

Superdave's Tech Tip

Front wheel installation:

This is a very simple but very critical process to insure the proper working order of your forks. If your forks get pinched or spread it will make your forks have lots of sticktion and feel really stiff.

Most all forks will have a shouldered axle. I recommend that before installing your wheel you check the fit of the axle through each for leg to make sure it will completely slide through nice and easy.

Some people like to use hammers that can mushroom the ends and create burrs. Your bike might not be brand new but new to you and the prior owner may have not been so kind.

Once you install your front wheel, the first step is to tighten the axle. If the axle rotates then snug the pinch bolts on the shoulder side of the axle. After the axle nut is tight I go ahead and tighten the pinch bolts on that same side. Then go to the shouldered side and loosen the pinch bolts if you had to snug them and move the fork in and out to find its center. It should just float. If it doesn't move freely you can tap a small blade screwdriver into the gap just to give it a little more clearance. Once you feel it is centered properly tighten the pinch bolts and you job is complete.

P.S. Don't forget to remove the small blade screwdriver!

This tip cost me about 5k one night. Robbie Pearson was riding a bike I had set up with wheels and suspension. He came over before the main event and said the front of the bike didn't feel right. I looked at how much of the front axle shoulder was sticking out and I knew the forks were pinched. I fixed it for him and he went on to win the national and I settled for second.