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major problems. Also look at the **tyre tread**. If the tread depth is 1mm to 2mm it’s time for replacements. Cracking in the rubber is also not good. It means dry rot and new tyres. If you keep your motorbike outside, especially in the rainy season, this will happen faster. The other thing to check is your **valve caps**. These should be done up finger tight to keep dust, dirt and moisture away.

The **battery** is a little trickier as it’s harder to get to, but you can extend its life by checking it monthly. Had I done this, Barney’s heart may have kept ticking longer. Check the battery when it’s cold. Give the top a wipe to get rid of the city’s road grime then peer into the chambers. You’re looking for sediment or sulfation, which means time for a new battery. If it looks clear, top up the fluid levels in each chamber using distilled water, not tap water — if you won’t drink it, don’t expect your bike to. Replace the caps and your maintenance work here is done. A tip: try to store your bike in a place warmer than 32 degrees so your battery doesn’t freeze and crack. That shouldn’t be hard here. If you’re away for more than two weeks ask someone to start the bike and give it a little **exercise** in your absence.

● Breaking and Entering

There is a bit less you can do with **brakes**, apart from knowing what they should look like. The brake pads are the bits that clamp over the tyre rims. There should be enough padding on them to perform that function. If you let them go down to the metal you can damage your brake disc, which is more costly to replace.

While you’re at it, check your **brake fluid**. Motorcycles have up to two brake fluid reservoirs, one for the front, usually found

on the handlebars and one for the back. Both should be checked regularly and topped up. Use a new bottle of brake fluid for this. And be careful; brake fluid is corrosive and can eat through flashy paintwork. Apparently it should be completely replaced every year or two, but it’s probably safer to let someone else do it.

In the bike license courses you are told to lube the **bike chain** every time the bike needs gas. I have never lubed the chain. But it’s time to start. For this you need a chain spray and some Vietnamese lingo so that you know how to ask for it. Push the bike back on to the centre stand and spray the chain liberally. You can spin the back tyre so that you get every part. Wait ten minutes then wipe away the excess oil. If you do this when the chain is warm, the oil will soak in and get into all the tight spots. Don’t worry if your chain looks a little saggy. It is supposed to look like that.

Finally, the **oil**. Regular oil and filter changes will keep your motorbike young and healthy and stop it from spewing blue smoke into the face of the rider behind you. Again, the bike should be on the centre stand so it is level, and do it when the bike is cold. Untwist the dipstick, which should be on the lower right hand side and give it a wipe, then rest it back in the oil on the lowest thread to take the measurement. The oil should be close to the maximum level. As a guide, your oil should be changed every three to six months or 2,000km to 4,000km. The former is likely to come first in this city.

Now that Barney has a clean bill of health, I aim to keep it that way. I’m keen on the purple beast keeping me mobile for a few more years. Hopefully these tips can do the same for you. 

basic functions I can learn. According to my research, I need to check the tyres, battery, oil, brakes and chain.

So. The tyres. An under-inflated tyre generates a lot of heat which can lead to a blow out, plus tyres that run too hot wear out quickly. This is what keeps the corner puncture repair guys in business. You should check your **tyre pressure** as often as you stop for gas. For me, this is just over once a week, rather than twice a year as per my previous guess. The pressure should be checked cold, when the motorbike has been on the road for less than a mile. If you do it hot, add an extra 4psi to compensate. For a Honda Wave, the tyre pressure should be around 30psi (max 33psi). Alternatively you can trust the corner guy who judges this by instinct, rather than by gauge.

While you’re watching your tyres inflate, check out the **rims**. Major dents can lead to