

Speedo Error On The GL Series

I recently upgraded from an '88 GL1500 to an '03 GL1800. I have noticed that both of these bikes have a speedometer error, when compared to my Garmin GPS V. Strangely, the odometers are almost exactly correct on both bikes, agreeing within tenths of a mile with the GPS over a 500-700 mile day. I have read about this in MCN about many other makes and models. This must be intentional on the part of the manufacturers. What possible purpose could there be for this intentional inaccuracy? Thank you for the excellent magazine.

Pat Armitage
p.armitage@att.net

We have heard that OEMs build optimistic speedos (5-10% is commonplace) to prevent the largest tires of the factory specified size from making the speedo pessimistic. But we tend to believe that because it inflates the rider's perception of performance, they would have other reasons. And, if they can build an odometer that reads statute miles accurately, why not the speedos?

Halogen Bulbs Keep Burning Out

Until recently, I had a '96 Royal Star and I ran aftermarket Emco spotlights with H3 halogen bulbs as additional lighting. I had to replace the headlight bulb twice in the five years that I owned it, but not one of the H3 bulbs ever burned out, and they were on all the time, except when following other riders at night.

I now own an '02 GL1800 Gold Wing with spotlights in the lower cowling, and I have replaced those bulbs three times this past year. Yesterday, I noticed that they were burned out again. The original set were supposed to be 55-watt blue xenon. The next were 55-watt hyper whites and the last set were 55-watts from the Wal-Mart bulb section, costing much less and lasting about twice as long, but they still burned out too early.

Even though the new Wing has exceptional lighting, I still feel safer in traffic with the extra visibility. But it's getting old replacing the bulbs and re-aiming the lights every few months. I was hoping that you would be able to tell me why this is happening, and maybe how to fix the problem?

Jim Travis
jaytravis@cox-internet.com

There are three common reasons why bulbs expire prematurely. Very often, examining the blown bulb can give you a clue. A bulb that looks silver or has no filament at all is usually a sign that the bulb has been subjected to voltage spikes. These spikes are often caused by a bad (intermittent) connection and we find that happens often

on the ground side. (Is it possible that something got loosened when you first installed the bulbs?) A bulb that has a broken filament is sometimes a sign that it has been subjected to vibration. Is the rubber mount for the socket in good shape? The last major cause of bulb failure is overheating. This can be caused by fingerprints or other marks on the bulb that were acquired during the installation process, or by using a bulb with a higher wattage than was intended by the manufacturer.

Idle Speed Mis-adjustments

My GS1000C Suzuki purchased new in 1978 continues to be an excellent ride after 90K miles. It required only minor adjustment of the idle air adjustment screws on the sides of the four carbs in order to get a smooth idle and balanced color on the spark plugs, until two years ago. A shop mechanic adjusted the sealed fuel adjustment screws located under the carbs (between the slides and the engine) for "better performance."

Since then, it has been impossible to get a smooth idle or an even color on the spark plugs that is normal. The carbs have been removed and cleaned, with new float needles and seats installed. One dealer tune-up resulted in the idle air screws being screwed in all the way and the idle set with the fuel screws only, resulting in a very fast idle with hot and fouled plugs.

A second dealer tune-up resulted in multi-colored plugs (brown-to-flake white) and runaway high idle when stopping after driving expressway speeds. The last dealer mechanic managed a slightly rough idle with brown-to-white plug color variation and a lot of stalling when cold. This last mechanic recommended replacing the stock Mikuni carbs with a set of Keihins made for a Kawasaki from about 1980 with a single idle adjustment screw per carb.

Is there a better way to adjust these four fuel idle and four air idle adjustment screws? The shop manual says only "don't touch" the fuel idle screws. Each 1/8th turn on any of the screws does have an effect on mixture and idle speed. It's getting them all "right" that's proving difficult. What single adjustment screw carbs, if any, would be suitable for this bike? Thanks.

Austin Eckert
via Internet

The proper procedure for adjusting the screws can be accomplished in two main ways. The 'old standby' method is to perform a procedure called an 'idle drop.' Once the unit is running roughly right, one uses a tach and turns the screw out slowly until the rpm hit their highest number, then the technician backs the screw in until the rpm drops by 50 rpm. This is done for each

cylinder in turn. Finally, the idle speed adjustment screw is used to set the idle to proper speed.

The other method is to connect an E.G.A. machine to each individual exhaust header (Yamaha's have had these for years, but on your bike, installation of a 'rivet nut' on the pipe is necessary) and individually tune each carb.

Neutrals, Tire Cupping & Warped Rotors

I'm working on a 1977 Honda CB750. I have a problem finding neutral after the engine gets hot. I can find neutral when it's cold or a little warm. I have replaced the friction discs and plates, checked for burrs and wear on the basket and have replaced the springs with new stock ones. The clutch cable is also new. I am using motorcycle specific oil. I have no problems with shifting or clutch slippage. The clutch is adjusted so it takes up with the lever almost all the way out. After the engine is hot, it wants to go from 1st gear to 2nd or 2nd to 1st no matter if the bike is moving or not. I have tried different adjustments on the clutch cable, but that doesn't seem to change anything. I can only find neutral with the engine is shut off, cold, or a little warm.

Also, I have a 2001 FZ1 that has 6000 miles on it. The front tire started to sawtooth or cup. The original tire was a BT-020. At 8000 miles, I replaced both tires with BT-012 tires. After 3000 miles, the BT-012 tires are doing the same thing. I checked rotor runout and one side is .002" out, the other is .004" out, which is the max limit. I think the rotor being out on one side is causing a drag and creating the odd wear pattern. I'm going to replace the rotors and tires, but I'm not sure what rotors to use.

