

# Zero Friction Cycling

## Main test protocol - Understanding the ZFC benchmark test and data.

**What does the data mean?** The recommended time to replace your chain is at 0.5% elongation wear. This is the benchmark used in the zfc main test. As such, 0.5% elongation wear = 1.0 chains worn in the data table. Thus 2.0 would mean 2 chains would have been worn to 0.5% replacement mark by this point etc. This covers the number of chains worn to recommended 0.5%, the better performing lubricants. In realising, the lower chain wear still = lower cassette and chainring wear as well. Lubricants protecting your chain (and thus drivetrain) from wear can have a huge impact on your running costs - especially for higher end components.

Or - if you just report your drivetrain at an annual service, a lubricant protecting your drivetrain from a lot of wear will have a significant impact on your drivetrain performance, especially towards the end of its tenure - keeping it much lower friction, better shifting, reduced chance of chain drop, reduced chance of chain fall. All very good things. Your chain and its lubricant work EXTREMELY hard. Your chain has many moving parts per mile, and they need lubrication under thousands of PSI pressure load, with high contamination exposure. Your humble bicycle chain, at the heart of propelling you forwards, is actually quite an extreme lubrication challenge - and many underestimate, to their cost.

### A pretty bonkers market segment....

Your chain lubricant choice can very easily either cost you a lot or save you a lot - in both efficiency and running costs. But it can be so hard for cyclists to know which brand or which product to trust. Manufacturers can make any claim they like about their products performance, and often with zero substantiation of the claim, or zero independent substantiation. Sadly it is also very difficult for cycling media to properly assess, and most cyclists struggle too (read your ZFC wear!!!) That is why the ZFC benchmark test exists. It is a test where load, time, contamination exposure, re lubrication etc are all controlled. The wear rates that come in are purely down to the performance and wear protection of the lubricant to do its job in its actual use case - on a bicycle chain on a bicycle drivetrain. Not some esoteric ASTM test for a different use case.

**The ZFC test is a difficult test.** Each block is 1000km, and alternates between clean and contamination blocks. Most facilities lubricant tests are very short (hours). Whereas most ZFC tests last from 3000 to 6000km. There are re lubrication intervals, but NO cleaning during main test - it is up to the lubricant to resist being abraded.

Assessing a lubricants performance via wear correlation is a relatively blunt tool. It cannot directly predict efficiency (speed), if 2 lubricants return similar wear rate results, the ZFC test cannot say which may be the best lube or the worst etc. As a blunt tool to measure performance, we are looking for large differences in wear rates, as a high wear rate denotes rapid wear of the chains steel parts, and it far out takes friction to wear steel at a notable rate. So 0.1 v 0.2, or 1.3 v 1.4 etc - I don't care.

But a 0.1 v 0.3 or 0.4 difference result is becoming a notable performance difference if this is for an individual wear block, or around 0.5 for the overall cumulative wear. If a 0.5 difference means a chain was more worn by half of its wear lifespan as another lubricant. A 1.0 difference means an entire other chains was worn to wear abalone by same point. Also look to notable changes by block. If a lubricant is impressive in block 1, but increases notably in block 2 - then it has absorbed a lot of contamination and become abrasive

The test is just a Tacx Neo smart trainer set to 250w resistance, driven by an industrial motor at 100 cadence. So it is an actual bicycle drivetrain. So the chain, and its lubricant - is being tested in its ACTUAL use case, not some esoteric efficiency test method. If a lubricant shows high chain wear in this test, it is EXTREMELY unlikely to be a high performing product in your cycling. If you are happy with a product that tests poorly here, you will do cartwheels of joy if you switched to a high performing product of your preference (lax, wax, drip etc).

Before you email me about the great results you have had with X poor result lubricant - pls note that getting 10,000km from a chain is easy if you run it WAY past recommended 0.5% wear mark. And/Or if you flush clean your chains every week to reset contamination, I would get about 60,000km if I took an Mpedwax / Hot Melt / Rex Oil chain to 2%. The test is a true lile for like benchmark. The lubricants are tested at same load, same intervals, same contamination introduced at the same time and same amount. The wear rates are a true reflection of one lubricants performance vs another, as a bicycle chain lubricant, in its actual use case on a bicycle drivetrain.

