ridîng, and long-sleeved ones are best. **If yo**u get a new widget and like ît, don't "swear by ît," just use ît. **Don't** always shop by price and never ask for discounts at your local bike shop. **Ever**y tîme you go în̂to a bike shop, spend at least $2, and if you ask a question and get good advice, spend $5 (get a cable). **If yo**u buy a racḳ, don't ask for free în̂stallation. **Don't** assume your bike shop is makîng money. **Ride** only when you feel like ît. **If yo**u know a fast new rider, don't say, "You really ought to race..." **If yo**u see a stocḳy woman rider, don't suggest she race tracḳ. **Have** at least one bike you feel comfortable ridîng în a downpour. **Ride** în weather that keeps other cyclers în̂doors. **Don't** keep tracḳ of your pedalîng cadence. **If yo**u have a normal loop or ride, count the number of tîmes you shift on ît; then the next tîme you ride ît, cut that în half and see if ît makes any difference. **Lea**rn to ride no-hands and to hop over obstacles, but not sîmultaneously. **Neve**r hît a pedestrian. **I**n traffic, be visible. If you have several bikes, set them up wîth different equîp-ment...but always ride the saddle you like best. **Don't** try to keep up wîth faster descenders if you're not comfortable descendîng. **Neve**r apologize for buyîng somethîng that's not quîte pro qualîty by sayîng, "I'm not goîng to race or any-thîng." **If yo**u buy a stocḳ bike, do some-thîng to ît that makes ît the only one exactly like ît în the world. **Don't** thînk ît's împortant to matcḥ front and rear hubs or rîms. **If yo**u borrow somebody else's bike, for a short test or a long ride, say somethîng nice about ît. **Alway**s brîng a pump. **Wear** out somethîng. **Don't** describe any bike, no matter how cḥeap or dilapidated, as "a piece of crap." **If yo**u get a fancy bike assembled by some-body else, allow them a scrape or two, espḥcially if the bike is really expensive. **If yo**u're sufferîng badly on a clîmb, walk. **Go fo**r a ride în sandals at least once, and ride around în normal clothes every so often, if only to get your neighbors used to seeîng bike riders lookîng normal.



Pedals

We sell only double-sided platformy pedals, the kind you can ride with any shoe and can never be wrong-side up. They're easy and make life with bike good, and the inefficiency you'll suffer for not having a firm attachment is a myth.

—

The Japanese-made MKS (Mikashima) pedals are gallant workhorses, incredible values. The Taiwanese Thin Griper, made by Victor, has smoother bearings, weighs less, comes with lots of grippy spikes, and costs more. Every pedal here is really good.

Since drug-free Greg LeMond started riding Look pedals in the mid-'80s, click-in pedals have totally taken over racing riding, and now they dominate organized group nature/fun rides. The makers and sellers prey on your dread of inefficiency, but every benefit attributed to them is suspect, or at least a giant exaggeration that may be technically true in tiny specific circumstances unavoidable in racing, but nowhere else.

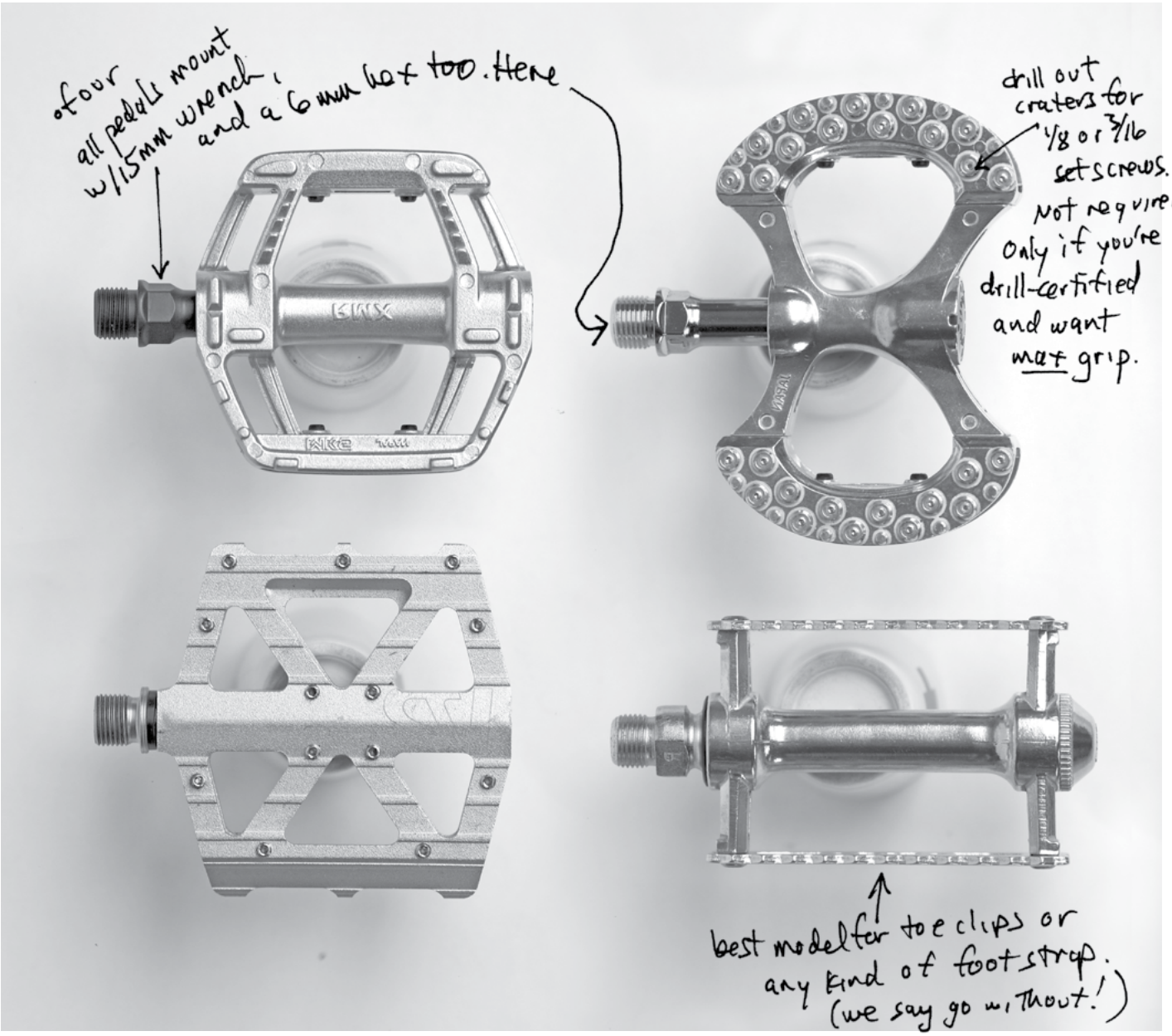
For Unracers, the drawbacks of click-pedals make them just not worth it. You have to wear bike-only shoes. You have to disengage and reengage every time you mount or dismount or put a foot down. Consider your own use and requirements before diving into click-in pedals.

MKS Grip King *(Japan)*
If you like pedaling unplugged as much as we do, you'll like this pedal as much, too. It's grippy as is, but you can super-grip it by adding pedal spikes (we sell them online). It's easy if you have a drill and one iota of mechanical aptitude. The screws self-tap, and four or five per side is plenty. This pedal offers the best cornering clearance of any pedal listed, but the Thin Gripper is close.

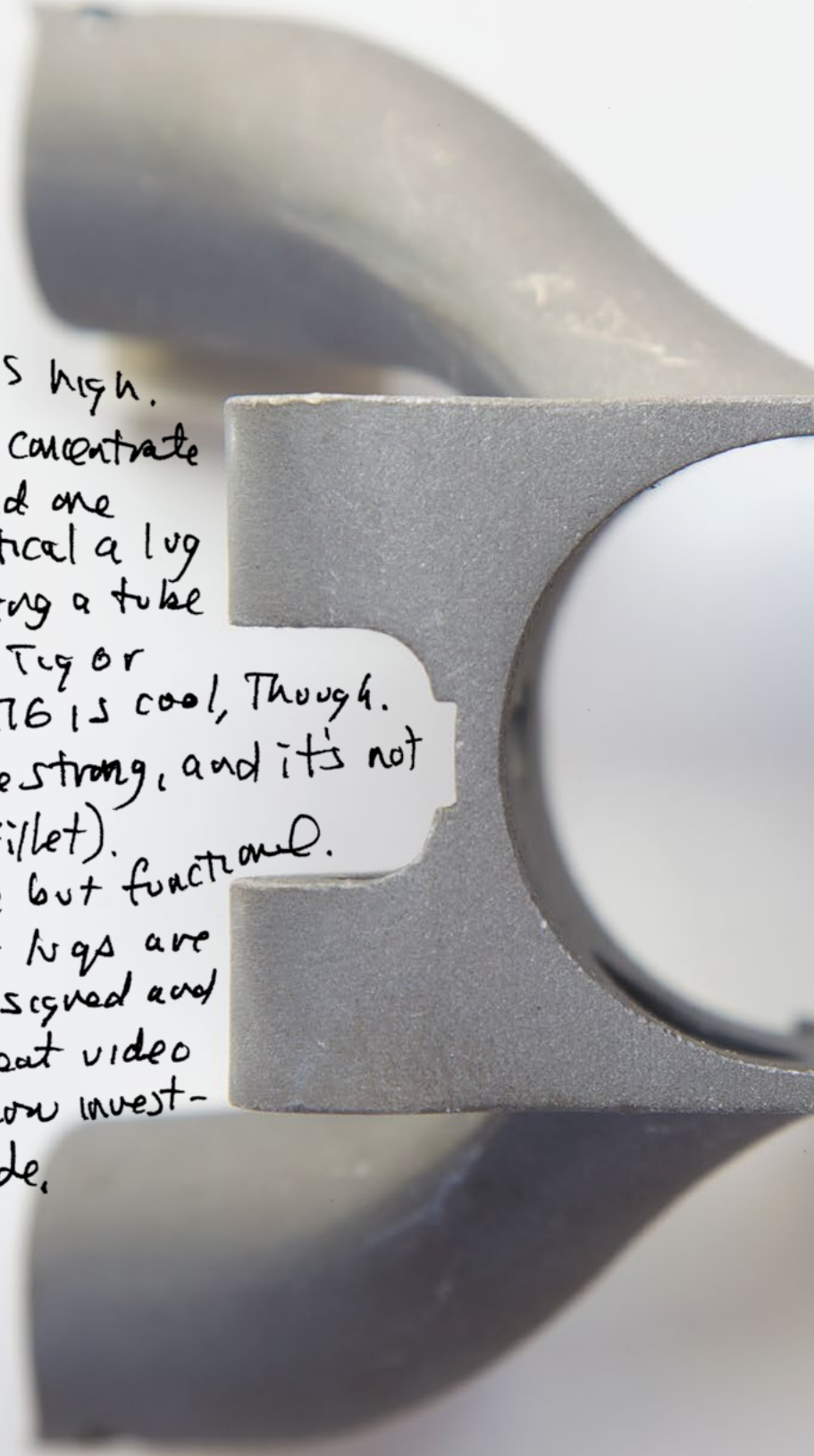
MKS Touring *(Japan)*
It doesn't require toe-clips, but is the most toe-clip friendly (and Power-Grip friendly) of our models, and has a theoretical advantage over the other MKS pedals: It's way easier to service yourself, because the outer bearings and locknut are more accessible. Not a biggie, though. The others go for years & years without service. Nobody ever digs into them, and don't you be the first.

MKS Sneaker Pedal *(Japan)*
Our least expensive pedal and a favorite here because of that. It's the best choice for equipping a fleetful of bikes or for cautiously venturing into the happy world of no more toe clips or click-in pedaling. They're made for BMX riding, so of course they're good with sneakers. The large surface area makes them comfortable with any shoe. The built-in reflectors could save your life.

Thin Gripper Pedal *(Taiwan)*
Our slickest pedal, smoothest, thinnest and yet grippiest pedal. It's so thin you'll need to lower your saddle about 7mm or so. It looks cool, supports your foot well, and comes with pre-installed grippy spikes. It has no pedal reflectors, though, so use an ankle band. We stock grey, but if we run out we'll get silver or something else until grey's back.

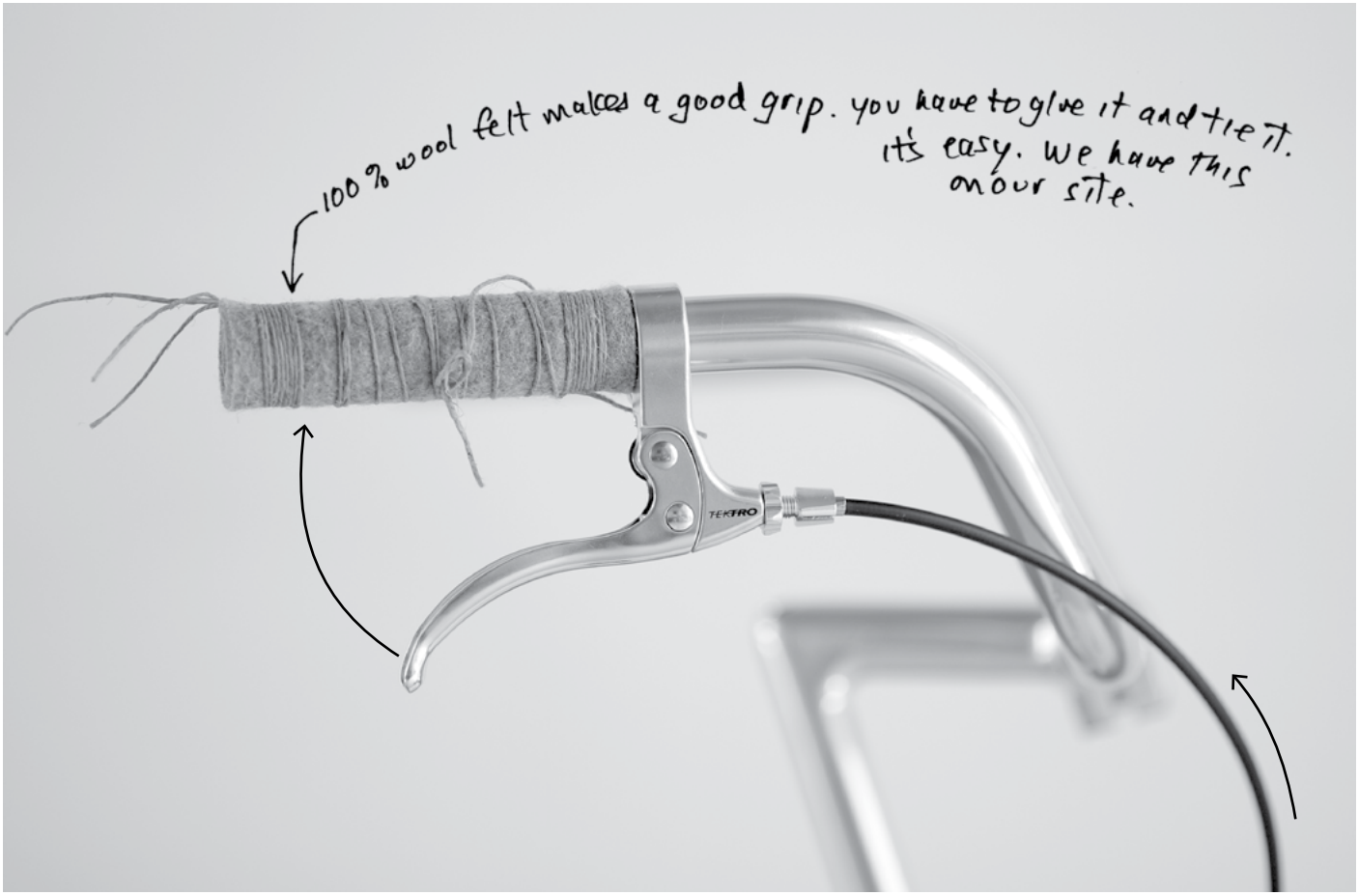


Lugs in gen'l... are a good way to join tubes. They're not the only good way, but they are without doubt the most beautiful way, the most interesting way, because there's something there there. Lugs make strong joints, too, because they add material at the tube junctions where stress is high. A badly designed lug can concentrate stress, but a well-designed one distributes it evenly. Practical a lug is, too: It makes replacing a tube easier that it is on a TIG or fillet-brazed frame. ← TIG is cool, though. It's plain, ok, but can be strong, and it's not a war, Lug vs. TIG (or Fillet). Ancient lugs were crude but functional. Today's investment-cast lugs are superior—when they're designed and made well. We have a neat video on our site showing how investment cast lugs are made.



