

Kevlar/Carbon Composite Care MTB Bar

Congratulations on your Kestrel purchase! The Kevlar/Carbon composite of your Kestrel handlebar is significantly lighter and stronger than conventional materials and will, barring accident, stand up to a lifetime of riding and racing. But composite handlebars require slightly different care than metal. Even if you've been working on bikes for years, please take a few minutes to read the following guidelines.

Installation

De-burr. As with lightweight handlebars of any material, it is important to de-burr the stem where it clamps the handlebar. Burrs in the stem, either at the edges of the clamp area or along the pinch slot, can act as a saw during riding, cutting fibers in the process. While the Kestrel handlebar is designed with plenty of extra strength in the clamped area, it is always best to avoid cutting any fibers.

Grease. Grease the handlebar and stem where they meet. Grease helps prevent creaking and eases the closure of the stem as the binder bolt is tightened.

Insertion. Do not force the fit of your Kestrel MTB bar. As with any modern handlebar, twisting a handlebar into a stem that is too tight will gouge the handlebar. The diameter of your Kestrel handlebar is 25.4mm (one inch), the most common size for mountain bike handlebars and stems. If your stem is the right size and still seems to be too tight, spread the stem clamp slightly and then slip the handlebar into position. Do the same for brake lever clamps and shift lever clamps to avoid scratching the clear-coat.

Torque. Recommended maximum torque for the stem bolt is 150 in/lbs. Even below this torque you may hear some preloaded fibers settling in the epoxy matrix. Although this is normal, do not exceed 150 in/lbs because excessive torque may damage the clamped area of the handlebar. (A typical mountain bike stem bends at the pinch bolt around 150 in/lbs, and 200 in/lbs. can break some bolts.)

Accessories

Set Screws. DO NOT USE COMPONENTS WITH SET SCREWS! Some brake levers and shifters (older model Grip Shift and others) attach with set screws. Normal clamps spread their load over a large area, while set screws load the composite at a small point. This point loading will damage the fibers of your Kestrel composite handlebar. Damage caused by set screws is not covered by your Kestrel warranty.

Bar ends. Use only external clamp bar ends. Because internal expander type bar ends do not expand in a perfect circle, internal expanding type bar ends should not be used in your Kestrel composite handlebar. The ends of the bar have molded-in internal reinforcement for the first 2 inches, so no additional reinforcing plugs or "BERTS" are needed.

Maintenance

Grips. Do not "slice" old grips off your Kestrel composite handlebar. Instead, use air pressure under the grip to slide it off, or use scissors to cut the grip. Slicing may cut fibers and weaken your Kestrel composite handlebar.

Inspection. As with any high performance component, a part of normal maintenance includes inspection for structural damage after an accident or heavy impact, or if you have reason to suspect your Kestrel handlebar could be damaged.

Cutting. You may cut down the bar length. Wrap the bar with masking tape where it will be cut. The tape protects the fibers from damage at the end of the cut. A normal hacksaw can be used, but the carbon fiber will dull the blade quickly. We replace our hacksaw blades after four cuts. If you plan to use bar ends, make sure you leave enough of the 2" long reinforced area at each end to account for the bar-end clamp width. (Max. removed per end = 2" minus clamp width).

Paint

Your Kestrel composite handlebar is clear-coated after molding. You can touch-up any chips or scratches with clear nail polish or paint. Caution: any paint stripper which will remove polyurethane paints will damage the epoxy matrix which holds your handlebar together. Do not use any strippers on your Kestrel composite handlebar. Do not bake over 150 degrees F. Do not remove any composite material.

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