

Buying nearly-new Bikes up to two years old

It should be perfect, but run through this drill before you buy

BUYING a bike that's one or two years old should be easy - there might be some warranty left, it won't need an MoT for a while and the biggest chunk of depreciation is behind you, leaving a still modern, clean machine that's just nicely run in.

Expect to see 5000-8000 miles on the clock and an almost perfect finish. Pitted fork legs or furry fasteners means it's seen winter use and that means the fasteners you can't see, and the brake calipers, could well be knackered too.

The owner should have all the paperwork including original sales receipts, log book (V5),

fully stamped service book (anyone buying a new bike and not servicing it is an idiot - walk away), both keys and alarm fobs (if fitted) and transfer of ownership details for security markings (Datatag or similar).

Make sure the VIN and engine numbers match those on the log book. The V5 should also tell you whether it's a parallel import but, if necessary, call the official importer with the VIN number and check it against their register. This is important because if there's any recall you may not get the rectification notice. Mechanical or labour costs might not be covered, either.

* Exhaust

■ Race cans are the first things most owners buy. A nearly new bike should come with the original too. Original kit is heavier and less powerful, but it's also expensive. You'll need it for the MoT - and non-availability could mean the bike's been crashed.

* Engine

■ Should be perfect. Most modern bikes are fuel-injected and should warm up and idle smoothly. Numbers scratched on the engine mean it's been raced

* Numberplate

■ To get a new, legal numberplate you need the bike's V5 and proof of ID. Small, 'show' plates are made up without these prerequisites. So to minimise the risk that your bike's nicked, and to stay on the right side of the law, make sure you get the original too if a smaller one's fitted.

* Suspension

■ Stock suspension is normally fine for the first 12,000 miles. But if the tops of the adjusters are scratched and worn it could be a sign that the bike's been used as a track tool.



* Bodywork

■ Should be blemish-free. Check tank, ignition and seat release locks turn smoothly, and that indicators, mirrors and tail unit are OE and undamaged.

* Crashing

■ Just because a bike's been down doesn't make it a bad buy. Light drops from forgotten disc locks are a fact of life. Stickers may be there to cover up scratches, so peel them back. Indicators, exhausts, mirrors and bar end weights take the

brunt of minor impacts so check them and never believe the 'I brushed a wall' story. Non-standard paint on a bike this new is often a sign it's been crashed. But be aware some sportsbikes come in limited edition colours.

* Wear & tear

■ Look at the swingarm for scuffs from boots, the tank for scratch marks, the tailpiece for scuffs, the screen for abrasion, the seat for tears, the fork legs for bubbling, scuffs to the wheels from chains, tired sprockets and saggy chain - then add up the cost to replace them or overlook them, and subtract that from the asking price.

* Finance

■ Nearly-new bikes run the highest risk of having outstanding finance. Call MCN's Bike Check on 01722 435555 to find out. A check costs £36.

"I buy and sell nearly-new bikes..."

■ Heston Slyfield is a sales executive at Chiswick Honda, one of London's biggest franchised dealers. They sell hundreds of new and secondhand bikes every year.

"Every bike that's out of its warranty gets an internal inspection on top of the usual checks like head races, bearings and tyre condition to ensure it's 100 per cent

"We like people to tell us about their bikes and we're always happy to hear if they've done more oil changes between services and so on - it creates an impression they care about their bikes.

"Customers who clean their bikes religiously will always get top money - the wheels will be free of brake dust, the shock will be spotless and the forks clean and unpitted.

"We can always tell straight away if a bike's been garaged or not, naked bikes especially.

"We don't discriminate between commuting miles or trackday miles - so long as the condition of the machine is spot-on and the service history is intact."

* Track bikes

■ Plenty of late model sportsbikes are bought specifically for racing or trackdays, then re-sold after a couple of years with an attractive mileage and 'dry, summer use only'.

There are tell-tale signs: pristine bodywork on a scuffed frame, scratched and chipped wheels from many tyre changes, worn discs, expensive suspension rebuilds, non-OE braided hoses (you can't race with rubber ones), scratched suspension adjusters, zip ties where OE wiring loom retainers should be, damaged lockstops and a creased subframe from where it's been straightened.



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