

The Education Column

7. Down Mexico way

This series of eight articles suggests ways in which teachers and ringing masters can help learners who have achieved bell control to make the transition to simple method ringing. The articles present various ideas and practice methods, not intended to be in sequence of increasing difficulty. The 'Jargon Box' serves both to explain terms to learners and to remind teachers not to assume that their learners will understand these terms.

This seventh article looks further at the uses of Kaleidoscope exercises, and in particular how they can help deal with a common problem: being excessively reliant on learning by rote the order of bells that one has to follow. It also looks at the exercise called Mexican Wave.

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| 1. Introductory rumbblings | 5. Original |
| 2. Bastow | 6. Introduction to Kaleidoscope |
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This article will look at a further use of the Kaleidoscope exercises that we met last week, and then Mexican Wave, which is an extension of Kaleidoscope. It may get its name from the wave that runs rounds sports stadia, but it would be a better match if we could persuade the spectators to duck down before they stand up!

Kaleidoscope revisited

A common problem with students who are rushed too soon into Plain Hunt is that they can develop an excessive reliance on knowing which bell they follow at every stroke. While there's nothing inherently wrong with knowing who to follow, it does cause difficulties later if they learn the relevant pattern by heart and rely on it to the exclusion of listening where they are, knowing what position they should be ringing in, ringing by rhythm, and being able to see a number of ropes come down in an order that, later on, will not be what they are expecting. In time the student needs to *place their bell accurately*¹ using all these skills, even on bells that are *odd-struck*.²

In a Kaleidoscope exercise where we put our student on the 4 and set them dodging with the 5, there are lots of benefits, but they will always be ringing after the 5 at handstroke, and back in rounds after the 3 at backstroke. This does nothing to prevent or discourage a '*learn by rote who you are ringing after*' habit.

So instead, in Diagram 7.1, the conductor has first set 2 and 3 swapping, for some reason choosing continuous Cambridge places starting with a dodge – perhaps they are more experienced members of the band and need a slight challenge. A little later the conductor has set 4 and 5 to dodge. This time our student on the 4 still has handstrokes over the 5, but the backstrokes could be over the 2 or the 3.

The whole point is to encourage the student to feel that there is no need to calculate in advance which bell they will follow; at backstrokes, look at the 1, 2 and 3 (which happily are all in the same direction) – the treble will lead, then the 2 and 3 come down one way round or the other, and then it's their turn. Does it really matter if they don't know in advance whether it will be 2 then 3 or 3 then 2? No! Encourage them to think of being the fourth rope down, without worrying about knowing in advance whether it will be the 2 or the 3 that they will follow.

There are lots of other exercises that can help here, but this is perhaps the simplest. We've discussed some (Bastow, Quick Sixes) earlier. The essential point behind all of them is NOT to push the student into Plain Hunt too quickly, as this is very likely to lead to the '*learn by rote which bell you ring after*' problem.

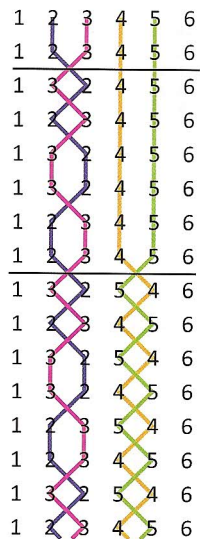


Diagram 7.1