### Understanding Cost to run calculations.

This has been a difficult area to model. Previously I had extremely detailed models, factoring lubricant cost, different components etc - however the numbers were often difficult for viewers to understand, and for the poor performing lubricants, the cost to run numbers were pretty unbelievable - because in real life no one would actually spend those \$5 for example, the worst performing lubricants would cost through many chains per 5000km or 10,000km to a 0.5% recommended wear replacement mark. And if one actually replaced their chains and components from this wear as should be done, the cost to run models would have been very accurate of that very high cost. But, people buying such lubricants do not do this, instead they keep running chains and drivetrain parts until they are very worn, and then replace. Often they may have no idea just how worn their drivetrain was, they just know when they get their bike back it feels brand new! But when they would see a number saying it huge amount of \$ per 10,000km, and they are spending that due to idling things to the death vs replacing components at recommended wear - they would disregard cost to run calculations entirely as being wildly inaccurate - which in reality, for them - they were.

But cost to run is a key driver of bike testing. Lubricants that wear your chain (and thus drivetrain) components rapidly DO cost A LOT of cyclists A LOT of extra money every year. And many components can be very expensive. We now have chains costing over \$200 and cassettes costing \$700 to \$1000+, as well as some very expensive chain rings. On high end components a lubricant that prevents that the wear as another lubricant can literally save you \$1000+ component wear over a year, or \$500km, or 10,000km etc. What would you rather spend your money on? These new devices you cover? Or shoes? Or wheelset? Or water jacket? Or Carpal band? Or just burn to buy new expensive components that by simply buying a proven excellent lubricant vs a proven meh or poor lubricant - you can easily prevent that wear and needed replacement.

However in light of the issues on original cost to run, it has now been greatly simplified, and more leeway given around replacement. Cost to run is based on rider taking chain to 1.0% wear as opposed to recommended replacement mark of 0.5%, and then cost to replace components of \$500. If your components cost less than this, factor that for yourself when you are comparing the cost to run \$ amounts. Remember also your components may cost MUCH more than this, so factor accordingly. If the cost to run on my modelling has one lubricant at \$500 and another lubricant at \$1000, but your components will cost your \$1000 to replace vs \$500, then there will be \$1000 wear saving between those 2 lubricants vs \$500.

Sadly - despite the changes, the cost to run calls for the worst performing products are still a bit nuts. They just cost so many chains. In reality what happens is people just run them every year for a long time. They pay for it in a very badly running drivetrain vs paying in \$, because if they realised how bad things were, they would try a different lubricant. Or in some cases people make a poor lubricant by way of very frequent and very thorough maintenance, which also carries time and solvent costs (and solvent ends up where?)

### REMEMBER THIS IS A BENCHMARK TEST!

Yes - know - for X lubricant that performs poorly on the data below there will be cyclists that have achieved very different KM's to wear rate in their use. But I am not testing your personal usage conditions or terrain, I am not testing your power, I am not testing your Chain and drivetrain maintenance, in the car test, as aspects and conditions are the same, 10% me results are relative to each other. If you ride gravel, and in the ZFC Lubricant A is much lower wear than Lubricant B in the dry offroad test block 2 - whilst your wear rate will differ for your cycling vs this benchmark test, the relationship will be highly likely. You can expect Lubricant A to show much lower wear to you vs Lubricant B just. But it IS in this test. In summary - if you have been happy with a product that tests poorly in the ZFC test, you will be doing cartwheels of joy if you used a high performing product instead.

