
Rounds games

These ringing games are all based on rounds and are suitable for ringers of all abilities. They add interest, variety and fun to practices whilst helping developing skills such as leading, bell control, listening and ringing by rhythm.

Rounds on 6 move right

This is an exercise in bell control. Ringing light and heavy bells require specific, different techniques and acquiring the skill for both will make for better bell handling technique overall and versatility. Every member of the band should aim to be competent and comfortable ringing anywhere in the circle.

Ring short bursts of rounds concentrating on striking and listening. When the rounds are settled, stand, and everyone should move to ring the bell on their immediate right (which is safer than moving to the left – the jump from the weight of the treble to the heavier tenor carries less risk, than jumping from the tenor to the treble). Less experienced ringers should start by ringing one of the middle bells.

Whole pull and stand

An exercise in anticipating the pull off and standing the bell.

The band rings rounds for one whole pull, after which everyone stands except the tenor, which rings for one whole pull on its own, before the rest of the band joins in again. This is repeated. A variation on this develops the ability to stand at will. Ask one of the ringers to pick a number between 1 and 10, or roll a dice. Ringers must ring rounds, count and stand on the stroke chosen. Repeat with random choices. If you get the impression people are avoiding standing at backstroke, ask a question which gives you the answer you are looking for.

Switch-a-roo

An exercise in bell control.

The band rings rounds until Switch-a-roo is called, when it switches to ringing back rounds the following handstroke. At the second call of Switch-a-roo the band reverts to ringing rounds again. Look for a clean change and discuss how the band might achieve this (light vs. heavy bells). Aim to switch every whole pull, once technique improves. Put your least experienced ringers in the middle as the speed changes are less dramatic. Increase the challenge by placing them further towards either end of the row as they get better.

Ring rounds facing outwards

This is a good exercise for developing listening skills and to practise ringing by rhythm.

Once steady rounds have been established, ringers take it in turns to face outwards and continue ringing rounds, striking in the right place. Who turns, when, should initially be controlled by the teacher. Once ringers are competent, they can take it in turns to nominate the next ringer to turn outwards. The challenge is for the band to maintain even striking. Demonstrate how and when to turn and give ringers an opportunity to practise turning on their own if they have not done it before.

Follow my leader

An exercise in adjusting speed.

Place the most experienced ringer on the treble and establish steady rounds. The treble ringer then starts to change the speed of their bell (faster or slower) and the rest of the band has to adjust their speed to keep the rounds regular and well struck. Ringers should use their listening skills but also watch the hands of the treble ringer. Teachers should look out for and help with any handling issues that crop up as ringers try to ring faster or slower.

Ringing rounds on alternate strokes

This is an exercise in leading and establishing rhythm. It is surprisingly tricky for more experienced ringers, so good fun on a practice night for mixed ability bands.

Odd numbered bells start ringing at handstroke, even numbered bells join in at backstroke. The aim is to get the rounds to sound right. Ringers will not be able to rely on watching the sally of the bell in front of them but will need to ring by rhythm and use their wider peripheral vision. For variety, repeat the exercise with odd numbered bells at backstroke and even numbered bells at handstroke.

Crash and gap

An exercise to help a ringer learn to hear their bell and how to make small speed adjustments to correct striking errors.

This exercise should be done with one, less experienced ringer ringing in between two ringers who can ring rounds steadily. Whilst ringing rounds, the less experienced ringer should start to alter the gap between their own bell and one of the neighbouring bells (up or down in the row) until they hear the bells clipping. They should then readjust until well struck rounds is achieved again.

Diminishing rounds or fading out

An exercise in listening, leading and adjusting speed.

The band starts by ringing rounds. To fade out from the front, the treble ringer stands their bell, leaving the 2 in the lead. After a few rounds, the 2 stands, so that the 3 is leading and so on, until the tenor is ringing by themselves. To fade out from the back, the bells stand one at a time from the tenor forwards. Fading out from the back doesn't require all ringers to be able to lead, whilst fading out from the front requires everyone to be comfortable with leading.

Incremental rounds or fading in

A game that helps a new ringer hear which is 'their' bell and understand that the spacing of rounds varies with the numbers of bells.

Start with three bells ringing rounds with the new ringer on the middle bell. Check that they are able to hear which is their bell. Whilst ringing, another bell can join in with the rounds in fourth place. Allow the rounds to settle with the extra bell and check that the ringer can still hear which one is theirs. Keep adding bells, ensuring that they can still hear which one is theirs. When the band is competent at fading in and out, you can combine the two – fading out and then back in again.

Ring 'o' Roses

This exercise will increase confidence and safety with bell handling. Ringers should already be comfortable with ringing with one hand on the sally (as when raising a bell) before taking part in this game.

Ring rounds with one person not ringing. Each ringer has to pass control of their bell to the person who isn't ringing. The tail end should be passed at the bottom of the stroke whilst the sally is being rung one handed. Demonstrate how to do this prior to starting the game for the first time.

Once the ringing bell has been passed fully to the new person, the ringer who is now standing out can take the rope from the next ringer in the circle. This can be done on just a few bells or round the whole circle.