MOTO PORCH

Honda Shadow 750 Buyer's Kit

Years covered: 1998 to 2014 for the ACE, Spirit and RS, with the Aero and Phantom sold later

A low, easygoing V-twin cruiser that Honda sold in several flavors under the Shadow 750 name. Reviews describe a mellow, low-vibration engine and a very low seat. The big buying choice is chain drive on the older ACE and early Spirit, or shaft drive on the Aero and later bikes.

First bike? Seat heights around 26 inches, a smooth and mellow engine, and simple controls make it a friendly learner. It is heavy, so practice slow-speed handling and picking it up.

Generations

Shadow ACE (American Classic Edition) (About 1998 to 2003)
Carbureted 52-degree V-twin with chain final drive, per Wikipedia. Sold in ACE and ACE Deluxe trims. Dates vary by source, so check the model year on the title.

Shadow Spirit (VT750DC) (2001 to 2007, with 2004 skipped)
Bobbed, hot-rod style cruiser. Chain final drive and dual carburetors, per Wikipedia. Dates come from one source, so confirm the year of a specific bike.

Shadow Aero (2004 onward)
Retro look with valanced fenders. Rider says the 2004 redesign switched from chain to shaft drive. Wet weight was 553 pounds and seat height 25.9 inches.

Shadow Spirit (VT750C2) (2007 onward)
Rider says the 2007 Spirit has a new frame, a 21-inch front wheel, shaft drive and a 25.7-inch seat. Still on sale for 2010.

Shadow Phantom (2010 onward)
Rider called it the first fuel-injected 745cc V-twin in the Shadow family. Blacked-out bobber styling, shaft drive and a 25.7-inch seat. Later Aero and Spirit models also gained fuel injection, but we did not confirm the exact years.

Shadow RS (2010 to 2013)
Wikipedia lists a chain-drive, fuel-injected RS in this period. We did not find a review to confirm the details.

Known problems by year

Harsh rear ride over bumps
Years: 2004 Aero, 2007 Spirit and likely other bikes with the same shocks | Concern: low
Rider's 2004 Aero test said limited rear travel sent harsh jolts through the seat on choppy pavement. Rider's

2007 Spirit test found the suspension compliant but said big freeway potholes bounced the tester out of the seat. Some owner reviews on Motorcycle.com's 2009 Spirit page also mention bouncing at highway speeds. This is a riding trait, not a defect. We did not confirm how common it is on later bikes.

- [ ] Check: Test ride over rough pavement and at highway speed. Look for oil on the shock bodies, and check that the preload setting is the same on both shocks.

Limited cornering clearance

Years: 2004 Aero, 2007 Spirit, 2010 Phantom | Concern: low

Rider's tests of these models all noted footpegs that touch down early. For the 2010 Phantom it measured about 8.5 inches from the pegs to the pavement. Scraped peg feelers or pegs are normal wear, not damage. This only matters if you ride hard.

- [ ] Check: Look at the underside of the footpegs and exhaust for heavy scraping, which can point to hard riding or a dropped bike.

Safety recalls on record

Recalls are repaired free by a dealer. Ask the seller for proof the work was done, or have a dealer check the VIN.

- [ ] 2014 to 2015: electrical system:starter assembly:relay (NHTSA #15V439000, listed for VT750) - confirm by VIN
- [ ] 2010 to 2011: electrical system (NHTSA #11V310000, listed for VT750) - confirm by VIN
- [ ] 2010 to 2016: electrical system:wiring (NHTSA #15V874000, listed for VT750) - confirm by VIN
- [ ] 2007: equipment:other:owners/service/other manual (NHTSA #06V270000, listed for VT750, VT750DC) - confirm by VIN
- [ ] 2007 to 2008: fuel system, gasoline:delivery (NHTSA #08V141000, listed for VT750) - confirm by VIN
- [ ] 2006: exterior lighting:headlights:switch (NHTSA #05V562000, listed for VT750C) - confirm by VIN

Shadow 750-specific checks

- [ ] Find out which version it is. The ACE and the early Spirit have chain final drive, per Wikipedia. The Aero and later Spirit use a shaft.
- [ ] On a chain-drive ACE or early Spirit, inspect the chain and sprockets for tight spots, rust and worn teeth.
- [ ] On a shaft-drive bike, ask when the final drive oil was last changed and look for oil leaking at the rear wheel.
- [ ] Carbureted models that sat unused may run rough or hesitate. Ask when the carburetors were last cleaned and how long it sat.
- [ ] Check the charging system with a voltmeter if you can. Some owners report stator and regulator trouble, but we did not confirm how common it is.
- [ ] Look at the fuel tank and the pegs for signs of a drop. These bikes are heavy and often belong to newer riders.
- [ ] Check the rear shocks for leaks and the fork seals for oil.

- [ ] On a 2010 or 2011 bike, ask whether the bank angle sensor recall was done.
- [ ] Confirm the fuel system: Phantoms are fuel injected, and Aero and Spirit models changed to fuel injection later. Match the VIN and title year to the bike.
- [ ] Test both brakes. These models use a single front disc and a rear drum, so expect the rear to feel less sharp than a disc.

Before you go

- [ ] Ask the seller not to start or warm up the bike before you arrive. A cold start shows problems a warm engine hides.
- [ ] Ask for the VIN by text and run a recall check at nhtsa.gov/recalls before you drive over.
- [ ] Ask for a photo of the title. Confirm it is in the seller's name and is not marked salvage, rebuilt or flood.
- [ ] Bring a flashlight, a rag, a tire pressure gauge, and cash or a payment plan you have already agreed on.
- [ ] If you are a new rider, bring someone who can ride the bike for you on the test ride.