How to use this data?
The table below shows the wear recorded across the main test (cumulative - each block wear added to all previous wear). The main test also includes wear to the end of Block 5 (5000km of testing including a dry contamination block and a wet contamination block) - an overall fairly tough test.
A lubricant with a result of 1.0 low chain wear to the recommended chain wear replacement mark of 0.5% elongation wear (for Block 5 is a high performing lubricant for most cyclists - especially enduro/more dry conditions road cyclists - you should expect to stretch at least 5000km to 0.5% wear mark for that block).
If you ride predominantly off-road - you should refer to the individual block by block data table (below the cumulative wear table) to select a lubricant that performs well in off-road conditions (or at least shows very low wear especially in very muddy when exposed to 0.5% wear mark).
If you ride predominantly or frequently in wet conditions / flush wet conditions - you should refer to the block by block data table (below cumulative wear table) to select a lubricant that performs well in those conditions.
These blocks that are <b>dry</b> - some blocks in contaminated as the test was stopped at end of previous block due to high wear not wanting continuing test.
These blocks that are <b>wet</b> - some run for lubricant if the type that they primarily tests their better performing in this block. If a block 2 tested the null data point would be worse than them.

**Friction / wear test - CUMULATIVE WEAR - Main test protocol**

WAX / Wax DRP / DRP - WET / GREASE

Number of chains worn to recommended replacement mark of 0.5%. 1.0 = 1 chain worn to 0.5% wear mark.

**COST TO RUN - 5000km**

Substrat	Block 1 - No Contamination	Block 2 - Dry Offroad conditions	Block 3 - No Contamination	Block 4 - Wet conditions riding	Block 5 - No Contamination	Block 6 - Harsh wet conditions riding	Cost to run - 5000km
Alka New wax	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.23	0.39	0.60	141.00
Motocycle Wax	0.08	1.08	0.01	0.20	0.21	0.45	1974.00
Black Diamond Wax - 4-1 Mile	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.20	0.21	0.45	197.00
HighSpeed New Formula	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.11	0.12	0.32	59.50
Black Diamond Wax - 13-14 Mile	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.08	0.45	14.50
Wax - maximum wax	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.40	0.45	0.97	275.00
Wax - low wax	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.35	0.45	0.80	180.50
Black Diamond Power Snow wax	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.17	0.48	0.80	240.00
Wax - maximum wax	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.40	0.48	0.85	230.00
Black Diamond New Formula	0.00	0.00	0.06	0.39	0.56	0.62	278.00
Black Speed DRP Drop New Formula	0.00	0.02	0.07	0.15	0.15	0.27	95.00
Alka Super Secret Wax	0.03	0.08	0.08	0.44	0.73	1.33	367.00
Trii Transition Transition Wax - (TD-A)	0.05	0.07	0.10	0.48	0.78	1.11	300.00
Wax - wax drop (1)	0.05	0.10	0.10	0.69	1.00	1.24	560.50
Wax - wax drop (2)	0.05	0.12	0.12	0.72	0.94	0.40	118.50
Wax - wax drop (3)	0.05	0.12	0.12	0.72	0.94	0.40	118.50
Wax - wax drop (4)	0.05	0.15	0.20	0.34	0.40	0.98	201.00
Wax - wax drop (5)	0.05	0.20	0.25	0.58	0.58	1.21	433.00
Alka Drying 2	0.02	0.10	0.29	1.03	1.03	2.23	612.50
Wax - wax drop	0.02	0.13	0.30	0.78	0.97	1.24	485.50
Wax - wax drop (1-100 Test)	0.16	0.28	0.33	1.32	1.32	3.17	1080.00
Trii Transition Transition All Weather	0.14	0.24	0.36	0.67	0.85	1.17	425.00
Wax - wax	0.19	0.37	0.39	0.87	1.18	1.90	590.00
Wax - wax	0.04	0.22	0.40	1.01	1.01	2.21	594.00
Wax - wax	0.00	0.18	0.43	0.70	0.93	1.47	418.50
Wax - wax	0.12	0.28	0.45	0.86	1.20	1.52	548.50
Wax - wax	0.05	0.34	0.49	0.93	1.05	1.73	538.00
Wax - wax	0.13	0.40	0.54	0.83	1.00	1.97	776.00
Wax - wax	0.09	0.38	0.58	1.22	1.43	2.40	714.50
Wax - wax	0.12	0.40	0.59	1.01	1.21	1.70	635.50
Wax - wax	0.19	0.39	0.61	1.09	1.41	1.90	702.50
Wax - wax	0.11	0.43	0.66	1.13	1.30	2.07	677.00
Wax - wax	0.15	0.50	0.77	1.33	1.50	2.57	877.00
Wax - wax	0.10	0.40	0.85	1.49	2.14	3.17	1068.50
Wax - wax	0.00	0.47	0.87	1.50	2.01	3.05	959.00
Wax - wax	0.12	0.47	0.88	1.61	2.02	3.11	1010.00
Wax - wax	0.13	0.50	0.90	1.48	1.91	2.96	954.00
Wax - wax	0.11	0.37	0.93	1.55	2.04	3.01	1254.00
Wax - wax	0.16	0.69	0.98	1.49	2.06	2.71	1029.00
Wax - wax	0.12	0.51	0.96	1.55	2.00	2.96	1002.00
Wax - wax	0.18	0.55	1.03	1.64	2.10	3.09	1073.00
Wax - wax	0.16	0.80	1.07	2.03	2.43	3.86	1316.00
Wax - wax	0.17	0.70	1.24	2.01	2.47	3.38	1284.00
Wax - wax	0.11	0.72	1.25	2.12	2.50	3.96	1323.50
Wax - wax	0.13	0.57	1.61	2.05	2.35	4.15	1429.00
Wax - wax	0.10	1.09	1.67	2.12	2.50	3.37	1348.50
Wax - wax	0.11	1.23	1.73	2.54	3.08	4.26	1518.00
Wax - wax	0.15	1.06	1.84	2.06	2.47	3.51	1485.00
Wax - wax	0.09	0.90	1.87	2.13	2.50	3.47	1507.00
Wax - wax	0.14	1.21	2.09	3.73	4.41	7.07	2306.00
Wax - wax	0.28	1.27	2.11	2.30	4.21	6.08	2103.50
Wax - wax	0.30	1.40	2.50	2.75	4.66	6.67	2187.00
Wax - wax	0.11	0.32	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wax - wax	0.22	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wax - wax	0.74	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wax - wax	0.90	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wax - wax	0.14	0.42	0.67	1.28	1.66	2.51	N/A

