



## Repair Help and Education

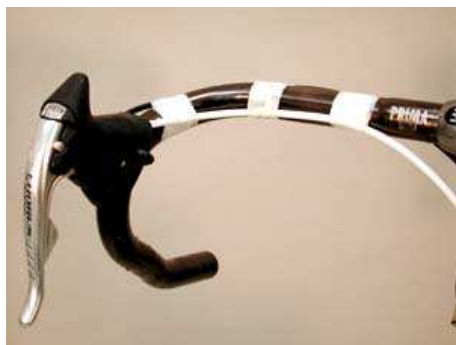
### Handlebar Tape Installation (drop bar)

#### TYPICAL TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

- [Repair Stand](#), holds bike secure for easy work.
- [HBH-2](#) Handle Bar Holder (makes work easier)
- Scissors and sharp knife or razor blade
- Strapping tape (for drop bars)
- PVC colored tape for ending wrap (for drop bars)
- In some cases, contact cement (MTB grips)
- Alcohol (substitute window cleaner or hair spray) for MBT grips

This article will address wrapping drop style handlebars. For installation of grips on flat handlebars see [Grip Installation on Flat Bars](#).

Handlebar wrapping is a skill that takes practice and patience. See also [advanced tips](#) below if you are experienced. Begin by washing your hands, or wear mechanics gloves such as Park Tool [MG-1](#). The finished job should look clean for the user. Make sure any housing that is to be under the bar tape is secure. Use strapping tape to hold housing in place.



Start the roll at the bottom of the bar. Begin so the tape extends well past the bar end. This extra tape is then stuffed into the bar and the bar plug inserted after the wrapping is completed. The direction of the wrap may also effect how it retains it tightness on the bar. Generally, it is the habit of cyclist to pull back on their hands when riding on the top section of the bars. By noting this, you can wrap so this habit will be self-tightening on the tape. Looking from the rider's point of view (from the back of the bike) wrap each side the tape rotates inward from the top. In other words, wrap the right bar counter-clockwise and the left bar clockwise. Note the image below.

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If the tape has an adhesive backing, overlap so the adhesive is on the bar.



Handlebar tape will vary in strength between manufacturers. If you are unfamiliar with the brand, assume it is fragile. It helps maintain a tight bar wrap by pulling the tape as you wrap, but too much force in pulling may break the tape. You often need to work the tape by pulling and backing up until it lies down nicely on the bar, especially at the corners. Inspect as you wrap. Notice the image below shows some sloppy taping under the curve.



The tape must pass past the brake levers. There are different methods for wrapping at the levers. Some riders like the tape to cover the bar completely, even at the brake lever. There is often a small piece included with the tape used for the brake lever. Pull the brake housing cover away from the bar and place the tape over the back of the lever. Continue to wrap up and around the small piece and the lever, plus one or two additional wraps past the lever. Fold the hoods back and inspect the tape. An older method useful with very thin tape was to make a "figure-8", wrapping around the lever then back down and around again. This method makes a very bulky area and is not needed or recommended with the commonly available thick tape.



An alternate method used at the lever is simply to wrap past it without the extra tape. This method is common among race mechanics. The extra piece of tape does not add to comfort and is not necessary for a functional wrap.



The amount of bar tape given in a roll varies between tape manufacturers. Generally assume the roll will be short, and wrap the low section with less overlap. Increase the overlap on the upper section where most of the riding takes place. Ending the tape cleanly is possible by marking where you want it to end. Continue the angle of wrap and continue past the ending point. In the image below, the tape should end at the sleeve.



Use a sharp knife or razor blade and make a cut in the tape along the ending line. NOTE: Use caution when working on carbon handlebars. Deep cuts into the fibers of carbon tubing can weaken the handlebar.



Back tape off two wraps and use scissors to extend the cut all the way through the tape. Maintain the line shown by the cut and cut tape cleanly.



Wrap the tape on to the bar again. Trim the tape so the end is at the bottom of the handlebar.



Use your piece of PVC or electrician's tape to end the wrap. Wrap the tape neatly, use care to maintain clean narrow wrap. Again cut so it will end at the bottom of the bar.



### Advanced Tips

There are several possible different methods to wrapping. It is often necessary to practice different techniques and see what works best for you and your customer.

A useful technique is to use either a double-sided sticky tape, or to turn the electricians tape upside down for the lower 5-8cm of the bars. This is the area where bars tend to become damage from falls and abrasion. Hold the tape as you make one wrap, then the tape will hold itself. This sticky tape will now help hold the bar tape should it become torn.



An alternative to overlapping the tape at the end of the bar is to first install the bar plug. Next, cut a taper at the end of tape. This allows the tape a smooth and even beginning, rather than a lump from the extra tape.



When riding on the drop section of the bars, it is the tendency to rotate the hands outward. It is possible to reverse wrap direction from start to finish in order to match this tendency. Note the image below has the tape beginning opposite of the taping first described. Wrap each side so the tape rotates outward from the top. In other words, wrap the right bar clockwise and the left bar counter-clockwise.



If you wrap as the image above, you must then reverse the direction of the wrap at the brake levers. Do not cross the back of lever from outside to inside, as is commonly done. Stay on the inside of the lever and continue to the above the lever. See image below. Notice the optional piece of brake lever bar tape is in place. The tape will now be in a self-tightening direction on the top and the bottom of the bars.



Even a well-trimmed end can show underneath the finish tape. If you are using black tape, it is possible to color the edge of the bar tape. After the tape is trimmed for the finish, use a permanent marker to color the inside edge of the tape. It will appear black, the same color as the holding tape.

After finishing the tape, use either a soldering iron or a heated metal tip to sear and seal the tape. This helps prevent the electrician's tape from loosening.



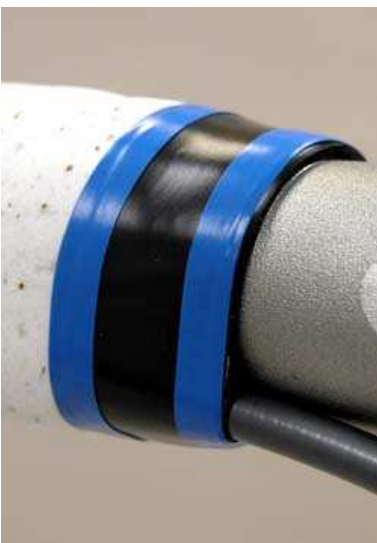




If the finish tape is black, and the tape has a non-black finish, it is possible to color the inside edge. After trimming the end, use a permanent to mark the edge. After the finish tape is applied, it will give a cleaner appearance.



Add some thin tape for color contrast. Make "pin striping" by cutting a roll of tape with a sharp knife or razor blade. Lay the roll of tape on a flat surface. Firmly press the blade into the roll, and rotate the roll. Use care whenever using a sharp edge. Peel the tape up and apply to the finish tape.



Posted by [Repair in Handlebar, Stem, and Seat Post](#) on July 7th, 2009  
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