

University Ringing



Running Ringing

Produced by the CCCBR Young Ringers Workgroup

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1. Making sure everyone rings

Ringing is, of course, a hobby – one which prioritises inclusion wherever possible. When running ringing, your first task is therefore to ensure the ringing is distributed fairly. Here are a few tips...

1.1 Start of the practice

This is where you work out who is ready to ring what. Ask everyone as they arrive what they'd like to ring or whether they're prepared for a particular method and make a mental (or physical) note of this.



TIP

Some people choose to have a paper notebook to write down what everyone should ring or wants to ring, then tick these off throughout the practice. You can also take notes on your phone to the same effect. Try different approaches out and consider what suits you best.

1.2 Combine touches (to a point)

When arranging a touch for one ringer in particular, it's important to make sure the band is as strong as possible so the learner gains as much from the practice as they can. That said, you also want the ringers helping to be gaining as much as they can from these touches. Getting one ringer to learn a method while another learns to conduct it is a good example of this, as both ringers can develop at the same time. Having experienced ringers stand with learners makes a touch much more likely to succeed even with an inexperienced band.



TIP

Be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of your particular ringers. For instance, if one of your learners rings methods using the treble, getting a learner to ring the treble is unlikely to be successful.

1.3 Ask for advice (to a point)

It can be very difficult to see what you're doing well and what you're missing when running a ringing session. Asking for advice from others helps counteract this, as other ringers will often notice things you haven't. Gain feedback from people with a range of ringing experiences and abilities – and take it all with a pinch of salt! Keep in mind, though, that it's impossible to get everything right when balancing so many variables. There are so many different styles of running a practice, and there is no objectively 'right' way to do it.

1.4 Delegating

Delegating the organisation of touches can be hugely beneficial on a practice night, especially if it's busy. If you're busy ringing in one touch, ask someone else to organise the next one! This shares the responsibility of running the practice, gives you a chance to gather your thoughts, and speeds up the changeover between ringing. Read more about delegating responsibility in our Leadership article.

2. Encouraging Progress

In a university society in particular, the focus of your practices should be on progress. You can never guarantee that experienced ringers will join your society year-on-year, so make sure the ringers you have reach a level where they can provide the strong foundations required to teach next year's new recruits.

2.1 Send out resources

The more preparation done in advance of a practice night, the easier it will be to make progress, so try to encourage this for your ringers! This is especially true when learning methods, but there are still useful resources online for more foundational skills, like call changes or plain hunt. Make sure everyone knows what they're working on and give them the resources to prepare.



TIP

There are all sorts of resources you can draw on when teaching your ringers. The [ART website](#) has plenty of resources for learners, YouTube videos can often be effective for introducing plain hunt and rope sight, or there are also many books you can recommend or loan to learners, such as Steve Coleman's Ringing Companion books. Explaining method theory in the pub after the practice is also a tried and tested approach to teaching!

2.2 Targets

These can be a really effective way of encouraging progress. For instance, agreeing with one of your ringers that they should aim to ring a quarter peal of a given method by the end of term, then organising it as soon as they're ready. Not only does this give them a reason to want to work on their own ringing, but it gives them a sense of accomplishment when they succeed!

2.3 Be ambitious!

Ringers will not always be able to see when they're ready to make the next step. While you shouldn't move them on before they're ready, be proactive and give them a new challenge as

soon as they are. Sometimes the best way to perfect one aspect of your ringing is to focus on learning the next one.

With this however, it is important to take caution that learners are not being pushed too quickly, which can happen in University societies. You may be able to understand the theory of surprise major but if you can't handle your bell without nearly hanging someone it's probably not the best idea!

3. Practice vs Service Ringing

Deciding what to ring depends hugely on the context of the ringing. This is one of the most important distinctions to be aware of when running ringing.

3.1 What to ring on a practice night

Practice nights should be dedicated to progress wherever possible. Encouraging ringers to ring or call something they haven't before is very important – if they can't try ringing it then, when else will they have the opportunity?

3.2 Service Ringing

Conversely, service ringing should be the very best quality ringing you can achieve. If this means ringing rounds, ring rounds! The focus of this ringing is that it sounds nice to members of the public, who will appreciate high-quality ringing far more than high-complexity ringing.

3.3 Outing Ringing

Outing ringing is something of a grey area. If ringing at a prestigious city-centre location, the cautious principles of service ringing may well apply – you don't want to be firing out touches in central London. However, if you're ringing in slightly more rural towers, outings can be a fantastic way of getting in concentrated practice across the course of a day and a good opportunity to consolidate what you already know. Just remember, however, that you are ringing on other people's bells, and should aim to keep ringing to a reasonable standard.

Conclusion

Running a ringing session can be a battlefield of guessing and compromises, where no one necessarily tells you when you're doing a good job and you live in fear that they might tell you otherwise. The three principles above (including everyone in the ringing, encouraging progress, and distinguishing between practice and service ringing) are central to any successful ringing. If you can keep to these, if you're receptive to feedback, and if your ringers keep coming back, you can't be going too far wrong.
