

Covering on the Tenor

Some change ringing is done with a “covering tenor”, meaning that the tenor rings last every time. Ringing the cover bell requires different skills and has its own fascination. Most importantly, when changes are rung with the tenor covering, the tenor sets the rhythm for everyone.

As with most things in ringing, it is a good idea to watch someone else ringing something before you try it, so take any opportunity to watch anyone ringing a cover bell.

You need to watch all the other ropes and follow the last one down each time. If you can learn to ring with a steady rhythm it will be easier to see the last rope down and it also helps you set a steady “beat” for the rest of the band. Practice in watching all the other ropes will also be useful when you start learning change ringing.

This is a good time to talk about ringing heavier bells because a different technique is needed. In earlier sessions you learnt how to hold a bell balanced, a skill essential for ringing lighter bells. But heavier bells, unless you are ringing very slowly, do not quite reach the balance. The trick now is to swing the bell to a height (near to the balance point and sometimes called the “Pause Zone”) where the bell comes to a stop just as you need to pull for the next stroke. If you tend to clash with the bell in front then pull slightly harder to raise the bell more; if you are striking wide then let the bell fall a little to quicken its swing. With bells in good order, especially if they are on ball-bearings, it does not take a lot of strength to ring rounds at the heavy end, in fact “wide” striking can be caused by over-pulling. It is worth experimenting to find out how little you need to pull, and this can save a lot of energy. But, if you are ringing a bell short of the balance, remember to pull a bit harder on the last backstroke when “Stand” has been called or you will fail to set the bell.

When you are ringing cover bell you will, of course, strike over all the other bells in turn. Little bells swing quickly, big bells swing slowly so, when ringing the tenor, you must pull close to the little bells to keep the striking right. If you are ringing with a steady rhythm you will find that this happens naturally.

Good covering is a skill; there’s more to it than just “banging the drum”. The rest of the band rely on you for a steady rhythm and it’s all good practice to improve striking and bell control, ready for an introduction to change ringing.