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## Access & Resources

If you want to own a clunker, you've got three options. The cheapest is to buy the only commercially produced model, the Schwinn Spitfire 5 (formerly the Klunker 5), which sells for about \$160. This bike is a five-speed and has a caliper front brake. While not particularly high-performance, either in equipment or frame geometry, the Spitfire 5 can serve as the starting point for the construction of a serious machine.

For starters, a better front brake, either drum or cantilever, would help, as would a stronger fork. Conversion to ten speeds would give a wider gear range, and the use of alloy cranks would cut weight considerably. After making what purists would consider essential modifications, the Spitfire 5 owner can have an investment similar to that required for the next option, which is to build a clunker from an old bike.

Converting an old bike into a ten-speed clunker is not just a matter of bolting on accessories. Because ten-speeds and ballooners have different origins, parts are rarely interchangeable. Several adapters are necessary in order to mount light alloy cranks and derailleurs. Old forks are poorly designed and are often bent, so tubular chrome-moly forks (\$25-\$50) are a good

idea. Wheels must be custom built onto drum brakes, and this adds a \$5-\$10 labor charge to the cost of the parts. The most comfortable saddle is the Brooks B-72, available from Raleigh dealers for \$25-\$30. Total investment for a clean conversion runs \$250-\$400, and most of the necessary parts can be found at any good bicycle motocross shop.

The ultimate, of course, is a custom-built clunker from one of the few bike builders qualified in the field. These bikes have handmade chrome-moly frames with proven geometry. All fittings, such as bottle cage, cable guides, and derailleur hanger are brazed on, and high-quality racing equipment is used throughout. Sealed-bearing hubs and cranks eliminate problems with dirt in delicate parts, and the use of a quick-release seat permits easy adjustment of the saddle height for various terrains.

Prices on custom clunkers run \$800-\$1,000, but cost has been no object to those who have purchased the few dozen in existence. All the custom bikes produced to date have been spoken for long before delivery. Sunshine Bicycle Works in Fairfax, California, or the Cove Bike Shop in Tiburon, California, are presently the only agents for custom clunker frames. —C.K.