

Learning Methods

Blue Lines

When you first rang Plain Bob, you probably learned the *order of work*: 2nds, 4-3 down, 6-5 down etc. Because the rest of Plain Bob is just plain hunting, there isn't much else to learn.

Some methods can be learnt entirely by what the treble is doing. For example, in Little Bob you always dodge in 5-6 position, up and down (or higher places e.g. and 7-8 and 9-10 depending on the number of bells), but only ever dodge in 3-4 when the treble is leading. Since the treble only goes to 4ths place and back, if you meet the treble in 3-4, you must not dodge with it. Other examples are Kent and Oxford, where you dodge in all places except 1-2, except when you are in 3-4 and the treble is below you, in which case you 'make places' and except when you meet the treble in 1-2, in which case you do dodge 1-2 and then do the front work (lead, 2nds etc until you meet and dodge with the treble again).

More complicated methods are different, and you'll have to learn the *blue line*, that is, the entire wiggly line that one bell takes through the plain course of the method, with all the dodges and places along it. Making the transition from learning a method by a rule, like Plain Bob, to learning an entire blue line, can be difficult. These notes will try and help.

- **Place bells.** You should (almost) always learn a method by its place bells. This helps you learn the line because you've broken up the whole course into smaller, manageable chunks. As a bonus, it also tells you where each bell starts, and enables you to ring it in spliced! You can also put yourself right when someone else says 'lead end now' if you know what place bell you are about to become.
- **Building blocks.** It helps enormously if you can give names to "chunks" of work, such as "Treble-bob at the back", "Cambridge places in 3-4" or even just "three-pull dodge down". Many methods share similar pieces of work, and you'll save much arduous learning time if you can recognise them. (There is not space to provide graphic examples here but ask a knowledgeable person what a 'fish tail' or 'Yorkshire places' looks like.)
- **Symmetry.** Most methods are symmetrical – that is, the second half of the blue line is identical to the first half, just reflected vertically. Knowing this can help you learn the second half of the line. If you learn by place bells, they come in pairs, with one place bell being the reflection of the other. There is usually an "odd" place bell called the "pivot bell", which is its own reflection.
- **Practice.** Learning methods can be painful! But, the more you do it, and the more methods you know already, the easier it becomes. Practised ringers can look at the blue line for a complex Surprise Major method and learn it completely in about a minute. Ringers develop good memories, and good learning techniques!

Ringling Methods Reliably

It's all very well learning the line, but how do you actually ring it in the tower for the first time without going wrong?

- **Practice at home.** Write the blue line out on a piece of paper – over and over again, and then some more. Recite your place bells to a friendly ringer! Better still; use a computer program like Abel or JBlueLine* to practise with. It is essential to pay attention to detail and get every blow of the course correct with no guessing or hesitation.
- **Develop your spatial awareness.** The more you know about what's going on in the ringing around you, the easier it is to stay on the line. This means developing your rope sight and/or listening skills so that you can see beyond just your own bell. For instance, if you can pick out

where the treble is this will help you a lot. Being able to see how other bells work with you also helps you stay on the line.

- **Learn more about the method.** The more you can learn about the method and its structure, the easier it will be to ring. For instance, learn where you pass the treble and what work you do afterwards. For dodges, places and points learn which blows are at hand-stroke and which at back. Learn what happens when the treble leads and lies – in most methods with 2nd's place made at the lead end, everyone else dodges. Learn what happens when the treble is not leading – for instance in St Clements you must do a triple-dodge on the front.

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* JBlueLine on-line is free (<http://www.cheltenhambranch.org.uk/jblueline.php#applet>), or for your mobile phone (<http://jblueline.zapto.org/>).