Paperwork

- [ ] VIN on the frame (steering head) matches the VIN on the title.
- [ ] Title is in the seller's name, with no lien listed (or a lien release in hand).
- [ ] Title is not branded salvage, rebuilt, flood or junk.
- [ ] Seller's ID matches the name on the title.
- [ ] Service records, receipts or a logbook, if any.
- [ ] Both keys are present.

Walkaround

- [ ] Tires: check tread depth and the 4-digit DOT date code (week and year). Tires older than about 5 to 6 years should be replaced regardless of tread.
- [ ] Chain and sprockets (if chain drive): hooked or pointed sprocket teeth, kinked or rusty links, or a chain that pulls far off the rear sprocket mean replacement soon.
- [ ] Brakes: pad thickness, rotor grooves or lip, and brake fluid color (clear to light amber is good, dark brown is overdue).
- [ ] Fork tubes: look for oil on the tubes or below the seals, and pitting on the chrome.
- [ ] Drop damage: scuffed bar ends, levers, footpegs, mirrors, engine covers, frame sliders and the tank. Bent levers or a crooked handlebar mean it went down.
- [ ] Frame and subframe: cracks, kinks, fresh paint or welds near the steering head, footpeg mounts and swingarm pivot.
- [ ] Leaks: oil or coolant under the engine, around the cylinder head, the water pump and the drain plug.

- [ ] Fluids: oil level and color in the sight glass or dipstick. Milky oil can mean coolant mixing in.
- [ ] Steering head bearings: with the front wheel off the ground (or a friend leaning the bike back), turn the bars slowly. Notchy or a center detent means worn bearings.
- [ ] Wheel bearings: grab each wheel top and bottom and try to rock it. Any clunk means worn bearings.
- [ ] Electrics: headlight high and low, brake light from both the lever and pedal, turn signals, horn, neutral light, kill switch and side stand switch.
- [ ] Modifications: aftermarket exhaust, intake or wiring. Ask what was changed and whether the fuel system was tuned to match.

Cold start

- [ ] Feel the engine before starting. If it is already warm, ask why.
- [ ] Starter should spin the engine briskly. A slow crank points to a weak battery or charging problem.
- [ ] Watch the exhaust on startup. Blue smoke means burning oil. White smoke that does not clear after warm-up can mean coolant.
- [ ] Listen for knocking, loud ticking or rattles that do not settle as it warms up.
- [ ] With a multimeter: about 12.6V at the battery engine off, and roughly 13.5V to 14.5V with the engine at a fast idle. Outside that range, suspect the charging system.

Test ride

- [ ] Clutch: in a higher gear at low RPM, open the throttle firmly. If RPM rises but speed does not, the clutch slips.
- [ ] Shifting: every gear, up and down. Watch for false neutrals or jumping out of gear.
- [ ] Brakes: firm lever and pedal, straight stops, no pulsing.
- [ ] Handling: no wobble or pull with relaxed hands on a straight road.
- [ ] Throttle: smooth pickup, no stumbling, and the throttle snaps closed on its own.
- [ ] After the ride: look under the bike again for fresh leaks and check that the cooling fan runs when hot (liquid-cooled bikes).

Questions to ask the seller

- [ ] How long have you owned it, and why are you selling?
- [ ] Has it ever been dropped, laid down or in an accident?
- [ ] Do you have service records? When was the last oil change?
- [ ] When were the valve clearances last checked?
- [ ] How old are the tires, chain and battery?
- [ ] What modifications have been made, and do you have the original parts?
- [ ] Have all recalls been done by a dealer?

- [ ] Is the title in your name, and is there a loan on it?
- [ ] Has it been stored outside or through winters without being ridden?

Red flags: walk away if you see these

- The title is not in the seller's name, or the VIN does not match.
- The seller warmed the bike up before you arrived and will not let you see a cold start.
- The seller refuses a test ride with cash in hand or a second rider present.
- Fresh paint, new levers and new mirrors on one side only (a hidden crash).
- Milky oil, steady blue smoke, or a clutch that slips on the test ride.
- A story that changes when you ask the same question twice.

Price worksheet

List 5 to 10 comparable bikes (same model, similar year and miles) before you go.

Listing / source	Year	Miles	Asking $	Notes

Costs this bike will need soon (tires, chain, brakes, service, recall work, damage):

Listing / source	Year	Miles	Asking $	Notes

Negotiation script

- Before you go, find 5 to 10 comparable listings (same model, similar year and miles) and note their

asking prices on the worksheet.

- Write down every item from your inspection that will cost money: tires, chain and sprockets, brake pads, overdue service, recall work, damaged parts. Get a rough price for each.
- Open with the facts, not a lowball: "It needs tires and a chain soon, which is about $X. Comparable bikes are listed at $Y. I can do $Z today."
- Stay quiet after your offer. Let the seller answer.
- Decide your walk-away price before you arrive and stick to it. There is always another bike.

Important

This kit helps you ask better questions and spot common problems. It is not a mechanical inspection and cannot tell you whether a specific motorcycle is safe. If you are unsure, pay a qualified mechanic for a pre-purchase inspection or walk away. Recall data comes from NHTSA; confirm open recalls for the exact VIN with a dealer or at nhtsa.gov/recalls.