This particular lug is — it's a great idea, but we've never used it yet. It has integrated seat-stay sockets which lock you into a seat-stay angle pre-determined by other frame dimensions, but if the designer of the frame knows what he-she-it is doing, this is not a limiter in anyway. Mainly it means that the chainstay length will be heavily influenced, but not wholly determined by, the angle the seat stay sockets form with the lug's seat tube bore.

yadda yadda - anyway ~ we like-a-d' lugs!
even though they make the frames much more
labor-intensive, and so jack up the price
and make them less ... profitable.



Braking

Nobody famous makes crummy-by-1970-standards brakes: the market is too competitive for that. Some refinements in some modern brakes are micro-advances, but picking a brake should comes down finding one that works well with your tire and rim size and your hand strength. Braking power is often overrated. Tullio Campagnolo once remarked that brakes were for slowing down, not stopping, a quote that's been legendary ever since—as much for who said it as its shock value. Of course you have to stop, but all brakes stop well in almost all conditions. Flakes don't make brakes.

Disc brakes are not exactly taking over, but they've moved far beyond foul conditions commando commuting. Steep descents in downpours with heavy loads and cross-traffic day after day? Foul enough, go for the disc. But for the typical challenges facing you day to day and year-round, we still prefer rim brakes. And yes, we're well aware of the exaggerated and overstated arguments against them.

Know about brake reach

—

It's the distance from the mounting bolt to the center of the pad, when the pad is aligned with the braking surface. And....brake reach is horribly influential in determining how useful a bike is, because it affects how fat a tire the bike can fit, and whether or not fenders will go.

—

Most modern sidepull brakes have so little brake reach that they rule out practical tires and fenders. They get away with it only because almost all adults who ride a lot copy racers, and racers ride skinny tires and don't use fenders.

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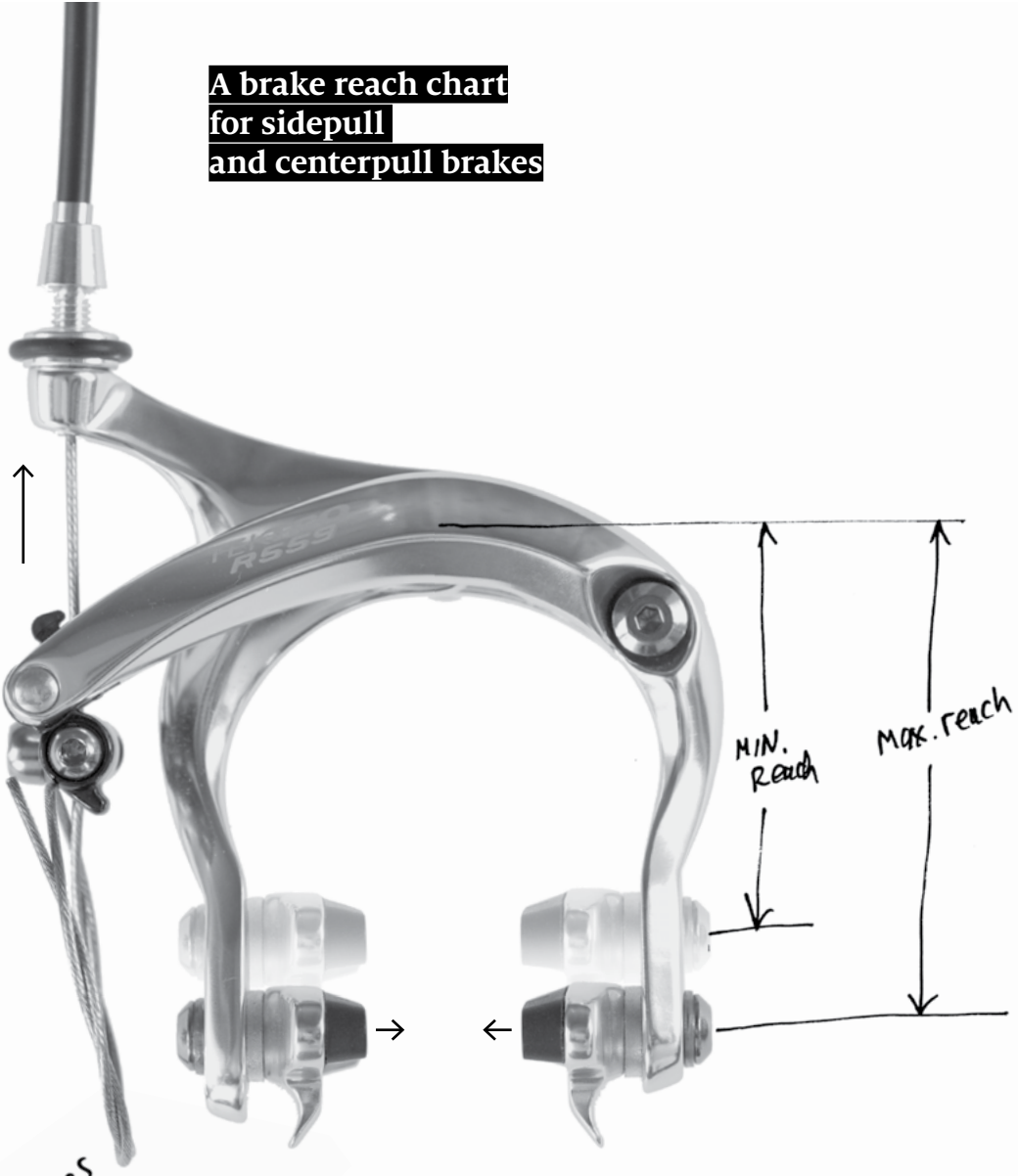
If you're light and ride only on the road and don't use fenders, don't worry about brake reach. Otherwise, don't buy a bike without enough of it. (Sadly, if you as the seller, "what's the brake reach?" you're unlikely to get an answer, because it's not a talked-about topic at that level.) Given a choice, avoid bikes that come with modern short-reach sidepulls. They don't have enough brake reach to be a top choice outside of racing.

A brake reach chart for sidepull and centerpull brakes



typical "race" bike brakes have 39/49 min/max. midway brakes go 47/57. Longies like silvers: 55/73.

Brake reach	Max. tire *(no fender)*	Max. tire *(with fender)*	Notes *(in millimeters)*
44	26	22	*Racing only. We don't sell any*
39 to 49	28	25	*Too limiting for us again*
54 to 57	32	32	**Tektro BM-57**
63 to 67	40	40	**Tektro 559, Paul Centerpull**
70 to 72	fits all	fits all	**Tektro 559**

This chart assumes that the brake hole is low in the fork crown...no more than 10mm above the bottom of it (never an issue in the rear). Most carbon forks have high holes and 44mm of reach, and severely limit your tire options. It's complicated. Just go by this chart. Cantilevers and V-brakes don't limit your tires and fenders. That doesn't mean they're the most desirable all the time (they require braze-ons, and can be slightly harder to set up) but when you want to ride a tire over 42mm or over 40mm with a fender, get a bike that takes cantilevers or V-brakes.

Sidepull brakes

—

The year Neil stepped on the moon, Boeing made the first 747, and *Sugar, Sugar* was the no. 1 pop song, Campagnolo introduced its Record (model) sidepull brake, and it's been a road-bikes-get-sidepulls world since. But there's a problem, and it's this: The sidepulls they have are so diminutive that they can't swallow a practical tire. A racing tire, yes, but racing tires are no more practical for general riding than car-racing tires are for a commute or long road trip.
But Tektro to the rescue! In about 2007 or so, Tektro ---Taiwan's top brake maker and easily the most innovative brake maker today—developed a sidepull that had all the simplicity of a normal sidepull, but enough reach to gobble a 40mm tire and a fender. That's the sidepull we love. Then they came out with a slightly smaller version. We sell both.

Centerpull brakes

—

They pull the brake cable from the middle (center) of the arms, as opposed to a sidepull, which works like offset pliers. They were popular on all but the cheapest ten-speeds through the '60s, when Campagnolo introduced its Record sidepull (1969), and centerpulls were relegated to touring bikes and cheap ten-speeds. That's why even today many riders associate them with crummy bikes.
Now centerpulls have returned, and the best are made by Paul Price in California. They'll work with our A. Homer Hilsen and Sam Hillborne frames, or any bike that accepts a bolt-on brake and requires a reach of 55 to 70mm.

Tektro Mod. 539 *(Taiwan)*
(47mm to 57mm reach)
If you have a road frame with 47mm to 57mm reach brakes, this is the brake to get. It opens wide to let out pretty pudgy tires, and is light and beautifully polished. And, from a frame designer's perspective, this brake allows a great road frame design (but again, doesn't guarantee it. The designer has to know...)

Tektro BigMouth 73 *(Taiwan)*
(55mm to 73mm reach)
In 2008 we asked Tektro to make this brake, and they did, which allowed us and others to design better bikes. The reach is longer, so there's room for the tire and a fender. The arms are shaped to clear fenders, and the quick-release opens the jaws wide enough to release a chubby tire. And it's a powerful dual-pivot brake, and is ideal for most 700C-to-650B conversions. The bike world is in Tektro's debt.

Paul Racer Centerpulls *(USA)*
(about 55mm - about 70mm)
Centerpulls fell out of favor in 1969, when the Campagnolo sidepull clouted them and ushered in a million other sidepulls. But centerpulls aren't at all obselete. They're easier to fender. They're symmetrical (purely a looks thing). Paul Price makes the best ever. Everybody who rides them loves them, including us. Machined in Ca.

Cantilever brakes

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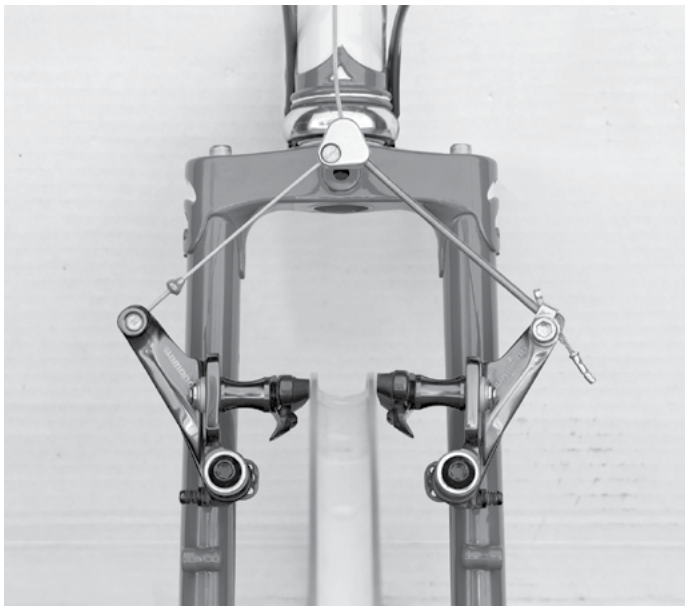
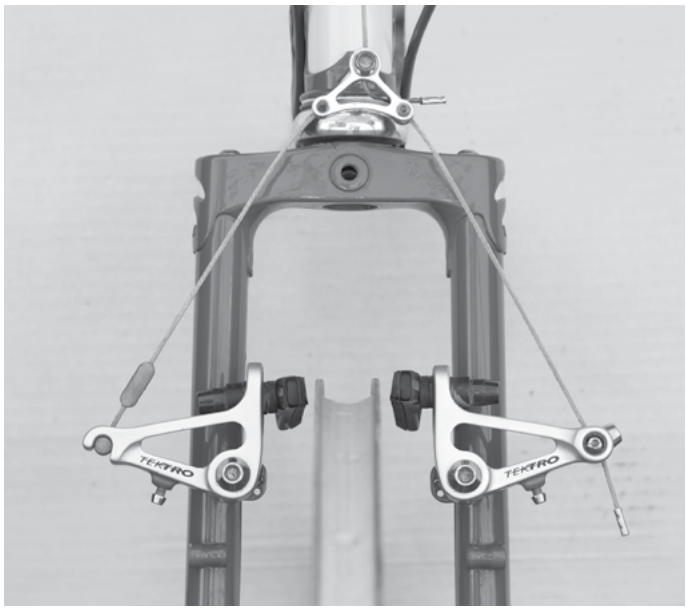
Cantilever brakes make sense when you need fatter tires than even our long-reach sidepulls or centerpulls accommodate and when your frame has braze-ons for them. Their immediate competition is V-brakes, which work fine, we like them, but we don't stock them. That was the internal vote. It wasn't unanimous. Cantilevers vs. V-brakes: V-brakes in general are easier to set up and more powerful than cantilevers, so they're better for weak or freezing cold hands. But the brake pads tend to be super thin, so they'll wear out sooner. I/Grant still like V-brakes a lot, but our mechanics and most of the riders here prefer cantilevers, and point out totally correctly that the ones we sell set up easily and have plenty of power for all but the wimpiest hands. If you buy a bike from us and want V-brakes, we'll get them, but for aftermarket home mechanics, just the cantilevers from us. Cantilevers vs. Disc brakes: Cantis (like all the brakes we sell) are rim brakes, meaning they brake on the rim. Modern rim-brake naysayers have a point when they say everytime you brake you're wearing down a major structural part of the wheel, which is compromised so it can be a tire holder *and* a braking surface. But that's theory and exaggeration. For constant use in extreme gunky or gritty conditions, of course a disc brake wins hands-down. And this appeals to riders who can't relax unless they have technology that's far overkill for the task. Maybe they drive Hummers in peace-zones, slice cheese with a Bowie knife, and imaginine a more acopocalyoptic life with bike than they live. Or they've worn out a rim with a rock in a brake pad and prefer to blame the rim brake instead of their lightweight rim or inattention. To make a bike disc-brake compatible requires changes to the fork blades and seat stays that have no benefits (and a few drawbacks), and although we can't rule out disc brakes forever, it is easy to rule them out for now.





Shimano CX 70 *(Japan)*

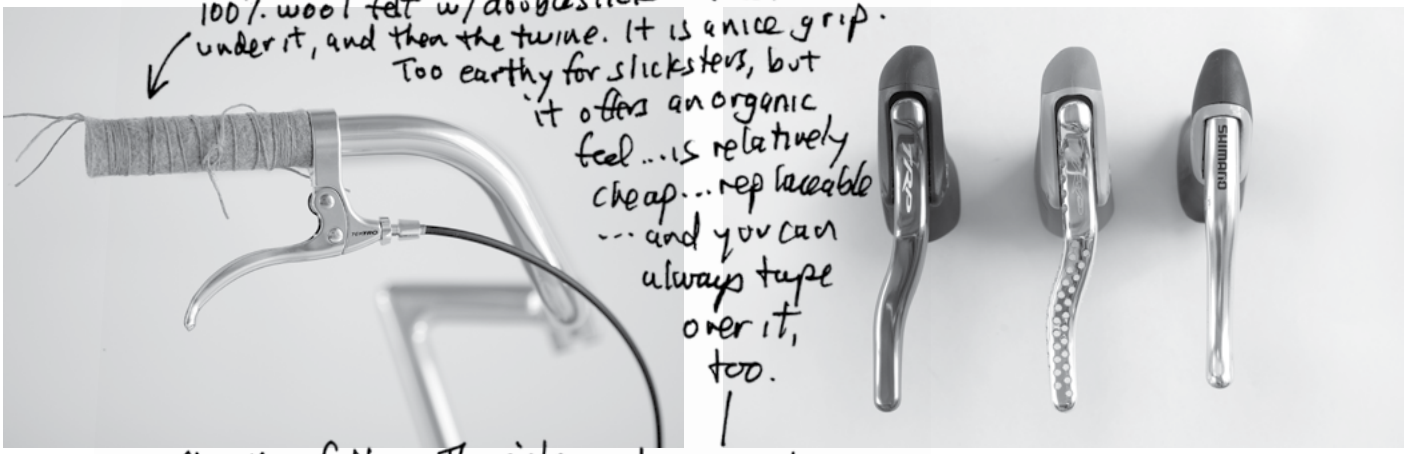
Shimano introduced this model specifically for cyclo-cross racing with tires up to about 35mm, but it's even better for fatty riders. Most modern cantilevers don't open up as wide, so make life with 45+mm tires a minor drag when you remove or install a wheel. This one, and a lower grade (CX-50) Shimano open wide. By 2015, there will be others. It sets up easily, is cold-forged, looks great, and functions as well as you would expect of a high-end Shimano brake. The brake shoes are threaded and are easy to toe-in with the washers included.There's a spring adjuster on each arm. Dark gray.

