

Step 1: Oil is the Engine's Lifeblood

ATV Racing Oil You may hear mechanics and wannabes alike claiming that oil changes are less important than ever thanks to tighter tolerances and advances in oil lubricants. While these claims may be true to a certain extent, break-in is certainly not the time to experiment. Proper break-in of a new ATV engine is an essential aspect to the vehicle's longevity. The key to successful break-in is to ride the quad easy but not so mellow that the rings can't seat within the cylinder. The best way to do this is to combine a high load with low RPM. In other words lug the engine a bit by riding smoothly in a higher gear when necessary as opposed to popping it into one gear and revving it out.

The oil that comes inside your engine will be adequate for the first few hours of break-in but conduct a thorough oil change immediately after. It's not a bad idea to consider a synthetic blend even over a full synthetic. Make certain to run motorcycle or ATV specific oil blends as they are designed to lubricate the clutch (this is known as a wet clutch) as well as the engine's internals. Automotive oil and full synthetics may be adequate at lubing up the engine but usually lead to clutch slippage.

Step 2: Lube Away

ATV Chain Lube Sure your ATV was greased at all of the pivots before leaving the factory but this grease is designed to withstand overseas shipping and initial break-in operation. Asking it to endure for the life of the machine is simply looking for trouble. Not to mention that all it takes is a little contact with the water from a pressure washer to blast this lubrication away.

It's always a good idea to check any and all exposed bearings and pivots (swing arm linkage for example) and to apply a thick slush of quality waterproof grease on these areas BEFORE they show signs of compromised performance. The common mistake is to wait until bearings begin to squeal or drag before paying attention to them and by then it's almost always too late.

Step 3: Chain Gang

ATV Chain It's quite normal for the quad's chain (shaft and belt drive units need not apply) to stretch a bit during those first few rides. However, just because a bit of additional slack is normal, it's critical to check to make sure it hasn't become too loose. It's a good practice to get in the habit of keeping a small ruler in your toolbox for this specific purpose. This way, whenever you lube the chain, you can measure and jot down the amount of slack present. Your vehicle's owner's manual will provide the proper range of movement expected before the chain will require tightening or replacement (depending on how many times you've tightened it before).

If you find yourself in a situation where you can't access a ruler to measure the amount of slack, the rule of thumb is typically no more than two to three finger widths of vertical movement.