

Here are some candidates for overly-big steps:

- A. Starting ringing with others by going directly into rounds on 6.
- B. Moving from rounds and call changes directly to plain hunt on 5 or 6.
- C. Expecting students to cope with HOW to dodge and WHEN to dodge both at once.

As for (A), not everyone can immediately hear their bell when there are five others ringing. The initial problem when moving on from ringing by yourself to ringing with others (whether human or on a simulator) is that you have to fit in with someone else's speed and rhythm, and perhaps you are also meeting the concept of the *handstroke gap*¹ for the first time. Why not start with two bells? It is quite enough of a challenge to have your learner following just one other bell at first, and to try to adjust their speed to match. Moreover they are much more likely to be able to hear their bell if just two are ringing. Then move on to three bells, with the student on the 2; they stand a much better chance of then learning to hear if their bell is a bit early or late.

This may seem obvious to some, but one so often hears a learner, put straight onto rounds on a higher number, say "Well, I could hear that it was not even, but I didn't know if it was me or someone else", or "I thought I was out, but I didn't know if I was too early or too late". We probably all know ringers who have *never* learned to hear their bell, perhaps through poor teaching at this early stage. It's hard enough at first to cope with the mechanics of making a speed adjustment, without the additional problem of not being sure what adjustment is needed. *What correction is needed and how to make the correction* are two different skills – if necessary split these steps: deliberately ring some poorly struck rounds with the learner listening but NOT ringing; ask the learner to identify (1) which bell is inaccurate, (2) whether it is early or late, and (3) if this is at handstroke, backstroke, or both.

As for (B) and (C), in the following articles we'll look at specific exercises that can help split these into smaller steps. Not every learner will need these extra steps – some cope perfectly well without them. But it is a great help for the teacher to have a range of exercises in their arsenal for those times when they are needed.

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Jargon Box

1. Handstroke gap

Good ringing is evenly spaced, so in rounds on 6, there should be exactly the same interval between the 1 and the 2 as between the 2 and the 3, the 3 and the 4, and so on.

At the end of the handstrokes, the 6 is the last bell to sound, and there should be exactly the same interval before the 1 is heard again, ringing its backstroke. If the conductor says "*Don't leave a gap at the backstroke lead!*" it means the treble has rung too late, leaving too long a gap between the 6's handstroke and the treble's backstroke.

However in most towers a much bigger gap is left after the backstrokes have finished (the main exception to this is Devon call-change bands). This pause is usually TWICE the length of any other gap. You could think of this as leaving a big enough gap for an extra, silent bell to ring before the next handstroke starts – this is the 'G' below. So rounds on 6 should be spaced like this:

Handstrokes	Backstrokes	Gap
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6	G - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 ...

This longer gap before the treble's handstroke is called the handstroke gap. If the conductor says "*Handstroke gap!*" the treble has probably not left a big enough gap.

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