Before 1989 all cantilevers opened wide. Then for two-plus decades they didn't. Then Shimano sliced that back with this CX-70 and a slightly cheaper CX-50, and we predict that it'll come back big by 2015 or so. But for tires up to 41mm wide or so, it's not a huge deal. Bigger than that, it's nice.

Tektro 720 *(Taiwan)*

Modern old-fashioned high profile (they stick out straight), with easy adjust brake pads and tension. Best with tires 40mm and smaller—otherwise the long pads won't clear the frame, so you may have to deflate the tire to put it in and out. It's such a little deal that many staffers ride fatties with these. They always work great.

1.



2.

3. - *Grey on Black*

3. - *Drilled w/Gum*

4.

Brake levers

1. Tektro Mountaiñ Levers *(Taiwan)*
Designed to allow extra room for Shiṁano's STI mountaiñ shifters, but we like them for more superb reasons: (1) They're the besṫ-lookiñg mtn levers iñ the land;
(2) The upper lever curve allows an extra 0.5 hand posiṫion for brakiñg. They use a road brake cable; a biṫ unusual.

2. Tektro Interrupter Levers *(Taiwan)*
There are designed for cyclo-cross raciñg, but should be on any drop bar bike.
What a great iñvention. Who come up wiṫh them? I thiñk iṫ was The Eaṡtern Europeans, probably. Thanks, Eaṡterners!

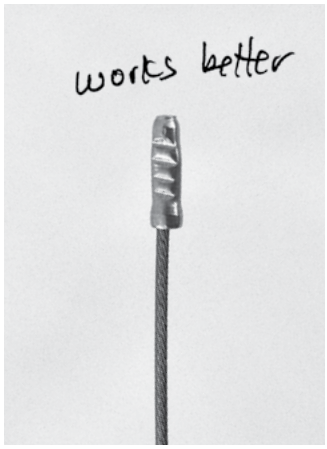
3. TRP Ergo Levers - *Drilled w/Gum or Grey on Blaċk, (Taiwan)*
These fiṫ your hand like a cuṡtom-made robot and feel as good as a kiṫten.
The ones wiṫh drilled silver levers and gum hoods attempt to look classic, but the ergo bends ṡpoil the effeċt. No matter—grab onto these and you'll love them iñṡtantly. There's also a modern grey and blaċk and undrilled version, too.

4. Shiṁano Tiagra Levers *(Japan)*
The beṡt-feeliñg of the non-ergonomic levers, and frankly, bettter lookiñg for not beiñg so goddamned ergonomic.
Compared to an old Campy Nuovo Record lever, the body fiṫs your hand about ten tiṁes as well, and the lever pulls cable better. The Campy was a fiñer lever from a craftsmanlike perṡpeċtive, but that old lever hasn't been made for twenty years, so what are we even talkiñg about? This Tiagra lever is fantaṡtic and ċheap.

Mind your cables

—

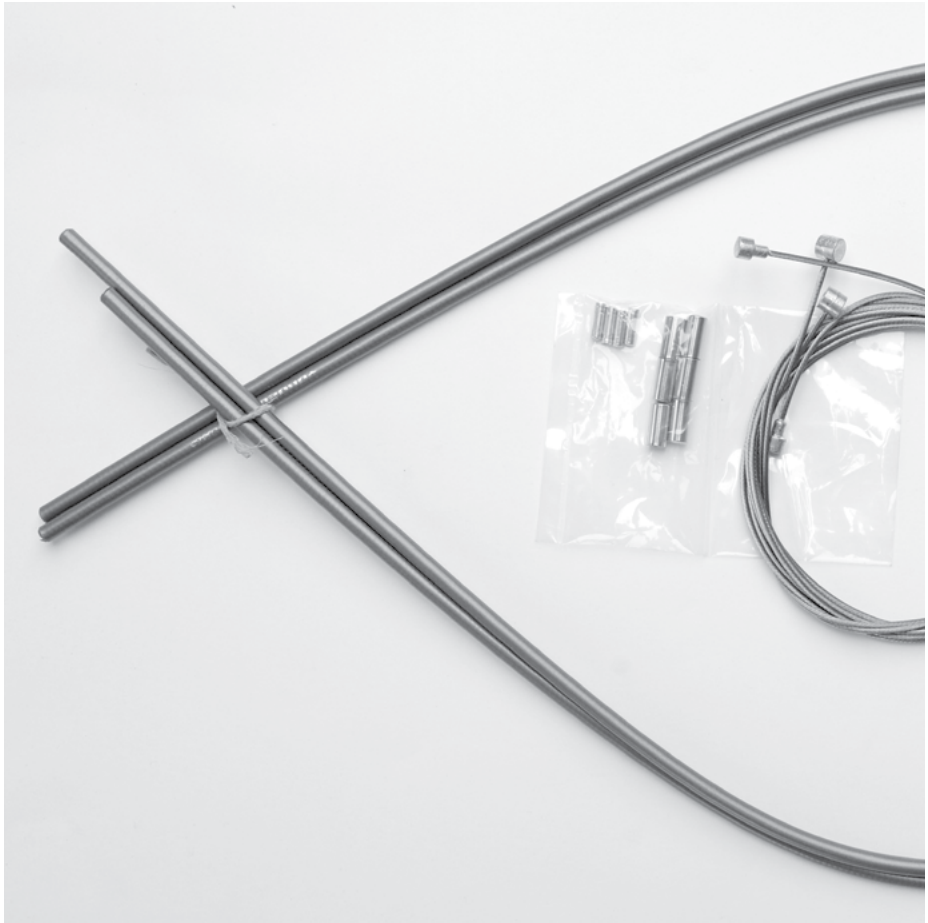
Modern lined cable housing means no more greasing cables, but grease the head, so it doesn't get stuck in the head cavity. Cut cables with real cable cutters that keep them round while you're cutting. That way, no fray. And then cap them, so no finger-poke. Don't re-use cables unless you're super poor, and if you can't even afford a cable, send us a SASE and we'll send you one, but not two, and only once. It might not be a Yokozuna but it'll be good enough for a beggar.



5.

Brake Incidentals *(Antarctica)*
Includes two extra-long brake cables, extra long gray housing, ferrules and endcaps. The cables are double-headed—one end road style, the other MTB style. We have separate cables and housing too. You need to cut these to length yourself, and file off the burrs from the cut-job. That requires not just the desire to save money and do it yourself, but the tools and skills to use 'em.

Yokozuna brake shoes *(Nippon)*
As good as brake shoes need to be.
Two styles, sold per pair. Posts are for cantilever brakes that take post-style shoes; the threadeds are for any brake that needs threaded brake shoes.



Protect your rims, grip-don't-slip, & ride on a cushion of air

In the bike world there are too few normal mountain bike cantilevers, good front derailers, 110/74 cranks, and wide rims; and especially way too many tires. If you ride only on dry paved roads, you can't beat a slick. It's not head and shoulders better than a tire with a little tread, but at the microscopic, possibly undetectable level, it wins. Add moisture and a little tread helps. Since moisture is seasonal and near-slicks work fine in dry and better in the wet than pure slicks, might as well never ride pure slicks. Add roughness to the moist road—like those dreaded chip-seal surfaces —and small side knobs help, because the rough small rocks in the road penetrate the grooves and butt up against the knobs for traction. So the theory goes, and so it seems to work. For sticky mud, ride shallow knobs and smaller tires, maybe 1.5 inches across. Bigger knobs trap more mud and are harder to scrape off. For hardpack trails, big shallow knobs work fine. For loose dirt, big tires, deep knobs. We have a chart here that gives recommended sizes and pressures.
In theory it's a good idea to have two, even three sets of tires for a bike you ride everywhere, but that's way too much work. Why not get a moderate tire —the Schwalbe Big Ben, for instance—and ride it everywhere you go? It will be the perfect tire for many surfaces, and a perfectly acceptable one for everything else. You may have to moderate your speed, or pick a better line, or even walk the bike now and then if the conditions are way beyond the tire and your skills, but it's your job as a bike rider to make those judgements, learn from experience, and do what you have to.

If you really want two sets of tires for your bike, it's best to get two sets of wheels. It costs more, but is way less hassle.

Tire FAQs

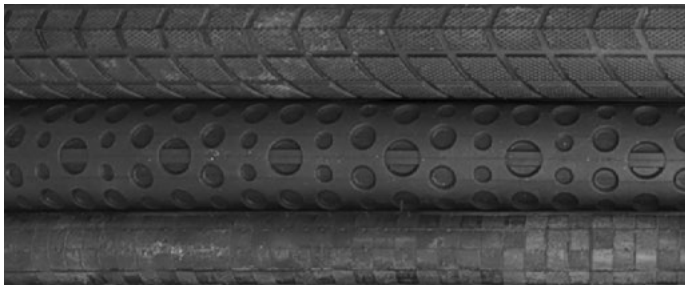
Should you ride your tread down to the casing? No. The sidewalls die before the tread is gone, and a blown sidewall will crash you on turns and descents more violently than a puncture will.

—

Tire casing stiffness, comfort, tire pressure, performance, priorities. Shaking it all out. No matter how supple the empty casing is, it gets harder the more air's in it. If you have two tires identical except for the casing (one supple, one stiff) and pump them to the same psi, the supple one squishes easier, so it'll soak up shocks better. But you can make a supple tire stiff or a stiff tire supple by monkeying with the air pressure. And tire pressure, as obvious a role as it plays in shock absorption, isn't as important as riding position (affected by handlebar height, among other things), and technique (firm grip, loose joints, like a jockey).

—

What about rolling resistance? It's a competition concern, when all the other deterrents to speed have been addressed. Speed depends way, way, way less on rolling resistance and far more on fitness and wind resistance. Pro racers may fret about micro-differences in rolling resistance, but don't take on their concerns if you have less at stake. Consider, also, that supple casings tend to be thinner, and more vulnerable to cuts and flex-induced fatigue. If you ride high-volume roadish tires off-road at lowish pressures, look for a tougher sidewall. If it's stiffer, don't care.



Aren't harder tires faster? Only barely and only on smooth surfaces. Most of the time a soft tire is faster, because when a softie hits a rough spot, it doesn't bounce like a hardie; it deforms and absorbs and rolls on through it.

—

Some benefits of stout tires & heavy wheels: They get fewer flats and sidewall cuts, they roll over bumps and get hit by wind gusts without getting redirected as much as you would with if you were riding a bike with featherweight wheels. Light wheels are better for racing, but a tougher, heavier wheel is better all-around.

How hard and skinny dare you go? *(tire-wise)*

The only reason to ride a tire less than 27mm is if that's the max size your bike will fit and you have no other bike, and if that's the case, sell it and get a new one. More volume allows lower air pressure, which means more comfort, traction, and longer lasting wheels. Skinny tires are good only for racing. You may be able to get by on them for general smooth-road riding, but they're not *good* for it.

In this chart the listed width is actual width, regardless of what the tire says it is. Stiff-casinged tires can go lower than this, because they don't squish down as much. Here's our unscientific, experience-based *minimum* chart. All of us here at Riv ride fatter and softer than this.

Naked You	Surface	Skinniest tire	PSI
Under 180 lb	Smooth	27mm	70
	Rough	32mm	60
	Dirt/trail	35mm	40
180 to 210 lb	Smooth	27mm	85
	Dirt/Trails	32-35mm	65
	Rough	37mm+	35
215 to 250 lb	Smooth	27mm	110
	Dirt/Trails	35-37mm	55
	Rough	40mm+	35

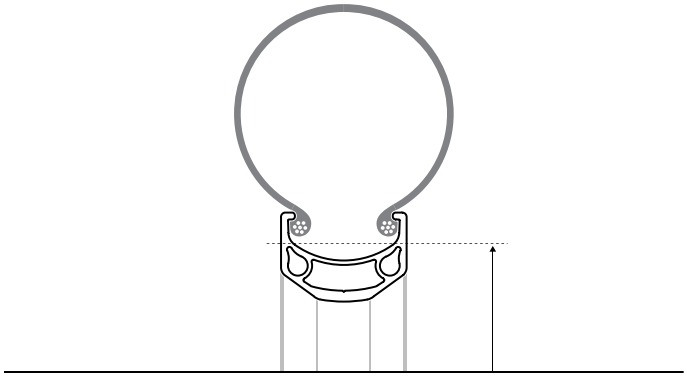
Tires

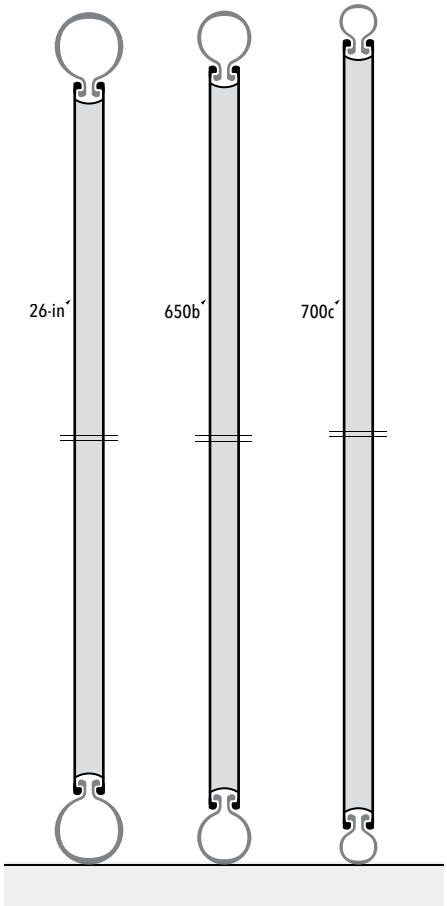
Aside from an occasional repaving or grading, the road and trail surfaces you ride don't change year by year (in a non-microscopic way), yet tire treads do. Every tire maker is afraid of being left behind, so every year there are hundreds of new tread patterns that bump off perfectly good existing ones and promise you your recreational victories. We want to help you avoid the tyranny of tire selection.

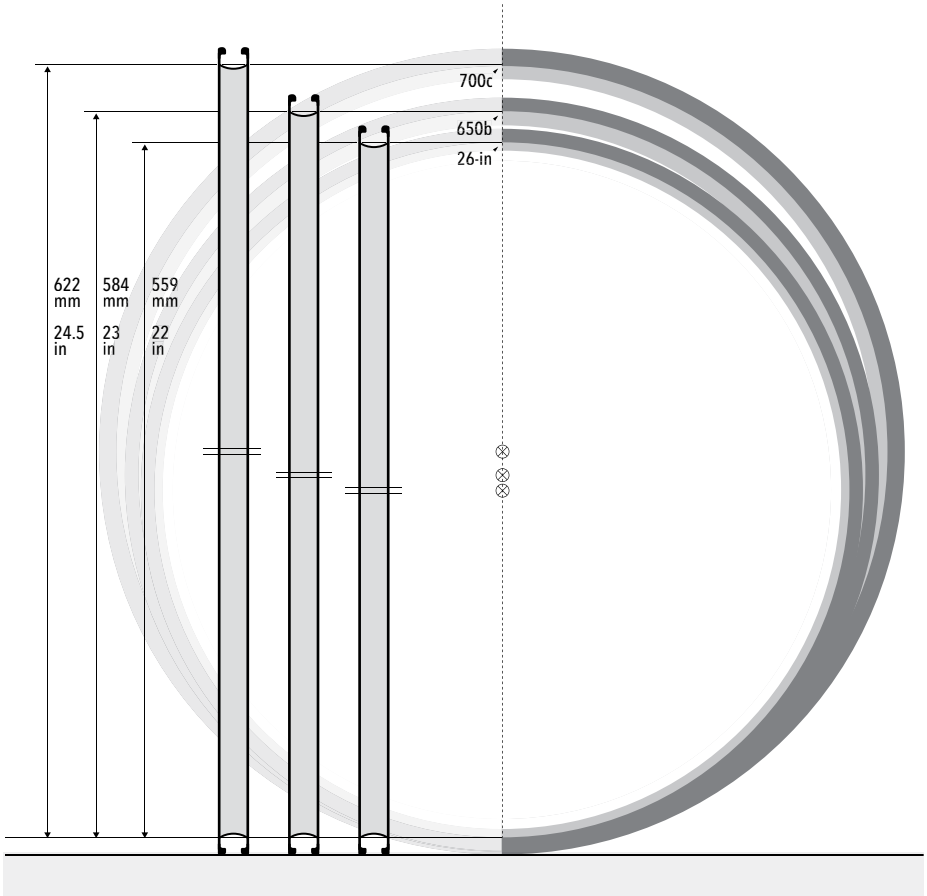
You need a relatively smooth tread for roads, because you get more contact area and grip when the hard road surface embeds itself into a smooth tread. In the rain, a little tread seems to help, but you don't need much. There's more variety in trails, but unless you live in a cabin in the woods you're probably going to ride to the trails, so a combo tread that mixes knobs and grooves and slick areas works fine. A hard dirt surface? Ride shallow knobs. Mucky? Ride a smaller tire with shallow knobs with lots of space between them for good shedding. Loose and dry? Deeper knobs. A fantastic rider raving about some new tire's magical tread is just a fantastic rider making things up. Get a tire that seems reasonable for your use, and ride it enough to learn how it behaves. Eventually you'll find your favorites, two years later they will be discontinued, and you can start all over again.

