Look after your brakes & they’ll look after you

Fitting new discs & pads is simple so keeping your stoppers in top condition is a no-brainer

Bruce Dunn
The MCN road tester and former bike mechanic gives his practical know-how for our step-by-step guides.

If there’s one thing on your bike you want to be working at 100% efficiency, it’s the brakes — and maintaining them is easier than you might think.

There are usually two types of problems that occur with discs. They can simply wear out over a period of time and become too thin, or they can warp. Warped discs can be highlighted during an MoT, when there is an erratic reading from the rolling road brake tester, or more often the rider notices a pulsing from the lever. This is caused by the uneven disc forcing the brake fluid back up to the master cylinder every time the warped section comes into contact with the pads.

Replacing discs in pairs is ideal, although in some cases not necessary. Using the original manufacturer’s components can be pricier compared to pattern parts, but the quality can also be higher than some aftermarket items.

The discs we are replacing here are on a 2003 Aprilia Mille. The rider had been complaining of a pulsing sensation through the brake lever, and after a quick check by a service centre a warped disc was diagnosed. We chose EBC discs to replace the originals, as they are just as good, and come with a warranty.

We won’t deviate from the workshop manual, and will use the same torque figures to secure the discs. Don’t forget to clean the discs with brake cleaner before use, to ensure that they are not contaminated, and make sure the pads you specify are suitable for your discs, and your riding. Track pads may offer the biggest grip, but will wear your discs faster, and may not work so well in normal road conditions.

NEED TO KNOW

| Time taken | 1 hour |
| Skill level | ★★★★★ |
| Money saving | £50 labour charges |

THINGS YOU’LL NEED

| New discs £162.50 each (2003 Aprilia Mille) |
| New pads £43.40 per disc (2003 Aprilia Mille) |
| Micrometer From £13 |

1. Place the bike on a stand. Most front paddock stands will require that the back is on a stand as well. So make sure the bike is stable and that the stand is high enough for the front wheel to be removed.

2. Undo the caliper bolts, and wiggle the caliper free of the discs. You can use a bungee or cable ties to secure the caliper out of the way, and prevent stretching/damaging the hoses.

3. If you can feel pulsing at the lever the disc is warped but if you want to know how much, a dial gauge can track the disc at its outer edge. Turn the wheel slowly and check the manual for run out limits.

4. Clean the surface where the disc meets the wheel with a clean cloth and a contact cleaner. Fit the disc and tighten up evenly, working in a diagonal pattern. Torque to the workshop manual specifications.

5. If the disc and pinch bolt tightening sequence is correct, and to the specified torque. Use contact cleaner to clean anti-corrosion agents from the discs.

6. Undo the disc retaining bolts. Give each bolt an 1/8 of a turn each, then undo each one diagonally, with all of the bolts removed the disc should separate from the wheel easily. Repeat for the other disc.

7. Reinstall the wheel and make sure the spindle and pinch bolt tightening sequence is correct.