Braking has wave rotors that are not supposed to warp. Do you have any experience with them? Is it true they don't warp? I'm not a heavy braker in normal riding, so I don't feel I'm causing excessive heat in the rotors. To only go 8000 miles on the stock rotors seems too short for expected life expectancy.

Rotors are very expensive and I don't want to have to replace them so quickly next time. I don't think the suspension settings are causing the problem. The tire pressure is checked on a regular basis and is set to manufacturer's spec.

If I'm missing something in either case, please set me straight. I appreciate any help you can give. Thank you very much,

Bruce Felker
Goofy655@netzero.net

The shifting problem is either worn shift forks, shift drum or a neutral detent ball sticking. Since it's heat related, our guess

would be the ball is binding up when it's hot. We don't think the rotors are causing the tire cupping. The rapid wear of the rotors indicates to us that you may have a caliper that is sticking and the pad is constantly in contact with the rotor. The tire cupping on the FZ1 is sometimes actually caused by a steering head bearing problem (I kid you not).

Techron Fears

I thought we shouldn't put "carb cleaner" (Techron) into motorcycle gas tanks because it "ruins" the coating on the inside and the tank could "rust through." Please advise.

William Todd
via Internet

It sounds like a misunderstanding. Fuel system cleaner is not the same as a mechanic's carb soak ("carb cleaner"), or nearly as caustic, especially when diluted with gas. If Techron is already put in Chevron's gasoline, as are many other additives in other brands, why would any of these products harm a coated gastank?

Strange Backfire

I have a 2002 Honda Shadow Spirit VT1100C. Last year, I had the dealer install Cobra pipes. They re-jetted the carbs at the same time. Towards the end of the riding season, I started experiencing some backfiring, mostly while in second gear and always on deceleration. The dealer's service department said this was due to outside temperature changes and it should be okay by next spring or summer.

Here I am in the middle of summer and guess what? Same problem, different day. I called the dealer again and they said fuel is responsible for the problem and that I should have the carbs cleaned at \$150 per carb (x 2) = \$300+.

I have always used a brand name gas and have tried different grades with no change. I find it hard to believe that the carbs need to be re-built and cleaned after only 6K miles. I purchased a service manual from Honda and there was mention of a backfire problem from too-lean carburetion. I was wondering if you felt the dealer might be wrong and if I should just synch and adjust the carbs? This is a frustrating and embarrassing situation for me. Any help you can suggest would be most appreciated.

Ray Barker
beisales@sbcglobal.net

It does sound like you are experiencing one of two possible things: Either that the fuel mixture is too lean, and an examination of the spark plugs will confirm that. The solution would be a rejet richer, or switch to a less restrictive air cleaner.

The other possibility is that you have an air leak into the exhaust system, possibly at the exhaust gasket or a joint. Careful examination of the system will reveal if that's the problem. Good luck.

Tubular Rubber Mushroom Farms?

The American full service gas station is nearly extinct, replaced by 20-pump mega-mini-malls, and the friendly fix-it-all mechanic has been traded for the management trainee du jour who sells far more triple mocha lattes than motor oil. These self service-oriented places have caused another loss...the source of dry, high-pressure air for tire inflation.

Not only must one plug two quarters into a battered metal box to access compressed air of meager inflation capacity, but here in the humid South, that air is accompanied with a tremendous amount of condensation. A two-to-three second blast from the line will soak the palm of my hand, and the water spray doesn't seem to lessen with extended use.

Obviously, this introduces a lot of water into the sealed environment of the tire and wheel. As it cannot likely ever dry out, what are the long term consequences of this? Corrosion? Tire balance issues? Mushrooms?

Bill Lentz
wllentz2@bellsouth.net
Atlanta, GA

Water in a tire or wheel is never a good thing and, yes, once it is in there it cannot escape. Water promotes corrosion in the wheel which can eventually prevent tire sealing, and in extreme cases even adds unsprung weight to the wheel.

Voltage Regulator Problem

One of my three motorcycles is a 1998 Kawasaki ZX-10. The voltage regulator has quit working, as indicated by no charging voltage at the battery, no voltage seen at the connector from the alternator, and by the voltage regulator failing the shop manual's resistance reading and battery-attached operational tests.

Kawasaki wants \$250 for the \$3 transistor mounted on their OEM plate.

My problem is that I'm unable to find a replacement transistor because the alphanumeric designation printed on the transistor is not in a standard sequence recognized by my local electronics parts supplier.

This voltage regulator transistor is used in the ZX-10 models, as well as in the ZX-11 models through the 1992 model year. It may be used in other model years, however, the backing plate design changes, causing a change in the OEM part number.

Could you provide me with the information needed to identify the replacement tran-

sistor for my parts supplier? And, any advice for the rest of us riding other bikes who may in the future have the same or a similar problem?

Thank you very much for any assistance.
Glenn Woolhiser
San Jose, Ca.

The reason you could not find the correct transistor number is: It's not a transistor. It is a voltage regulator chip, and to the best of our knowledge, it is not available from regular parts sources as a separate item. We highly recommend that you simply get the part from your local dealer.

Electric Gremlin Exorcism Please

Help! There are poltergeists in my stereo system that randomly and maliciously cause the "mute" to engage and disengage in no discernable pattern. Sometimes, it will engage immediately on starting, and other times when upshifting, downshifting, braking or for no reason at all. Half the time, I can disengage it by doing any of the above or switching back and forth from the tape selector to the radio...anything except actually fiddling with the mute button, which appears to have no effect on the problem whatsoever. Can you guys tell me how to exorcise this demon? Thanks.

Peter Bassett
peterbassett2003@yahoo.com

Sounds like the pinched-wire-ground fairy has paid you a visit. Start looking for a pinched wire leading from the handlebar switch to the control box.



Downtime Files

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Mission Viejo, CA 92690

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