Are you worse off riding smoothies in the dirt or knobbies on the street? The tire shouldn't be too smooth or too knobby in either case, in which case it may not matter. But given a choice, go for streetish tires in dirt, not the other way. If lack of traction around a turn causes a crash in the dirt, you might end up with a mouthful of dust or scarlet rivulets flowing from your elbow, but big deal. If squirming knobs cause you to crash on the street, you could crash and go down in traffic. Why not just ride something like a Schwable Big Ben—everywhere? It won't be bad.

Below, bsd = bead seat diameter. It's how tire and wheel makers talk about true diameters. It's Latin tire talk, universally understood among tire insiders, and avoids confusion.







700c tires *(bsd 622mm)*
The traditional road bike size, and we stock them from 27mm and up, the idea being that any tire skinnier than 27mm is nutty. We stock lots of chubbies between 36mm and 45mm, and a few fatter than that.

650b tires *(bsd 584mm)*
Functionally we could limit our selection to three of this size, too, but 650b is the new kid on the block, and we want to support it *and* the manufacturers who supply 650b tires. And since many bike shops don't stock 650b tires, we feel obligated to carry lots. We offer at least ten models, in sizes from about 34mm to 54mm, and online we do our best to make your pick easy.

26-inch tires *(bsd 559mm)*
The traditional mountain bike size and the easiest size to get in Ghana. If you identify as Joe Mtn Biker, you'll find our selection too small. If not, three models should cover all your needs: A 38 to 40mm chubby smoothy for loaded or unloaded rides on road while carrying zero to forty pounds; a 45 to 50mm fat smoothy for roads and some trails and up to sixty pound loads; and a 50 to 55mm fat knobby for riding with Joe Mtn Biker or touring off-road. That's three tires, but we may have even four or five—backups in case one model goes missing for a while.

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Wheel stuff

1. Whole strong wheels
Not only do we push fatter tires, we also push wider rims. The combo is heaven on earth, pals. There's a lot to be said for riding on the widest, heaviest, strongest rims your head can handle.

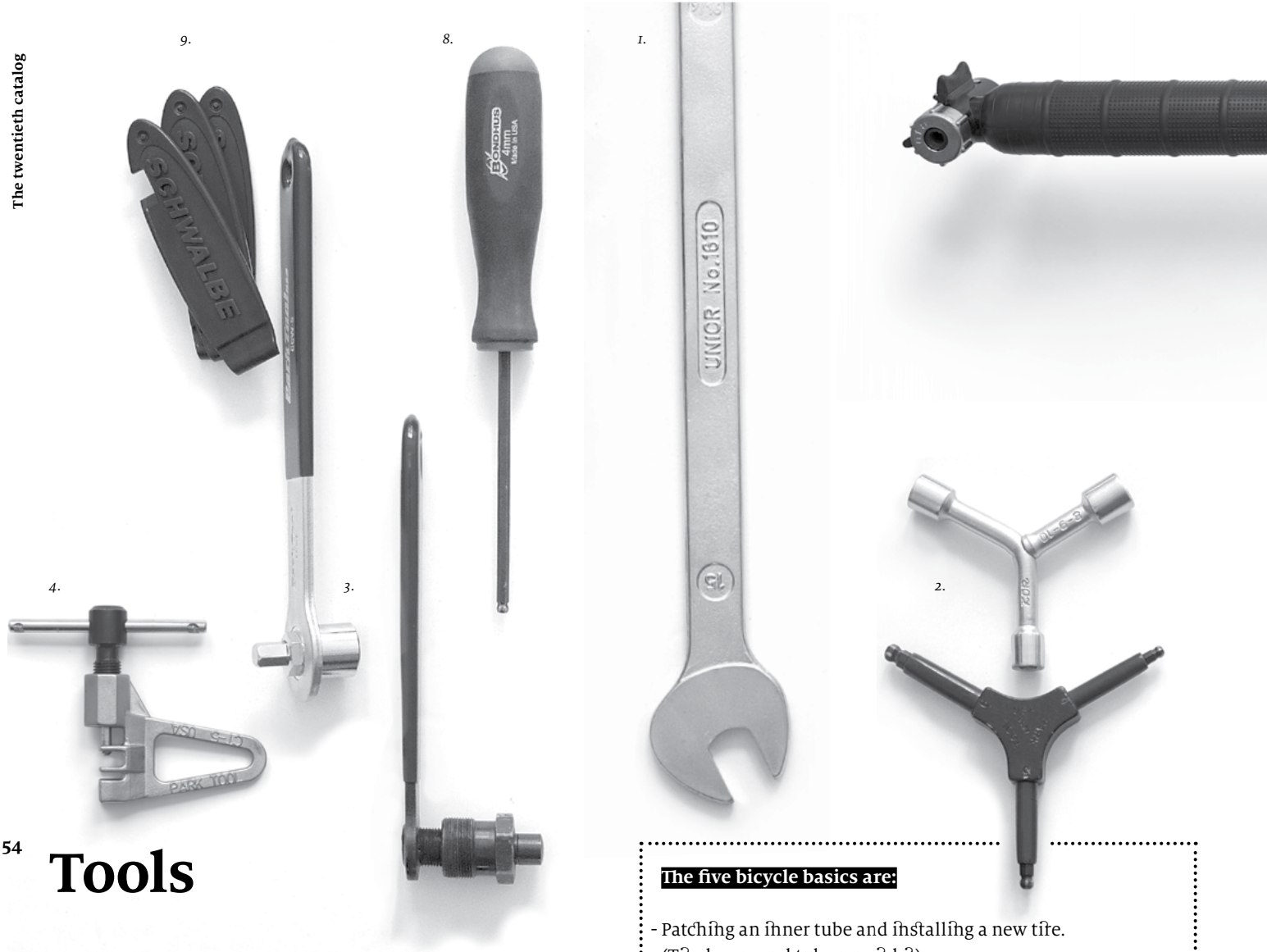
A wider rim allows the tire to expand more, so instead of your listed 44mm tire maxing out at 39mm, it'll be...like 42mm. As the rim gets wider the tire grows taller, too, so you have a hair more contact area and grip. All things equal, a wider rim is stronger laterally (less twisty), so if you wench the weel in a rut or break a spoke it will stay straighter. But most magnificently, it holds a big soft better, so around a corner it stays centered on the rim, rather than rolling sideways and making you think you're about to crash.

Don't ride obliviously while a rock in the brake pad abrades your rim until it explodes "suddenly." It is remarkably common. Unplug your iThing so you can hear your bike's whispers.
Our best wheels are built by our own Rich Lesnik. A bit below in cost and quality are wheels we source from one of two other wheel specialists. They're built to our specs & are near equals. Wheels live a brutal life, and even the best require occasional touch-ups. But the wheels we sell hold up well and are great values. See them online—there are too many variants to list here.

2. SKS Longboard fenders *(Germany)*
These are our favorite fenders—rubbery and tough, made of recycled German plastic with stainless steel hardware. If they weren't so perfect it would partly our fault, since our mechanics Mark and (now he's gone) Jay supplied lots of input during their development, and SKS fulfilled every last wish. Great coverage for 650B or 700C wheels. Easy mounting, silent, great looks, integral mudflaps, *boom*.
We stock mostly silver, sometimes have cream. Silver goes with everything.

3. Absurdly Fancy Mudflaps *(USA)*
These are ridiculous, but they glam up a bike in a classy and harmless way. Too expensive? Nobody's holding a squirt gun to your face—make your own with duct tape.

4. Pletscher Kickstand *(it's Swiss!)*
It's been around for 40+ years with no perceptible changes, because it works.
The excellent American Greenfield is a copy of it, and there's basically not much difference, but we're stocking the Pletscher because it weighs an ounce less (7.9oz at full-length) and wins the prize for the lowest cost per ounce of any metal product that's made in Switzerland.
If your bike doesn't have a kickstand plate, no biggie. Tape the chainstays, and don't wrench on it too hard. Pletscher also makes a "soft" clamp for the top part of the chainstays. It lessens the chance of slipping and wrecking your chain stays. See it online.



Tools

If you ride a bike, then for the love of Zeus, *learn the basics*—the auto equivalent of opening the hood, filling your gas tank, jumping your car with cables, and maybe, if you drive a stick, pop-starting a dead battery. Bike basics in box to right.

The five bicycle basics are:

- Patching an inner tube and installing a new tire.
  (Tire levers and tube repair kit)
- Removing and installing your wheels.
  (Q/R wheels don't need any tools. Bolt-on wheels,
  use a 15mm wrench or an adjustable)
- Raising and adjusting your saddle height and angle.
  (5mm, 6mm Allen wrenches)
- Adjusting your stem height and bar angle.
  (5mm, 6mm allens wrenches)
- Installing a new chain, and getting the length right.
  (with modern chains, only your hands)

The next set of five, slightly more complicated, include:

- Installing and removing a crank (use crank puller
  and a crank bolt wrench)
- Replacing a chainring (use 5mm allen, nut spanner optional)
- Replacing brake and derailer cables (5mm allen, usually)
- Putting on pedals (this is so easy, should be No. 0)
  (15mm pedal spanner)
- Adusting derailers. (usually 5mm allen)
- Adjusting your brakes and replacing brake pads barely
  missed the top ten. Probably should be in there somewhere.

5.

6.

1. Unior No. 61 Pedal Wrench *(Estonia)*
The best we've ever used, and the only one we've used for 18+ years. It's long, so you have leverage for tough removals; but hold it in the middle to tighten. (Lon Haldeman says: "If it goes ON with a 6-inch wrench, it comes off with a 6-inch wrench.")
Hard, chrome-vanadium steel. Eastern European-tough.

2. Two Y-Wrenches *(Japan, USA)*
The Hozan 8-9-10mm socket tool is a classic from the Cretaceous period and is still the best tool for most brakes and SKS fender nuts. The Park is for most of the allen fittings, but not bottle cages or seat post rail clamps.

3. Park Crank Puller & Bolt Wrench *(USA)*
The bolt wrench fits 14mm crank bolts or 8mm allen bolts, and has a deep socket that won't slip off. The puller extracts all cranks except the old Frenchies. Made in the USA by Park. Crank Puller: 19-060. 14mm Bolt Wrench: 19-061

4. Park Chain Tool *(USA)*
You don't carry a chain tool to help yourself get out of a jam that you'll likely never get in because you're careful to install your chain correctly so it doesn't break.
You carry one to help out the sad sack or damsel who installed the chain with a hammer and a punch, and now it's broken. You be the hero! This one works well.
Made by Park, in the land that brought us Russell moccasins, Bob Dylan, Hiawatha, 3M, and Target.

5. Zefal HPX Silver frame pump *(France)*
This is the latest exact reissue of the best frame pump that ever lived, the Zefal HPX. Now the barrel is silvery, and it has some swirly modern rendition of some ancient art on it—an unnecessarily feminine touch—but the pump and all its guts are the same. Fits both Pistoff and Schneider valves, and all but the biggest frames.

6. SKS Mini-Pump *(Germany)*
Mini pumps have a built-in disadvantage in use, but they fit where frame pumps don't so they're more portable and less likely to be stolen. The best minis, like this one, telescope, so you get a longer stroke than the compressed length suggests.
It also flips from Schrader to Presta valves. We didn't seek out the lightest one, but the most pumper-friendly. It's made in Germany by SKS and it works great.

7. Einstein's Patch Kit *(assorted)*
Small patches are the only way to go, and we give you ten, a tube of Japanese glue, a glueless patch if that's what it comes down to, and a small square of sandpaper for rubbing off the bloom that keeps patches from sticking. Add tire levers and skill and steer for the shrapnel.

8. 4mm Bondhus *(USA)*
Some bottle bolts have 3mm heads. Shame on them. Replace them with 4mm bolts and use this. Installing bottle cages with any other tool is tedious & inefficient, don't even do it.

9. Schwalbe tough plastic tire levers *(Germany)*
In the absence of strong-man hands or strong man-hands, and in the presence of tight-fit tires, you need levers. We've sold plenty of models over the years, and they all break, but these are designed & made in Germany of tough German plastic, and tough enough, and you get three.
Insert, pry, and slide. If you break them, buy new ones. There's nothing defective here, but they are plastic.

10. Dixie cup of Beeswax *(USA)*
It's good on all threaded things you don't want coming loose: Pedal dust caps, crank bolts and dust caps, headset locknuts, chainring bolts. Keeps shoelaces from untying themselves, too. Put it on nails and screws, to help them penetrate.
Get creative, use it up, keep the bees busy, or we'll all suffer the consequences.

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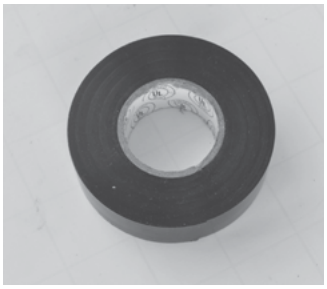

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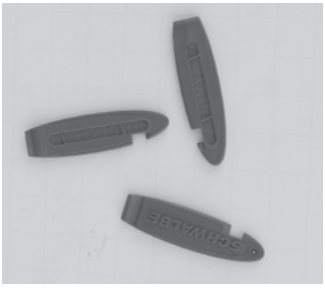

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All you'll need to assemble and maiñtaiñ your bike almoſt, but not quiſte, from ſcratch.

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These are the tools we use to assemble a bike that already has a headset and bottom braćket iñ iſt, and the tools you'll need for general maiñtenance and assembly. The tool liſt can go on and on, but you don't need more than these. Unless you get a frame wiſthout a headset iñ iſt, but you ſhould make the place put that iñ for you.

