

TRACK PUMPS

*A track pump can provide accurate and near effortless tyre inflation. Cycling journalist **Guy Kesteven** reviews four good ones*

TRACK PUMPS, floor pumps, workshop pumps – whatever you call them, moving from a hand pump to a stand-up, stay-at-home pump is a fantastic investment. It makes tyre inflation easier and faster whatever pressures or tyre size you run, and if you're regularly topping up tyres for a family fleet you'll soon wonder how on earth you managed without one. Getting to 100psi is a breeze, and you'll know when you've got there too, so you'll get better performance and lifespan out of your tyres.

As ever with modern components, there's an increasing amount of complications and 'bonus' features being added to even the humble track pump. To make sure you don't fall foul of fragile or pointless designs that are more hot air than high-pressure air, here are four usefully different pumps that are worth owning.

YOUR THOUGHTS?

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STROKE

The larger the plunger diameter, the more force on the handle is needed to reach a given pressure. A smaller diameter plunger will allow inflation to a higher pressure, while a longer stroke will do it more quickly. Smooth, easy movement marks a pump that should last well, and a soft, spring-damped end to the stroke will stop bumping and hand bruising. 'Strokes to 100psi' was counted using a 700×25C tyre.

HOSE

Long hoses make life a lot easier, especially if you're inflating the tyres while the bike is in a workstand. A robust connection to the pump body and valve head are crucial for a long and happy workshop life.

BASE

Fold-out bases are convenient if you're sticking the pump in a car but you'll often need to brace the pump against your leg for stability. Big, heavy bases with wide feet give a more stable platform for pumping.

HEAD

Push-fit, lever-tightened 'smart' heads are more convenient than a screw head. Some designs use separate Presta and Schrader fixtures, while others have 'automatic' valve-adjusting heads. Make sure you can buy spare heads (or at least valve rubbers); the head is always the first part to fail on track pumps.

HANDLE

What handle shape fits best in your hands is obviously a personal thing. Traditional, warm wooden handles get my vote compared to cold metal, and plastic always feels cheap, especially on a £100 pump.

GAUGE

Small, indistinct pressure gauge dials are hard to read, especially once workshop grime builds up. Gauges in the handle are easier to see but can be damaged more easily when (not if) you knock it over. At a nominal 100psi, I checked pressure accuracy with a Schwalbe digital gauge.





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1) GIANT CONTROL TOWER 2

£29.99 giant-bicycles.com

Giant's Control Tower 2 pump suits mixed MTB and road bike use thanks to its dual-volume switch. You use the high-volume setting for fast inflation at low pressures; it fills a 25mm tyre to 70psi in just ten strokes. It shifts enough air at a high enough pressure to inflate and seal tubeless tyres. When pumping gets hard (60-70psi), you push the foot pedal to engage the reduced volume setting, in which it will easily reach 150psi-plus. A broad base and steel shaft make it sturdy and stable and the 'auto' adjusting lever head works fine. But the 'foot pedal' is potentially fragile, the hose is short, and the gauge lacks accuracy. Strokes to 100psi: 23. Actual pressure at 100psi: 91.8psi. Hose: 75cm.

● *Useful high-volume pump for family use or mixed bike fleets, but gauge is inaccurate*



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2) SKS RENNKOMPRESSOR

£59.99 zyro.co.uk

SKS have been making the Rennkompressor for nearly 40 years. Fold-up steel feet with rubber tread make it compact for carrying but it's not especially stable. The deeply-recessed dial face, which shows pressure only in 'bar' and in 40psi increments, isn't as easy to read as modern dials, but a verified 98.1psi shows accuracy is good. The narrow barrel means it takes a while to fill a tyre, and the coil stop-spring does nothing to reduce the end-of-stroke slam. The stroke itself is effortlessly smooth well past 100psi, however, and tops out beyond 200psi. The double-barrelled Schrader and Presta 'Multi valve' head is a convenient modernisation, but the reversible EVA or original brass screw-chuck heads are available as options. My own EVA Rennkompressor has had over a decade of workshop workhorse use. Strokes to 100psi: 36. Actual pressure at 100psi: 98.1psi. Hose: 120cm

● *Low volume stroke means it's slow to pressure, but it's a smooth, ultra-durable classic*



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3) LEZYNE SPORT DIGITAL DRIVE DV

£59.99 upgradebikes.co.uk

This is a great combination of classic pump architecture with modern measuring technology. The three-toe foot makes it one of the more stable pumps here despite being the lightest. The skinny metal barrel uses a long stroke to inflate tyres faster than most retro-styled pumps but doesn't require any extra effort through the wooden handle to do it. The stretchy hose pulls tight when the head is slotted into the foot for secure travelling. The digital gauge version comes with a double-barrel DV (Dual Valve) head. The dial gauge version comes in either DV or a reversible screw-on barrel connector version for £36.99. But the big digits of the LCD screen make for super-accurate inflation: I verified the 100-101psi display at 100.8 psi. Strokes to 100psi: 31. Actual pressure at 100psi: 100.8psi. Hose: 125cm

● *Long, smooth yet stable stroke and an ultra-accurate gauge*



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4) BONTRAGER FLASH CHARGER TLR

£99.99 bontrager.com

Designed for easy home or trailhead inflation of tubeless tyres, this is basically a hand-powered compressor. It uses the skinny, low-volume pump shaft to pressurise the large black air tank. Once up to 130psi, you throw the big lock lever open and it discharges with enough force to pop the tyre into place and create a solid seal on all but the most leaky tyre-and-rim combos. Pressure can be topped up via the pump as normal, although the tiny volume means this takes ages. High weight and a broad foot provide stability. The 'automatic' lever-lock valve head works well, and the tank-top gauge is easy to see – although out by 5%. The plastic hose/head fixtures and T-handle are potentially fragile, and disappointing on a pump that costs more than a basic electrical compressor. Strokes to 100psi: 48. Actual pressure at 100psi: 95.3psi. Hose: 120cm

● *An effective DIY compressor, but slow to pressure and too much plastic for the price*