

Econo-Tech Revisited: the \$1.25 Bearing Cleaner

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Silverfish Longboarding's staff and moderators receive a lot of email from skaters looking for a tip or resource, and we often refer them to articles in the archives of the Front Page, here on the 'Fish. One classic is this one, originally published as a sidebar to our review of Biltin Bearings a few years ago. We've pulled it up, pasted it here and made a few minor tweaks to it, but we think you'll find it to be both a useful item and a quick look back at how we used to format things...

The \$1.25 Bearing Cleaner. How to Make it & How to Use it.

It's really easy to make a bearing cleaner using the bolt that comes with Biltin Bearings as part of the packaging (or get on down to the hardware store and buck up the 14 cents for your own) and a bottle of "spring water" or juice. Now, you need a wide mouth bottle: we've found that the blue-tinted Dasani water bottles, Minute Maid juice and even the small Powerade bottles all have a neck large enough to fit a 608 bearing through them, but smaller-necked bottles won't. So, gather some change out from between the cushions of the couch and get yourself a bottle full of designer water or whatnot and drink it. We used an 11.5oz. Minute Maid bottle, so let's get started. It will take you longer to read this than to make the bearing cleaner!

First, get your water bottle rinsed out and drained. Gather your poor, dirty bearings, the Biltin bolt & nut and a drill motor with a 17/64" bit, or whatever's just a tad smaller than the diameter of your bolt.

Drill a hole in the lid. Then take the bolt and jam it through the hole. If it's tight enough, it won't even leak. If it does, use Shoe Goo or silicone caulking to seal the hole by putting a drop under the bolt head before you squash it onto the top of the bottle cap.

Next, simply install all the bearings on the tube with their open side facing away from the cap, tighten the nut that came with the bearings, and pour a little of your bearing cleaning solution into the bottle. If you're not using Biltins, just take the shields or seals off of at least one side of each bearing, both sides is better. If you really want to go all out with the Biltin, you can remove the outside shields, but this works w/o doing that. You can use mineral spirits or "bearing and chain degreaser"; just pick something without surfactants in it unless you're going to rinse with rubbing alcohol.

Slip the bearings into the bottle, tighten the cap and shake well. Some degreasers will foam up a little, but the froth will die down quickly. After some good shaking, let the bottle sit for a few minutes, so you can see the dirt that accumulates in the bottom of the bottle.

The open-faced bearings will drain out into the solution, and you can pull them out--no muss, no fuss. If they're really dirty (you'll see how dirty the cleaning solution gets) do it again with clean solution. (Shampoo, rinse, repeat) When you're done, you may want to blow them out with compressed air (you only need to get degreaser in your eye once to figure out how not to do this) do one more shake in the bottle with straight rubbing alcohol in it or just irrigate them with rubbing alcohol, as we do here (except you should actually hit the bowl, oops!).

Either way, once the bearings are dry, it's easy to put a drop or two of lube in, spin the bearing, and then flip them over to drain onto some paper towel for a few minutes.

When you're done, reinstall them in your wheels and Go Skate!!

P.S. For our non-Biltin-ed readers: like we said above, just take the shield off one or both sides of each bearing, and use your spacers between bearings on the bolt, similar to how the Biltins' extended inner race keeps them spaced apart in these photos. Whether you use Biltins or not, this is a very cheap and easy way to effectively clean your bearings right, every time.