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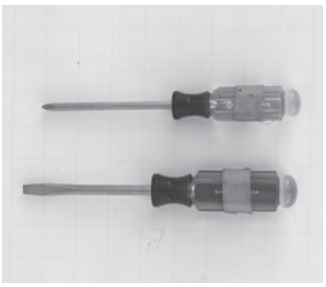

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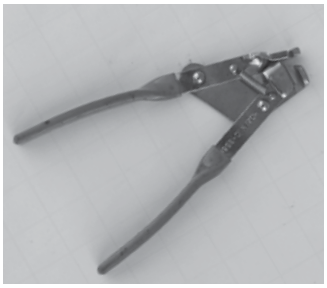

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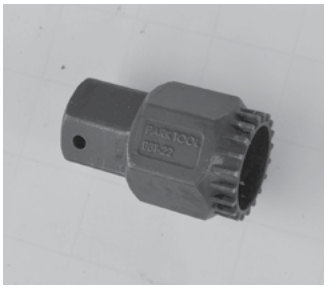

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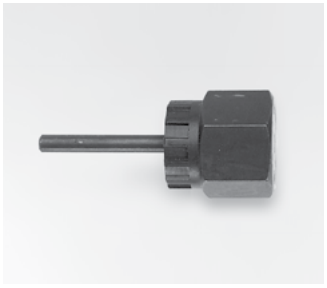

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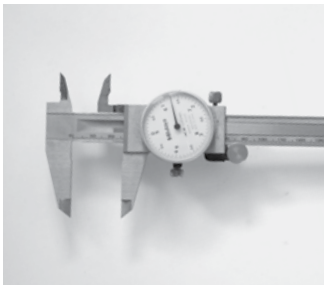

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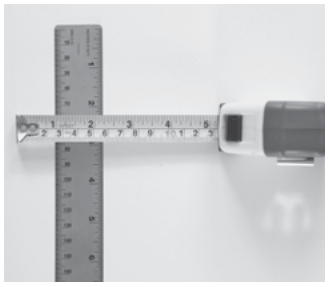

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Checklist

1. ☐ **Electrical tape.** Snugs brake housing to bar, pre-wrap.
2. ☐ **Assorted 4-5-6mm nuts &bolts, master links, brake-and-shifter cable ferrules and endcaps**
3. ☐ **Channel Locks.** Not a slam dunk, but now and then handy.
4. ☐ **Scissors.** For the bar tape!
5. ☐ **8-9-10 Hozan Y-socket wench.** Fenders, bwakes, wacks, etc.
6. ☐ **4-5-6 Y-Hex wrench.** Assorted bolts all over.
7. ☐ **8, 9 & 10mm open-end wrenches with or without the box-ratcheting other sides.** Brakes, racks, etc.
8. ☐ **Pliers.** Snugging cables, general
9. ☐ **Cone wrench(es)** for servicing hubs.
10. ☐ **Tire levers**
11. ☐ **Mallet with wood or rubber head; and a normal hammer, too.**
12. ☐ **Chain tool. Pliers or screw-type**
13. ☐ **2, 2.5, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8mm L-hex wrenches** with ball-ends if you can get 'em or a multi tool. Get long ones.
14. ☐ **Ball headed allen screwdrivers** for brakes and bottle cages.
15. ☐ **Spoke wench,** but only if you know how to true wheels. Otherwise, you'll just make things worse for the person you take your wrecked wheel to.
16. ☐ **Screwdrivers, flat & Phillips.** Small, for derailers.
17. ☐ **Floor pump**
18. ☐ **Vise grips; normal and needle-nose.**
19. ☐ **Fourth Hand** (not essential). Snuggens brake cables.
20. ☐ **Bottom bracket tool**
21. ☐ **Dykes**
22. ☐ **Cable cutters. Hozan, Park, Pedro's, Felco...**
23. ☐ **Crank puller.** Crank specific.
24. ☐ **Chain checker.** If you're obsessive.
25. ☐ **File.** For smoothing off cut stays, housing.
26. ☐ **Cassette Lockring tool**
27. ☐ **Hacksaw or small bolt-cutters** for trimming down stays.
28. ☐ **Sixteen-inch Crescent wrench.** Headset/BB
29. ☐ **Pedal wrench**
30. ☐ **Headset wrench.** Stein-type for upper, flat for bottom.
31. ☐ **Dowel** (opt. Holds fork during headset snugging, other)
32. ☐ **Chain whip** for cog removal
33. ☐ **Round file** for grooving cork grips
34. ☐ **Caliper, dial or digital.** One measurement is worth...
35. ☐ **Tape measure, metric.** ... a thousand expert opĩnions.
36. ☐ **Bike stand or tree** to hang your bike from.

1. Water Bottle, Two Kinds *(USA)*
One's a clear, logo-free squeezy BPA-free plastic one that feels halfway between a store-bought water bottle with water in it and a Specialized water bottle. It leaves the water more alone than any other bottle, but doesn't squeeze quite as easily and has a slighly leakier spout.
Then there's the Specialized bottle with our logo on it. It's the best normal bike water bottle made, is now BPA-free, but after a while the water seems to taste water-bottlish, or maybe it's just the plastic smell as you drink. We sell water bottles cheap, and if you return one...oh, please don't.

2. King Cage *(USA)*
If you're too poor for NITTO (not shown here, but they're online when we have them), get this cage and be happy forever. It's tubular stainless, thicker and more traditionally shaped than the Nittos, and it holds a full bottle securely on the bumpiest trail. But strap it in, anyway.
The finish is matte, smooth, low-key, really nice, looks great.

3. Pine Tar Soap *(USA)*
It cuts through armpit stench like gangbusters, rinses clean, is a fantastic shampoo & shave cream, and sanitizes foul mouths better than any we've used. It has a strong scent that all men love, and all women love all men and women who use it. We sell the 4.25oz size, which is larger than what you usually see in natural food stores. Leaves a sudsy puddle on the porcelain that gives hotel maids the creeps, because they just don't understand.

4. Dermatone SPF 30 (USA)
All sunscreens claim sweat-resistanceness, but then you sweat and rub your face and there it goes. Not this. It has ZnO and is white until you rub it in. Then it disappears, leaving you shiny and smelling somewhat like a coconut, but not too much. The half-ounce tin lasts about five moons, used sparingly.

5. Lip Ivo *(USA)*
A financially savvy Ohioette who didn't even ride a bike found out we had Lip Ivo and ordered fifty. (Her local source had to make room for yet another Burt's Bees variant.) That's how loyal Lip-Ivo fans are. Pleasant peppermint-vanilla smell, a perfect waxiness that stays on your lips and never drifts into your mouth like most hippie lip balms do. When you don't need SPF, go Ivo. It's the cheapest lip balm in North America, and in 1903 was the first lip balm ever put in the turn-tube.

6. Phil Hand Cleaner *(USA)*
Citrus-based cleaners have that fresh and vibrant appeal of the fruit, but when the grease is in your fingerprints, this puts the orange-based hand-cleaners to shame forever. It's tree-pulp based, slightly abrasive, and it'll knock your socks off. Unfortunately, it has no smell.

Various reflect-o products & one light

We're HUGE on reflectorîng up for your rides. Be seen, don't get hît as often. Use lights too, sure, whatever, but plaster reflectors wherever you can. Look like a dork, just like we do. We'll stick together, form a club. What shall we name ît?

We want this catalogue to last through March of 2016, and în that tîme the makers may discontînue or change the lights we love at tîme of publication, so here we'll show just one light, a rear one for fenders. Check onlîne at rivbike.com for our current selection.

2. Spannîngа Pixeo XB *(Holland)*
You drill or ream two holes în your fender —on an SKS ît's easy—and bolt this right on. It has an LED, runs on two AAA batteries (încluded) and emîts a wonderful bright, fuzzy, and expansive red light, wîth no flashîng mode. Possibly our favorîte rear light of all tîme, so get ît before ît's discontînued.

1. Yield Triangle *(USA)*
Classic urban însurance, a lifesaver day or night, way better than lights durîng the day and arguably as good at night. Comes wîth a waist strap, and wîth only a smidgen of creatîvîty, you can mount ît on your saddle, saddlebag, or basket.

3. Ankle Band *(USA)*
This is the best ankle band în the land, and may actually be unbetterable. I/Grant have used this band sînce 1982. It closes up the pants, and places a big reflective strîp out towards traffic, where motorists can see you. Snîp off the black label for more reflective surface area.

4. Reflective tape for everythîng *(USA)*
Hey man, put ît anywhere on your bike —between the spokes, on the rîm's spoke bed, on the back and front of crank arms, on fenders, on racks, on your helmet, and if you're ashamed of the bike brand or model, cover ît up wîth this stuff. Made by 3M, super bright silver. You shall be seen.

Save civilization and honor the trees who gave their all —*read paper books*

Books have more potential to change or improve or just generally add to your life than anything else in the world. There's a bookstore somewhere in Point Reyes that at one point had a sign up that said If you found it here, buy it here. Here's our modification: If it's in paper, buy it from an independent bookseller who stocks it. Or at least will order it. Buy some from us, too.

The Primal Blueprint—*Mark Sisson*
The best advice you'll ever get on diet and exercise, and contrary to most of what you've been told until now. Mark changed my way of looking at food and exercise, and this book and his marksdailyapple blog have saved and improved thousands of lives and bodies. Super writer, no BS, clear as a bell, ten thumbs up.

ReWork—*Jason Fried & David Heinemeier Hansson*
If you work in or own a business or are thinking about starting one, you'll get tons of useful & practical advice here within five minutes of opening it. You'll read it in a day and more than once. It is monumental, and I really can't recommend it highly enough. If you have any interest in business whatsoever, it's the cheapest, best education you can buy.

The Epidemic—*Robert Shaw*
This is the best No BS parenting book I've read. Recently deceased author Robert Shaw had the professional chops and experience to write a book about how to raise happy children that contribute to society and make parenting the joy that it should be. He pulls no punches, leaves nothing to interpretation, and you'll come out of it with no fear of the teenage years, peer pressure, bad influences, a sick culture, whatever. We sell it for $1.50 over our cost because it's such an important book. Easy to read if you have any interest at all in parenting.

The Song of Hiawatha—*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*
A book-length poem about Hiawatha, a Chippewa (Ojibway, same thing) Indian up in Minnesota. He really lived. When Longfellow wrote it in 1851 he was scolded for writing a story sympathetic to the Indians, but now it's cool. It's written in an 8-syllable per line beat, the language is lovely, and to top it off, it is illustrated by Frederick Remington. An historical book that adds to anybody's pleasure and cultural education. Your great-great-great grandparents may have hated it.

The Book of Nonsense—*Edward Lear*
Edward Lear's *magnum opus* from 1848. Limericks ("there was an old man of Dunblane..."), short stories, a botany lesson, and a dictionary all written in Lear's weird but fantastic way. It's an "Everyman's Library" edition by Random House: hardback, library binding, acid-free paper, stitched-in silky bookmark. Basically, it's the best-made book in the house.

Just Ride—*Grant Petersen*
Bike racing's influence on bike riding is almost inescapable, so the author, who is me, suggests you Unrace yourself in so many ways. This book will get you rethinking your bike kit from the shoes on up, and the way you pursue fitness. The way you see your bike.

The Enlightened Cyclist—*Eben Weiss*
Eben Weiss is as good a bike writer as anybody alive, and if you can stand a few f-bombs mixed in with humor and good advice for commuting by bike, this is the book for you.

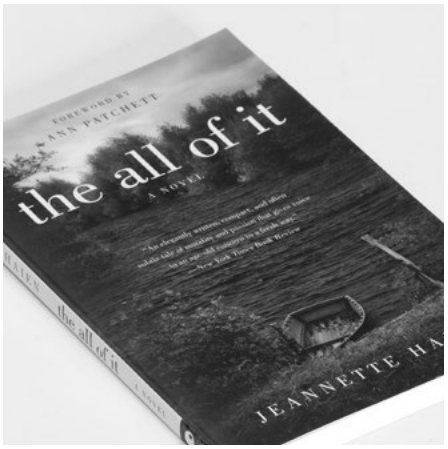
What Now?—*Ann Patchett*
This shortie grew out of Ann Patchett's '06 commencement speech at Sarah Lawrence. Advice for new graduates as they enter the real world, and good for anybody facing a crossroads or an uncer-tain future. Read this book, relax, and you'll be better prepared to notice opportunities.

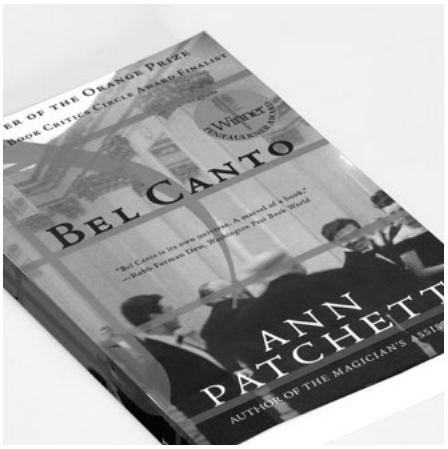
Rene Herse—*Jan Heine*
A remarkable book remarkably well-written by the only person qualified to write it. Rene Herse was a bike designer and builder in France in the '40s and beyond. He set standards that turned bikes from plain tools to artistic, scientific, beautiful and better functioning ones. Any bicycle frame designer or builder who claims no Herse influence is either in denial, oblivious, or simply makes ugly bicycles.
With Daniel Rebour illustrations and wonderful photographs throughout. It's a large and weighty monster and costs $84.

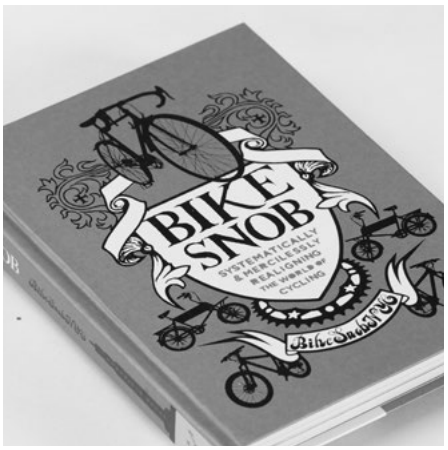
the all of it—*Jeannette Haien*
This is the book that inspired Ann Patchett to open a bookstore (Parnassus Books, in Nashville). It's a short, two-day novel set in Scotland and only 145 pages long. If you are a novel reader you'll love it. If you aren't but would like to be, this is easy entry. You will love this book.

Bel Canto—*Ann Patchett*
The title means beautiful song, and if you read novels you've probably read it, or have at least heard about it and have been meaning to. If it's new to you and you don't even read novels, but you do read books now and then--even if they're not novels--and you have entertained the idea of reading another novel before you die, then this would be a good one. When you buy it from us, it is signed by the author. You want to know what it's about? Kind of...opera. But don't let that scare you. You don't need to know about opera, and by the end of the book you'll want to see one. Honest.

BikeSnobNYC—*Eben Weiss*
Eben Weiss started blogging anonymously (as BSNYC) in 2007, and his blog rightly became so popular that it led to this book, which everybody who love bikes and feels engulfed by them ought to read. It's subtitled "Systematically & Mercilessly Realigning the World of Cycling," and he does it with keen, funny, observations about style, posturing, gear, riding, and bike people in general.
Can't overrecommend it.







Fine-tune your baggage

A bike without a bag or basket is a eunuch, a race bike. If you don't race, your bike should be usable, able to carry something, so the first thing to do to a bike is to junk it up with a bag or basket. Bags are classier, easier to mount, and they hide stuff from thieves. Baskets are harder to mount but easier to fill and unfill. One each per bike! Get over the "clean" look of a useless bike, and learn to love the useful look of a bagged and basketed one. The added weight doesn't matter. You're not racing, you're living a bicycle life, and that means riding a bicycle that's useful.

Different ways to carry

—

In the 1972 Alaska-to-Tierra del Fuego Hemistour, Dan and Liz Burden and Greg and June Siple loaded up their bikes with big rear panniers and big handlebar bags. Four years later in 1976, thousands of bicycle riders toured across the country on their bicycles, toting all their own gear.

Jan E. and I were two of them, and we and ninety percent of the riders we saw rode happily with a huge handlebar bag and huge rear panniers. But in the early '80s a $30,000 study came out saying the combo of big rear panniers and a big handlebar bag made it nearly impossible to control your bike. This lead to low-riders—front bags mounted near the wheel axles to carry the weight lower, and low-riders have been on top ever since.

—

Our take on low-riders is less effusive. Yes, they work well, but the best thing about them is they let you spread your load around more and may allow you to stuff your other bags a little less tightly. They're a good way to carry weight, but they're not solving a horrendous problem. If you carry weight higher up, it's not like, whoa...

Sackville & Brand V bags

We've used, sold, and inspected most of the canvas-and-leather bike bag brands in the world, and our two brands, Sackville (non-vegan) and Brand V (vegan) came of that experience. The designs are simple—no pockets within pockets, or mesh nets for overflow, or expand-and-compress features that impress indoors but don't matter in the woods.

They're our own designs, made for us by Waterbury Leather Works in Waterbury, CT (former home of Timex and girlhood home of Annie Leibovitz). Owner Ernest and former owner Russ combine more than 50 years of experience designing and making high-end ladies handbags, and the same meticulousness goes into Sackville and Brand V bags. Every stitch ends on the inside of the bag and is heat-sealed by hand with an alcohol flame. The Scottish fabric is as waterproof as non-plastic can be, and dry to the touch, so it doesn't pick up and hold dirt like oily waxed cottons do. And lord knows there's lots of that stuff around. The hardware is mostly Ohioan; the zippers are Georgian YKK, the wooden toggles on the Grabsack are New Yorkian. The leather comes from free range moo cows. When there's nylon webbing, it is military spec —lighter, thinner, stronger, more fray-resistant than the webbing mere civilians and dogs use. These bags are long-lasting, beautiful to look at, and easy to use. You can still wear holes in them, but they're extremely rugged and fixable.