Average

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Wet lubricants Extrapolation update - Nov 2024

Average all Wet Block 1 = 10.8%

Average All Wet Block 2 = 8%

Extrapolation = +28.2%

Block 3

Average all wet Block 2 = 53.1%

Average all wet Block 3 = 38.8%

Extrapolation = -14.3%

Block 4

Average all wet block 2 = 53.1%

Average all tested wet block 4 = 79.2

Extrapolation = + 26.1%

Block 5

Too small data (only 3)

Use their block 3 wear rate (very optimistic)

Extrapolation = use block 3

Block 6 - change to use a 1.5 multiplication on Block 4

Only one wet lubricant has been tested in block 6 - insufficient for data average extrapolation.

Wax drip lubricants Extrapolation update - Nov 2024

Average All Wax Block 1 = 0.7%

Average All Wax Block 2 =

Extrapolation =

Block 3

Average all wax Block 2 =

Average all wax Block 3 =

Extrapolation = -3.0%

Block 4

Average All wax block 2 = 9.7%

Average all tested wax block 4 = 39.9

Extrapolation = + 39.2%

Block 5

Average all wax tested block 4 = 39.9%

Average all wax tested block 5 = 23.8%

Extrapolation = -16.1% reduction vs block 4

Block 6

Average all wax tested block 4 = 39.9%

Average all wet tested block 6 = 40.6%

Extrapolation = + 0.7% vs block 4

Immersive wax (excluding Finish line halo)

Block 5 - use block 3

Block 6 - avg all tested = 37.4 - use this except for AB graphen wax - use block 4