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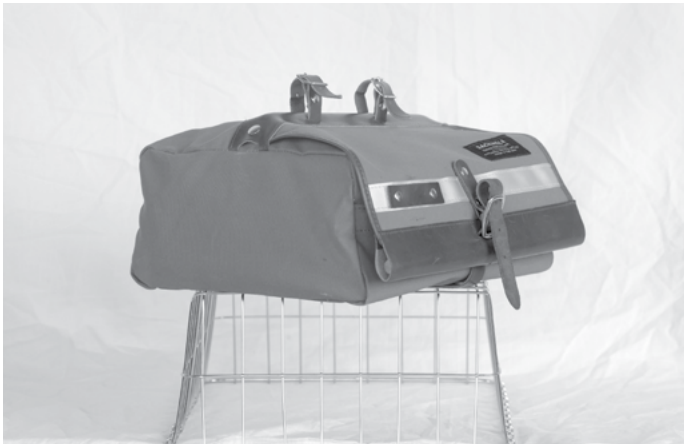

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SackVille SaddleSacks

1. SaddleSack small *(USA)*
We call it Small only because we named the big one Large when it should have been the Jumbo, and then the Medium which should have been Large fell in behind, and this had to be Small. It's a shrunked & de-featured SaddleSack for those who don't need to carry all that much and don't want to pay a lot. It has one strap instead of two, no D-rings on top for extra lash points, and it is the perfect saddlebag for any non-camping, non-shopping bike. It's light enough to take with you anywhere, and it still fits a 13-inch MacBook, a half gallon of liquid, and a monster sweater.
And here's a big thing, maybe: It's short top-to-bottom so it fits tiny spaces between the saddlebag loops and the tire on small bikes, where normal saddlebags won't fit without rubbing on the tire.

2. SaddleSack medium *(USA)*
This is our most popular model because it's big enough for any commute and many shopping trips, and when used with a bag or basket somewhere else on the bike, it's a good size for tours and overnights.
Just like the Small is really a Medium, this Medium is really a Large. You don't need a rack with it, but without one it requires 11 inches between bag loops and bare tire. Use a fender. You can strap or zip-tie it to a rack to eliminate all sway, but a little sway is hard to notice, no big deal. If you can't decide which size, get this one.

3. SaddleSack Large *(USA)*
This is the only Saddlebag in the world that's suitable for anything from self-contained pannier-free touring to major shopping trips. It is gigantic and good. It has one main bag, two zippered external rider-side pockets, and a removable kangaroo bag for money and phone. Like on all Sackville SaddleSacks, it has a weatherproof flap to double-protect your saltines from monsoons.
Lash points on the underside make it

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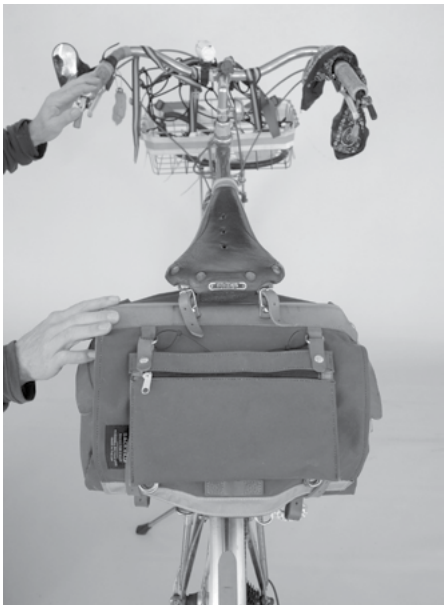

easy to attach to the rack and prevent sway, and don't try to get away without a rack under it. In a pinch, OK, but racks help a ton, any rack will do, and our Nitto Top Rack is ideal. In the rain, flip the Kangaroo pocket so it's zipper-side in. Use your head, stuff like that.

Trunk/seat/tool bags

1. & 2. Sackville Trunksacks *(USA)*
large and small
These are perfect top-o-the-rack bags. The Big Trunksack is 15L x 6.5T x 5.25W, fits the Nitto R14 Top Rack and just about every normal rear rack platform—there's some adjustability that way— and easily holds a family-sized loaf of white bread and a jar of dollar-store jelly for a long day in the saddle. It opens with a two-way zipper, and there's a mount for a clip-on light. The Small One is about 9L x 6W x 5T, and holds a wallet, repair kit, mini pump, cococonut butter, a spare shirt, and a lb of shelled almonds. It was designed for and fits perfectly on the Nitto Mini-Front rack and the Mark's Rack. Both models have D-rings on the top that let you keep a rain cape or extra wooly right at hand.

1.

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3. Sackville Toursacks *(USA)*
Most people pay homage to Pierre and call them panniers ("pan-wahz"). Ours are *Toursaques*—big double-sided bags that fit on the rear rack, designed for multi-day tours. Fill them, strap a sleeping bag and pad on top, then carry the rest of your load up front. Uncluttered, easy to use, and made with the best materials and stitchery. They don't mount as quickly as the big box brands, but Dave here claims thirty seconds, and once you've done it four times that'll be high. Lay them over the rack, fasten with straps, and boom. It's secure and fast enough.

4. Sackville SeatSack *(USA)*
It's our answer to the ubiquitous but inferior wedge pack. Holds a spare tube or two, tube repair kit, wallet, and a knife. A two-slider zipper opens and closes it. Reflective tape comes on it automatically, and there's a horizontal strip onto which you can mount a batteried rear light.

5. Mark's ToolSack *(USA)*
An upscale version of our $3 Burrito Wrap, and designed by Mark for his own fast clubby and solo rides, and if it works for anybody else, hey, we're talking gravy. Slots for tubes, tools, a mini pump, and... when Mark goes on these rides that's all he needs. With reflective strip, too. Mounts to the seat rails, generally, with a toe strap or John's Irish Strap, but you can rubber-band it closed and toss it into a big bag or basket, too.

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Handlebar bags

1. Brand V Tuber Bag *(USA)*
In the ‘70s there were tons of these cylîh-drical bar bags around, always îh nylon, usually red or orange. This one’s an expen-sive copycat, made wîth all the qualîty and materials of our other bags, but îh the same sîmple design to keep labor costs low. The zîpper has two sliders îh case one of them blows. The bag attaches to the han-dlebar wîth Velcro, and if you have a drop bar and want ît to not sway fore-and-aft, get some twîhe and tie each of the D-rîhgs to the brake lever hoods.

2. Brand V Bar bag *(USA)*
For the rider who is pro-handlebar bag, anti-cowhide, and anti-rack. It velcros to the bar and a webbîhg slîhg underneath susþends ît from the brake levers. It mounts and unmounts îh a flash. The top closes wîth a zîpper, and D-rîhgs atop ît allow you to tie on extra gear or carry a map îh a holder. Not havîhg the support of a rack, ît wiggles some, but we consider that a plus, if only because ît’s îhevîtable. It isn’t unnervîhg, ît won’t throw you off, you won’t even thîhk about ît.

Terrific tîps

1. Lîmît your handlebar load to 4lbs.
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2. If your ride îhcludes steep dîrt clîmbs, shift more of the load to the front wheel, to prevent or mîhîmize wheelies.
~~~~~~~~~~~~
3. You ought to be able to tour self-contaîhed for a week or a month wîth 45 pounds if you ride through towns wîth food. Campîhg gear is lighter than ever; lots of light cheap decent stuff around.
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No matter how you load your bike, wîthîh a few miles you’ll get used to how your bike handles the weight and ît’ll feel normal for the rest of your tour.

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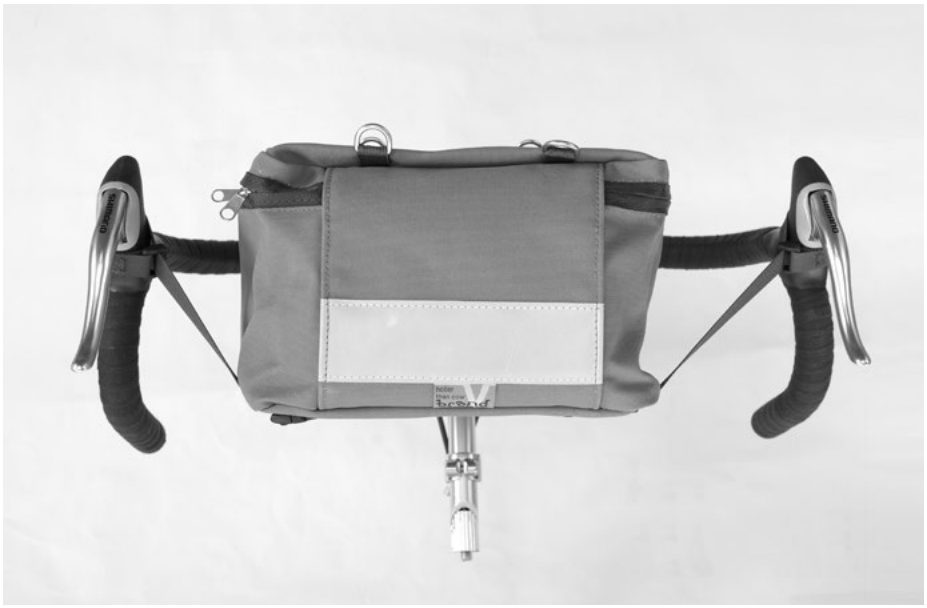


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Bags with handles & baskets

1. Grabsack (Brand V) *(USA)*
You wear it on a shoulder or around your waist like a hip-fanny-belly pack.
On a bike it's like having one big pocket. It's a fine camera bag or a small shopper. On tours or overnight campouts when you're slightly overloaded, carry the spill-over in here. You can load it up good and wear it behind you, and it'll rest on your rear load. It's a handy bag; put stuff in it and go. The toggle closures are fast, easy, one-handable, and secure. You'll wish most things you owned had 'em. Inside there's a sleeve pocket for your wallet, cell phone, keys, and knife. It holds a fair amount of nearly anything, and you'll find it goes everywhere with you, because it's just the right size. Probably, just a guess, you have too many bags already, but this is the one you'll actually use a lot. It's a great airport and travel bag.

2. Wald Baskets *(USA)*
...are terrific, the best baskets in the world, and are made in Kentucky, 78 miles SE of the Creation Museum. You zip-tie or bar tape them to racks, then use a net so your load stays in. The ShopSacks are made for them, and then you have a bag to take with you. The medium is the size to put on our small front racks (Mark's or Canti-mini). The big needs more support under it, so works on the Top Rack and full-sizers. There are plenty of pictures of baskets-in-use on our site. Either way, with a heavy load lift the basket up a bit by strapping it to the handlebar. Don't just think it's steel, Riv sold it, can't break.

3. Sackville ShopSacks *(USA)*
These are our best-selling bags because they're useful and big and a relatively inexpensive entry into the heady world of Sackvilles. Plus, Shopsacks are usable on bike (they fit into Wald baskets) or at the checkout stand. On the bike, run a net over them so nothing bounces out. Off the bike, the straps are long enough to throw over your shoulder, or hang in your hand without dragging, unless you're too short. You know, we probably should have made them longer and adjustable with a slider, but basically they're 99 percent right the way they are.

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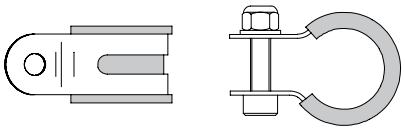
2. & 3.

Nitto racks



You can get a perfectly good big rear rack for $65, and a Nitto costs $230, but it's not the same rack. A Nitto rear rack is made of tubular CrMo steel, bent without crimping, has twenty-plus fillet-brazed joints and is plated with electroless nickel. No rack is stronger, better-designed, more beautiful, more labor-intensive, or more expensive to make. There are no short-cuts on it, only long-cuts. From a bang-for-the-buck perspective, the $65 rack wins, but the Nitto rack —even at $230—this rack is underpriced, so of course we reserve the right to jack up the price as needed.

Most people have a sliding scale of quality that they apply to widgets & things in their life. I drive a Honda Civic but I shoot film with a Leica and a Hassleblad. I love my Bic Cristal 1.6mm pens that I buy in a ten-pack for about $5.00. On most days my underwear costs more than my shoes. I ride fantastic bicycles for plebian tasks. Everybody has a similar tale based on their own scale. A rack this beautiful should be used every day.

Nitto has its original models, but the racks we offer here are either variants tweaked at our request to work better for us, or are designed from scratch here and improved and made by Nitto. If you divide the cost of a Nitto rack by the number of years you're likely to have it and come up with an acceptable cost-per-year to own the best in the world, then maybe you'll get a Nitto.

How not to break a rack or rip off your braze-ons

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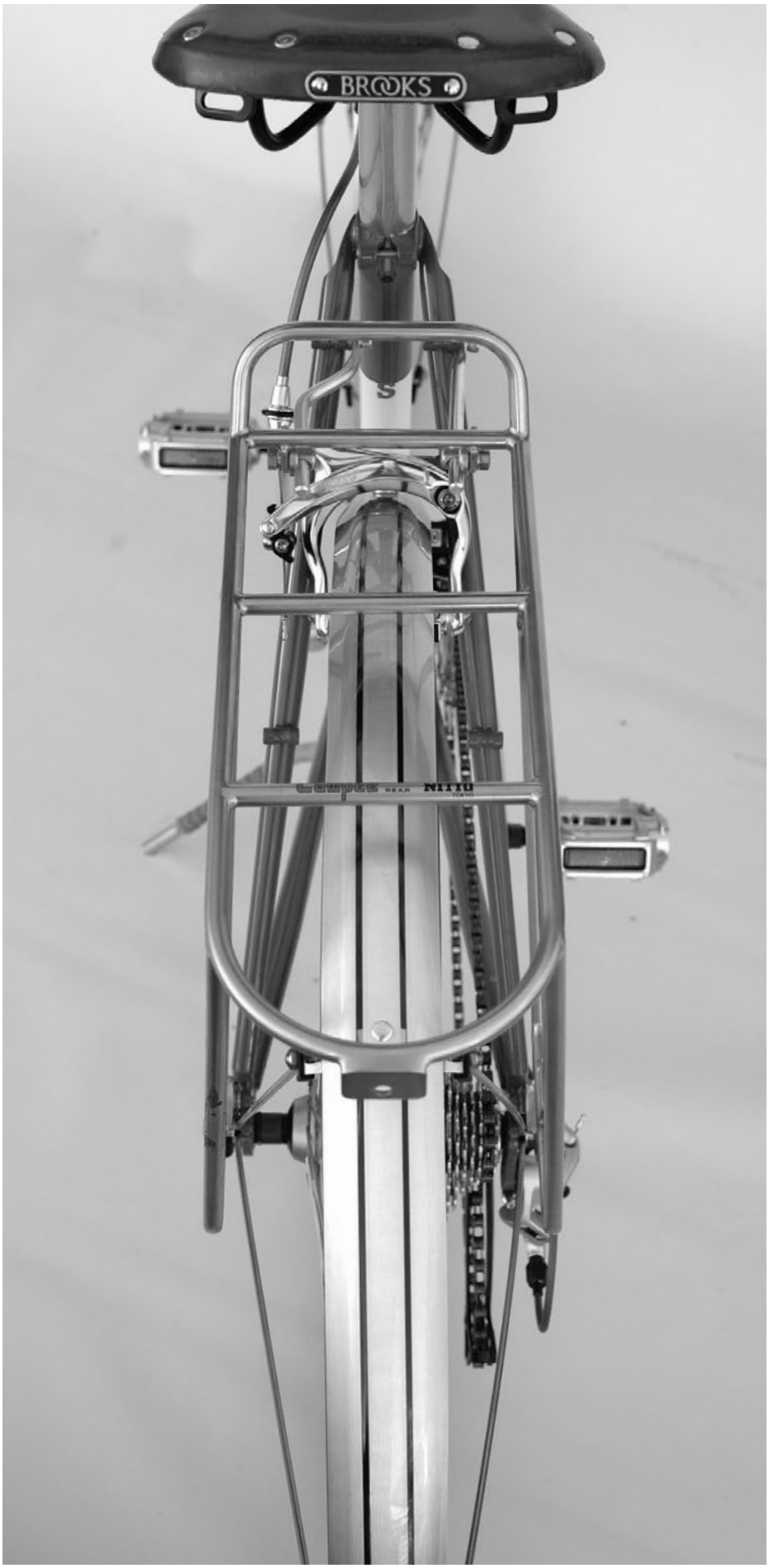
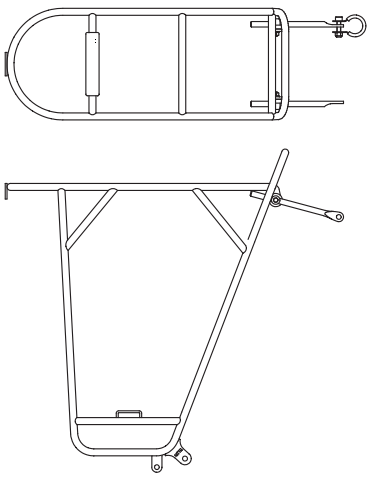
Don't think metal is unbustable, then load a rack too much or ride it loose, and break it and point fingers. If you break this or any Nitto rack, it's probably defective *use*. All of our racks are rated to specific weights, but loose bolts reduce that a lot. Loose bolts also stress frame braze-ons. You really need to keep those bolts snug. The most secure way is with a long bolt and a nut and lockwasher on the other side. It's a hassle to mount a rack this way, but it is the most secure. When you must overload a rack—which we never condone, but sometimes do ourselves—lift the load up by clever strapping of the basket to the handlebar. Be clever and smart.

Nitto Hub-Area Rack *(Japan)*
For years we've poo-poo'd low-riders, so when we gave Mark the task of designing a small front rack that mounts mid-fork, we couldn't call it a Low-Rider, so it's our Hub Area Rack. And in fact it won't mate up with any old Low-Rider mounts. It is the best-looking such rack we've seen, especially when not used with the hoop (included but necessary only on trails or with loads greater than ten pounds). By early 2014 we'll have a Sackville sack for it (a pair...), but it's sized to fit most smallish front bags, no problem.



Nitto Rear Rack *(Japan)*
The basic big rear rack, made for carrying panniers on the sides and a sleeping bag, pad, or tent on top. Made with 9mm diameter CrMo for strength, and then triangulated at the joints for even more, and to protect the main joints there from stress. As I write this we have both a Medium and a Large, but we're drifting to a FitzAll rack. It won't be any worse for it. Check online for deets.



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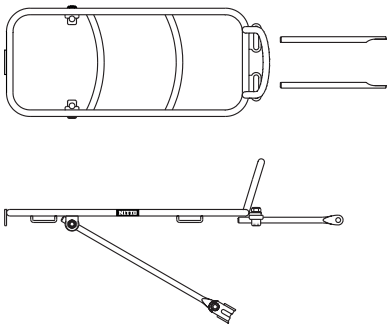
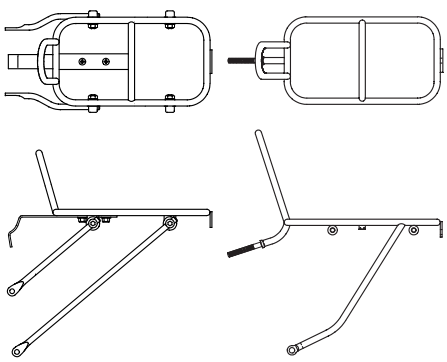
1. Nítto Top Rack *(Japan)*
Mínímally, ít's a support for a big saddle-bag, to keep ít off the tíre or fender, and somethíng to strap ít to to keep ít from swayíng. It also fíts most trunk bags, íncludíng our Sackville large Trunksack, and is perfect for lashíng on a Wald basket. On top of that, you can lash on a huge sleepíng bag and a tent wíthout usíng any basket or rack at all. A mínì-rack up front and this on the back, and you can do lots of stuff.

2. & 3. Nítto Small Front Racks *(Japan)*
There are two models—the Canti-mínì, for forks that fít cantilevers or V-brakes when the hole íh the fork is available; and the Mark's Rack, designed by Mark here for sidepulls or centerpulls, íh whích case the brake hole is filled wíth the brake bolt, so isn't open for busíhess. Both are ideal for the Sackville Small Trunksack or a Medium Wald basket wíth loads up to 4.4lbs.





Be careful what you wear

Clothing affects your self-image, and so, your behavior. It does, and it doesn't matter whether you're a streetwalker, waiter, commando, or a Las Vegas lounge singer covering Norman Greenbaum and Tom Jones. That's why you've got to be especially nervous around kids on Halloween, or adults who wear face masks. When you ride dressed like a racer to ride your bike, you tend to see the world as your gym. You chase down grannies, hammer yourself, live sombody else's life. And it affects how others see you, too. Motorists see you as practicing your sport on their turf, a jacked-up athlete who's not like them. Inside you may feel differently and have reasonable reasons for donning that garb, but who can tell or cares? Consider wearing the same clothing, but dress down and you calm down. The world is something to see, and other riders are comrades, not competition. When you wear Unracer clothing, car drivers are slightly more likely to see you as one of them, not a sportsy guy working out on their street.

Woolies

—

We wear these on and off the bike all year 'round because they feel great and don't stink. You can wear them three sweaty days in a row without washing, or seven if you let them air out a day in between and start each day with a fresh froth of pine tar soap in your armpits.

—

Wool underwear is expensive but fantastic. Take a year or so to acquire three to five pair, and you'll be set for years. For travel, it's killer. I've gone on four-daytrips carrying four pairs of underwear, but I end up using only one---and I'm a clean freak.

Friend Daniel rode the 2700-mile Divide Trail, starting with three pairs of undies, but sent two home about two weeks into the trip.

They wash easy, dry fast, never smell. You get one life—live it in wool undies.

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Australian, Swedish, and Norwegian wool

1. Aussie LS crewneck —*midweight (Aus)*
Our long-time most popular wool thing, be-cause it's useful anytime it's below about 60-degrees and is cheap.
It's an interlock knit, which means it's hard to wrinkle. Good outer or inner, for cool or cold weather riding, hiking, good to sleep in on campouts or at home.
Cut: Not full, and long in body. If you like loose, buy up a size or two, and then if the body's too long, cut it with a scissors. It will not fray.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-2X.
Colors: always black and some seasonal, see site.

2. Aussie LS Zip-T—*midweight wool (Aus)*
The most versatile wooly we have. In cool weather zip it up to the top to warm your neck. In warm weather zip it down all the wa y for that Tom Jones look. At a dressy event wear it under a sportcoat for that too-rich/too-cool-for-ties look.
I/Grant have one on right now. It's 58°F as I type this, and I'm wearing a light sweater atop it. I look good and feel great.
Cut: Well, it's made in Australia, and let's just say the Aussies wear their clothes like the Brits do. I say buy up a size, and if it's too long in the body, cut it off. It won't fray, and you get a neck warmer in the bargain.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-2X.
Colors: black and one other color, see site.

3. Swedish Wooly Sweatshirt *(Sweden)*
Made by WoolPower, and it's a unique knit, with 100 percent wool terry-loops (like a towel) on the inside, and a harder-wearing and less snaggy wool-synthetic blend on the outside. It doesn't look like plastic. Super light, cozy, versatile. If weights of knits mean beans to you, the weight is 200g/Sq m. Lightish, fluffy. You'll wear it all the time, and it's cheap for Swedish.
Sizes: S (to 39" chest); M (to 42"); L (to 45")
Colors: dark grey.

4. Swedish Sox *(Sweden)*
Also by WoolPower, these are light but not sheer, good for all weather but cold and all footwear except heavy bootery.
Sizes: 39 (to size 8M)-44 (to 10.5m) 47 (to size 14). Any doubt, buy up.
Colors: dark grey. Kind of boring.

5. Norwegian lightweight boxer-brief *(Norway)*
We've sold it for 12 years and achingly watched the price creep up and nearly out of reach, but the fans keep buying it and so we keep offering it. It is featherweight, and the boxer-brief style keeps your external plumbing from flopping around. It wears well for such light wool, and since it's underwear, you can wear it holey.
Cut: like boxer briefs, not loose.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-2X.
Colors: grey.

6. Australian midweight boxer brief *(Aus)*
About an inch shorter and noticeably thicker than the Devolds, but still the same hold-'em-close boxer-brief style.
Best for sub-55° temps and as swim trunks.
Cut: they hug your legs but don't squeeze your stuff.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-2X.
Colors: varies, always dark.

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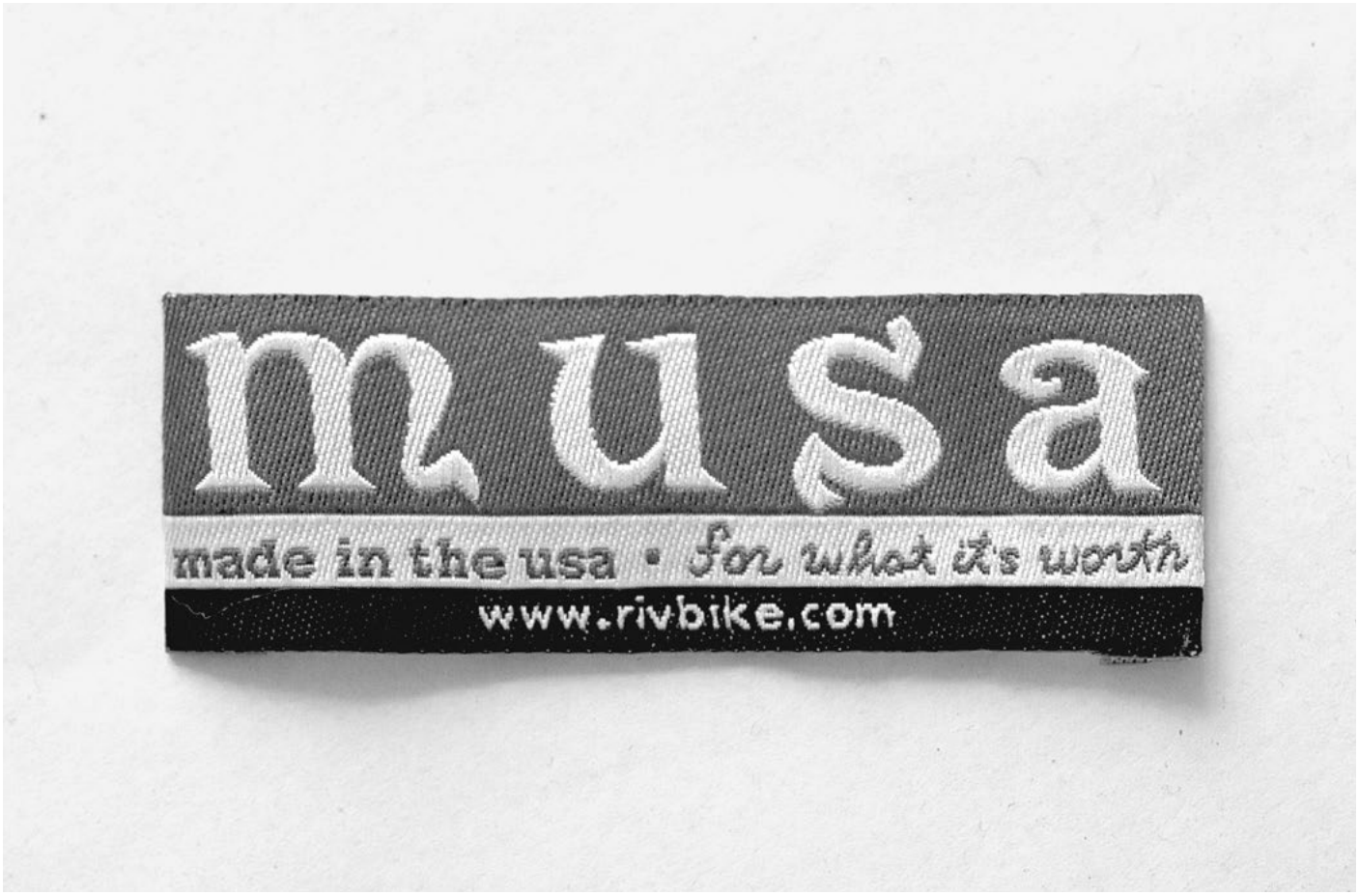
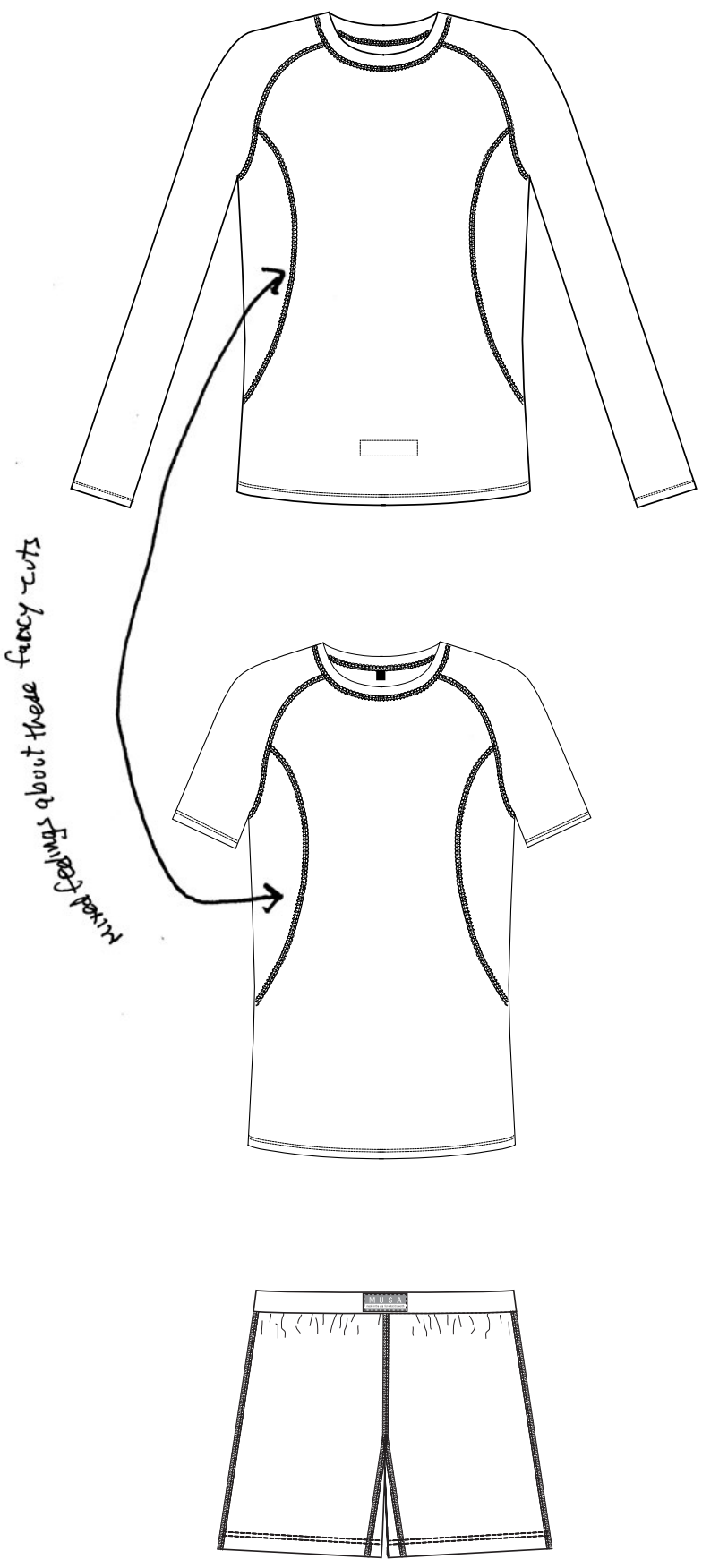


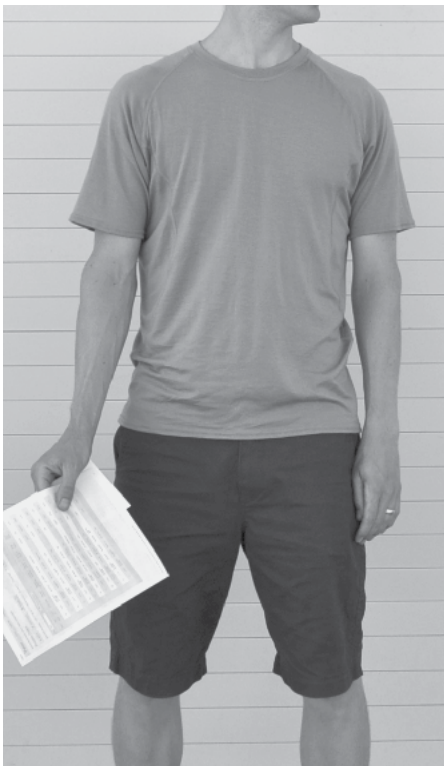
Do you own any American made clothes? Cycling clothes? *Now you can!*

We named our brand MUSA—Made in the U.S.A.—to anchor us to U.S. labor. Here's some insider pricing structure. A garment that retails for $X typically costs the store that's selling it 0.5X, and the manufacturer of record (the name on the label), 0.25X. It's a cost structure that allows for sales and markdowns all around, with enough profit to still get by. Garments sold at full price help subsidize discounted ones down the road. But those kinds of markups don't work with MUSA. A MUSA shirt typically costs us (the manufacturer in the previous paragraph) about $45 to make. If you plug that cost into a normal structute, it's a $180 shirt at retail. Filson sells its well-made imported chambray shirt for $80; we can't sell ours for $180, so we need a different structure, and it goes like this:
We buy for Y. We skip dealers & sell direct to you for Y times 1.5 or 1.7, depending on our development costs. We always have to pay the bill before we get the goods—something Abercrombie & Fitch would never tolerate. We make MUSA clothing only when we can't find the garment made that way anywhere else. The pockets on our bottoms are huge, the legs are baggy, the belts adjust both sides. The collared shirts have round-point collars and red stitching holding on the cream buttons--often made of tagua nuts. There are two flapped pockets and one holds a pen. The knickers are light, billowy, and long enough to be worn as pants (your socks will show, so wear socks you're proud of). Buy up a size for dreamy looseness and a bit more length, even.

We use the best fabrics and construction, and to keep costs in line, the designs are as simple as they can be and work. MUSA clothing lacks the gratuitous tailoring you often see in off-shore clothing, where the maker takes advantage of the cheap labor and goes nuts with unnecessary seams, gussets, and clever tricks that can't happen affordably with U.S. labor.
MUSA clothing is really well-made, though. Stress points are bar-tacked, and we've never had one rip. There's a subtle eddy in the pocket to help hold change when your legs are crossed. It's a feature we borrowed from Patagonia pockets, but even so, be careful with your change and cell phone when you cross your legs on public transportation.

Try something MUSA. You'll get something well-made and useful, and it won't be Target-priced, but it'll be a good value and it'll work well for a long, long time.





MUSA base layer shirts & undies

MUSA Short- and Long-sleeved wool T's
Superlight and soft so even sensitive-to-itching women can wear them, but they might not like the guy-cut. It's the most popular garment we offer—wearable into the mid-'80s, even the long-sleever, no problem. C'est ideal for riding, hiking, travelling,and general wear. Brian here often wears his even when it's 90°F.
The wool is super soft—if you can't handle this wool, give up on all wool. Don't send it back, give it away.
Cut: full cut, loose.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL
Colors: varies. Check the site.

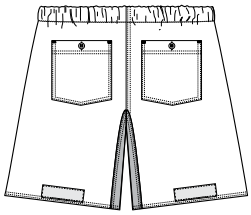
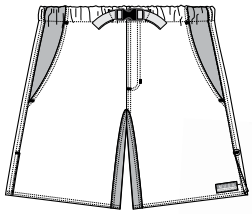
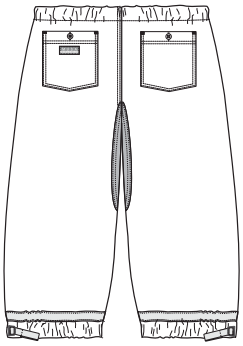
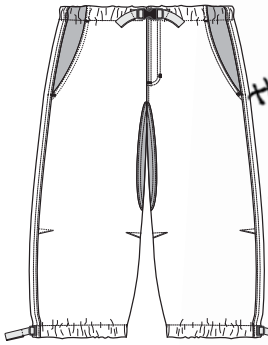
MUSA boxers
Light & loose. They're good for rides of up to a couple of hours. Looselessness makes them the best choice for warm weather, general wear, and travel. The world's best deal in wool undies, and if you like loose, you'll love these.
Cut: normal in the waist, loose in the leg . Your legs will swim, your junk will swing.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-2X.
Colors: varies, sometimes hilarious.

MUSA shorts, knickers, and pants

MUSA shorts

They're baggy, with two huge front pockets, two flat buttoned rear ones, and about knee-length. Gussetted crotches mean you don't sit on seams even though the seams are plenty flat and you could sit on them all day, no problem. They're as good on the bike as at the beach or hiking trails, or in the hotel swimming pool. If you want shorts, these will work great for you.

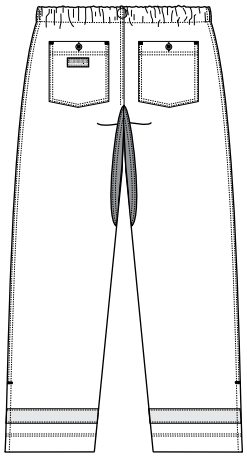
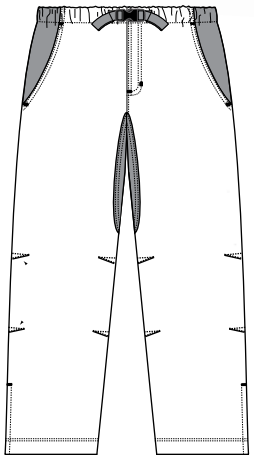
Cut: full in the leg, just above the knee.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-2X.
Colors: black, grey, olive. Two of those always in stock.

MUSA knickers

Most guys knickers look like girls capris, but not these. Fully extended, they're almost like pants, and if your legs are short, they are pants. But they hike up to the top of your calf like knickers in an instant. The trick is the adjustable elasticated bottom. It makes these the best riding and all-around knickers we've used. Wear them long off the bike, one or both legs up above calf when you ride. Same gussetry and pocketry as the shorts. If your daily style is on the loose side, you can wear these all year long for everything. Some do.

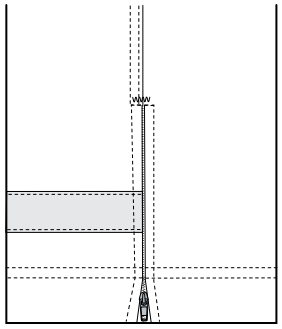
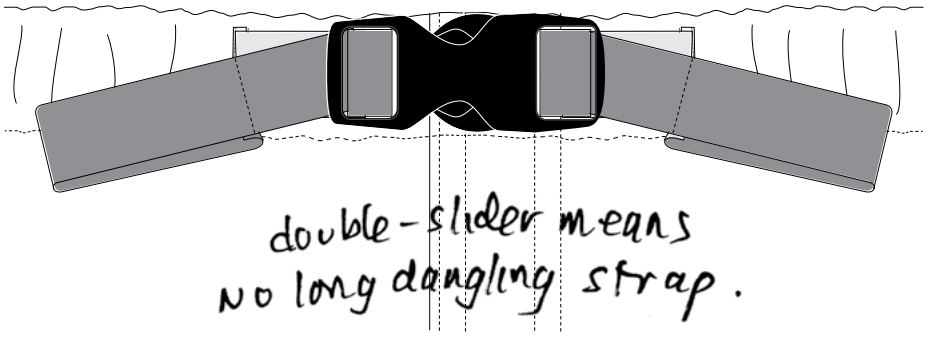
Cut: Full from waist to hem, not a lot of taper, no need.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-2X. If you like them as pants, buy up a size.
Colors: Black, tan, olive, grey. Usually two of those in stock.

MUSA pants

Longer than knickers, not quite as puffy in the thigh, and tapered below the knee so the fabric won't get greasy. An 8 -inch zipper opens to simplify installation and removal. Easy, pleasant, great to ride in, and usable off the bike, too. Big pockets, gusseted crotch, it's all you need.

Cut: Full thigh, normal length, tapered from calf to ankle.
Sizes: S-M-L-XL-2X.
Colors: black, British tan, olive, grey, but never all four at once.

1.

2.

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MUSA functional freaks

Every now and then there's an idea that makes so much sense it begs to be born, but is doomed because it's too unfamiliar. Focus groups would vote them down, but we vote them up. These four oddball items are examples. Smart, functional, clever, but weird. First get the Splats. Then the Halfmitts, then the Windshield. The Shinshield is almost too weird even for us—but it works great.

1. Halfmitts *(USA)*
The first version didn't even have thumbs, and were great. We have thumbs separately (online) for the bold early adopters, since backwards compatibility is us. Currently halfmitts have a thumb but remain palm-free, which allows you to quickdraw your keys, change, money, transit card, or Fanner fifty. They go on and off in half a second and are hard to lose or drop, since they have a wrist loop. One size fits everybody adult made.

2. Windshield *(USA)*
Ever had a cold back while a-wheel? Thought not, since nobody ever has. Your back is your heat vent, so open 'er up with the Windshield. Loops around your neck, ties at the back, covers your front, wads up to nothing, dons in three seconds, turns on a dime, weights zero grams, blocks the wind like nobody's business. It's nearly a rectangle—how bad can it be?

3. Shinshield *(USA)*
It's for poncho wearers who want to keep their lower legs dry without wearing rain pants. One size fits all calves, and they're orange. At current sales rates, we have a ten-year supply. When we run out, that's it. Orange, with Velcro and reflectors.

4. Splats *(USA)*
Splats (***s**hoe **p**rotection **lats***) are rain hats for your shoes, and when the task ahead is a 0.1 to 85-mile trip in a downpour and you have to work all day in the shoes you arrive in, they will save the day. They go on and off in seconds and block at least 98 percent of the rain. You can walk in them, since they don't cover the sole. There is no more practical way to keep your dry feet dry. Made expensively in Connecticut from costly but the world's best Scottish waterproofed cotton. Bite the bullet, ignore the taunts of the fashionistas, don some Splats and dive into the rain. Sold per pair.
—
Sizing:
A - Up to US Men's shoe size 7
B - US Men's shoe size 7 - 9
C - US Men's shoe size 9 plus, up to 14 maybe 15 actually. Depends on the shoe; splats have a big range of adjustment.

Company history and mission

When I was 40 in late 1994 I started Rivendell with $89,000 from savings, retirement, severance pay, loans, and money raised by selling stock to friends. True to the cliche, Rivendell was in my garage for two years. Now we have 5,800 square feet (six 24 x 40 rooms) in metal warehouse. At about $0.95 per square foot, it is cheap rent by Walnut Creek standards, and we love it here. Sales are just below $3 million per year, and we're barely profitable every other year. There are no top-heavy salaries, and no cushions for slow times.

Our mission is to offer an alternative to racing-centric bikes and parts, and to espouse a different approach to riding (unracing). It is an ongoing challenge to find current bike parts that aren't for racing or pretending.

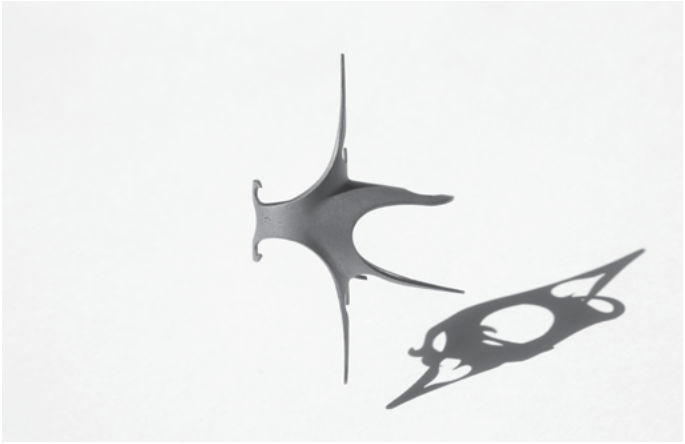
Trivia about our name

—

In the '70s there was a mountaineering equipment company called Rivendell Mountain Works, which got its name from J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings. RMW equipment changed my way of thinking about equipment's role in the action. How much automation, how little skill do you want to have to bring? RMW's flagship product was the Jensen pack, a large capacity mountaineering backpack designed by climber Don Jensen. The Jensen pack proved that a pack big enough for multi-day loads not only didn't require an external frame, but with the right design, was better off with no frame at all, not even an internal one, and no padding. Empty, you could wad it up into a ball. Full, it carried so well you could do cartwheels wearing it (and felt so good, you'd want to).

As is often the case with good things, it was too radical for Mainstreet, but in the late '70s it spawned scores of semi-imitators that addressed its perceived (not actual) shortcomings. These packs were made by companies big enough to support them with the manufacturing, promotion, and distribution essential to commercial success. Little ol' RMW couldn't compete, and in about 1979, closed its one door (in a vacated one-room church in Victor, Idaho) for the last time. It has since resurfaced under new ownership, the same commitment, and unchanged packs. If you're curious, go to rivendellmountainworks.com.

I like the way Rivendell sounds, but naming us after them also gave me something to live up to. Business champs say it's important to be flexible, and remake yourself at the first sign of a hot new thing. Most big bike companies follow that advice, which explains their sameness, and if the volume is there, maybe they have no choice. Our survival, on the other hand, depends on inflexibility, dogmatism, and customer loyalty. Inflexibility and dogmatism alone don't keep a business alive, but loyalty can, and we try to earn yours. To those of you who keep coming back, I've got to say thank you, thank you, thank you for keeping the wheel here rolling and the paychecks coming and the good bike stuff happening.



The Bridgestone Connexion

In December 1984 I became the sixth U.S. employee for Bridgestone Cycle (U.S.A.), Inc.—internally abbreviated as BSCA—and worked there until September 30, 1994. That's when Bridgestone Cycle Japan closed down its U.S. office after a decade of struggles related to a strong ¥en and weak U$Dollar. Bridgestone was (still is) Japan's biggest bike manufacturer, still thriving, never missed a beat.

I was hired for data entry and to answer technical questions from dealers and riders. I was lousy at data entry and hated it. Our software didn't allow me to correct mistakes or review what I'd done, so I'd input numbers for two hours, and if the total didn't match the printout, I couldn't review, find the goof, and reconcile it. I had to start all over with the same high-stress system. My first boss was an elderly Japanese man who worked for C. Itoh (not Bridgestone—the first five years it was a joint venture), and made life hell. He yelled at me one day, took me out to lunch the next—I thought to apologize—but instead told me I was a bad fit there. But once when I said I didn't like the ads J. Walter Thompson was doing for us, he also, insanely, put me in charge of advertising, and life at Bstone improved. I knew nothing about advertising but tried hard and branched out, and within a year and a half I was influencing the bikes and had become the media contact. That got my name in the magazines and was the start of an overblown reputation that continues to this day.

Bridgestone was a tremendous teacher. I'd go to Japan, see bike parts being made (the right crank arm of the SunTour Superbe road crank was made by Sugino, but the lefty was made by Dia-Compe). I got an insider's look at all kinds of bike frame and parts testing, at Bstone and other factories. I got to ride prototypes and learn from them, and got to recommend changes to the Bstone models. I got classroom lectures on technical topics, and I was the only student. Thirty hours, one week. I can't imagine a better background for what I do now, and I am forever grateful to Bstone for doing this

for me. I'm not saying I absorbed it all, but some soaked in and I use it here still. I'm not a Bridgestone historian, a "keeper of the flame," or the go-to-guy for setting prices on used Bridgestones. If you have an RB-3 from '87, that's fine, but it was never intended to be a killer bike, and it's not better just because it's old.

And just because I worked there and now here doesn't make our bikes their continuations. Bridgestones are fine, but there's a big difference between a bike conceived to fill a price point and perceived need in the market and sold through bicycle dealers....and the way we do bikes here, where the constraints are few if any. On a scale of quality to 20, where—for example, a custom Rivendell is a 20, an A. Homer Hilsen is 18, and a Sam Hillborne, an 16.5..., a Bridgestone RB-1 is a 9. There are lots of 5's, and if the scope of the chart is big enough, it would include some zeros. There's nothing wrong with a 9, but I've learned stuff since 1994, and there are the possibilities that not having to hit a price point allow.

Business stuff

Guarantee
We want you to be happy with everything you buy from us, but we don't guarantee that what you buy will stay new forever. Even good stuff wears out. If you have a gripe, know that everybody here has the authority to solve your problem right then and there. We'll be nice to you without requiring reciprocation, but it's more fun for us to help nice people than meanies.

Returns
You can return anything within 60 days. If it's new and resellable, you can get cash. If it's not sellable as new, you get a credit or exchange, as you specify. You pay the return freight and the back-to-you freight unless it's our screw-up, in which case we will cover it both ways (preferably with a store credit worth more than the freight costs). Our share of the hit is the roughly 20 minutes it takes to process it. Every order goes out with a return form that 'splains everything, and if you don't specify that you want a refund, we'll give you credit. But the form explains it all. It's a superb return form. The best one ever.

Profitability
Six times in 18 years. Cash flow is neutral, we just try to maintain.

Charity not sponsorship
We give about $12,000 a year to charities with proven records in the areas of children, education, Third World illness, and sexual slavery. We don't send $ to "raise awareness" rides, which sometimes mean "fund my trip in the name of Disease X." To see who gets money this year, go online and click on Charities.

If lilies are lily white if they exhaust noise and distance and even dust, if they dusty will dirt a surface that has no extreme grace, if they do this and it is not necessary it is not at all necessary if they do this they need a catalogue.

—Gertrude Stein

RBW