

Quick or Slow?

Stedman is so simplistic in construction it should be easy. Alternate quick and slow 'sixes' (or hunting on 3 bells) with simple dodging above, extending to as many bells as are available, it is enjoyed by so many ringers, whatever their experience. Yet seemingly excellent peals of Stedman can 'fire out' at a moments notice. Part of the cause of the fire up is a momentary lack of concentration to figure out which way to go into the front work, quick or slow?

Different Ways To Work Out Which Way To Go In

It is essential that you know which way you should be going in. If you go in the wrong way, you may confuse those already on the front, which will probably start a fire up.

Counting Bobs

If there is an even number of bobs whilst you are at the back, or you have to make the bob, then enter the opposite way to the way you came out last time. *i.e.* This does not affect the normal order. Many compositions of Stedman Triples use pairs of bobs which makes it easier for everyone ringing. 'Odd bob' compositions are considered harder as ringers are more prone to entering the front the wrong way. Singles do not affect the way you enter the front.

'Footsie'

Using the bob counting method is useful, but on higher numbers especially, a ringer is prone to forgetting which way they came out last. Since you only need to worry about whether there was an even or an odd number of bobs, you can use your feet to remind you which way to go in next time. Decide which foot is slow. Each time you exit the front work, swap your feet over to tell you which way to go next time. For each bob called whilst you are in the highest dodging position, swap your feet over. This method goes wrong when you forget to swap your feet over on exiting the front work. By the time you get to 10-11, you may have forgotten which way you came out! Another version of this involves muttering quietly to yourself which way you will go in next time when you leave the front. For each bob you are caught dodging behind for, mutter the other way to yourself in between counting the dodges.

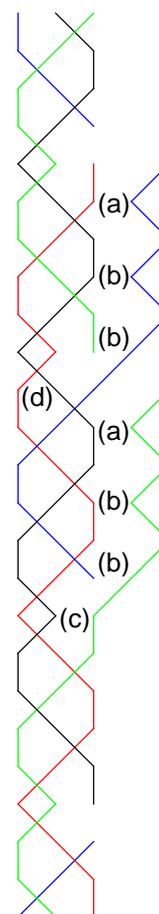
Course Bell

This method relies on your course bell going in correctly. Watch the bell coursing down in front of you to see which way it goes in, and then you go the opposite way. You must identify your course bell. This is easy if you have not been caught behind by bobs as it's the bell you were dodging 6-7 up with in triples, and that bell then courses down in front of you. If you had to dodge down at a bob, then your course bell is now the one that made the bob. When you get to 4-5 down, if you strike over your course bell for your first blow in 4th, then your course bell has gone in slow and you go in quick. If your course bell continues down to lead, then it's going in quick and you must go in slow.

Last Ditch

This method trusts that those on the front will not go wrong whilst you are dodging in 4-5 down, and the above methods should be used in preference. If you have fallen asleep, this method offers one of two last opportunities to get the entry right. As you start to dodge in 4-5 down, note whom you strike over at the first blow in 4th place (a). The second and third blows (b) in 4th place should be over the other two bells on the front. The bell you have noted will be the bell you turn from the lead, whichever way you end up going in. When you get to your first of a possible two blows in 3rds observe whom you strike over. If it's the bell you noted (c), go in slow otherwise quick, as that bell should be leading.

What's actually happening? Well, if you meet the noted bell when you are in 3rds place and it is in 2nds place (c), then it is doing its last whole turn which



finishes with a lead wrong, from which you turn it and lead wrong yourself for the first whole turn. If the bell you noted is leading (d) when you are in 3rds place, then it is leading right and finishing its first whole turn, and you must lead right after it.

Watch the Leading

Again, this method trusts the front bells will not go wrong. Look at the leading whilst you are in 4-5 down. If bells are leading at hand and back (leading right), it's a quick six, so you go in slow in the next six. If the leading is back and hand (leading wrong), is a slow six, so you go in quick next six. This one needs good rope-sight or listening skills!

Slow and Hope?

This method *must not be used*, in spite of being a 'top tip' in newsletters I have read in belfries on ringing outings. This is how peals fire up. The 'tip' is to always go in slow and yank the bell in quickly if you see someone try to ring over you. As a result of using this method of entry to the front, you will probably end up crashing another bell 50% of the time. This does not sound good and you may have to suffer the humiliation of an irate conductor!

Close

Lastly, if you are conducting the touch of Stedman, then you have the upper hand, and can check through the composition to see in advance which way you will enter the front work and you can remember this detail for short enough touches. Just don't miss-call it!

Note: For those not familiar with Stedman on higher numbers, the 'bobs' are made in 5^{ths} for Triples, 7^{ths} for Caters and 9^{ths} for Cinques. Similarly for singles, places are made in 567 for Triples, 789 for Caters and 90E¹ for Cinques.

Philip Abbey
Consulted by Mark Davies and Janet Covey-Crump
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¹ 0 = 10, E = 11 (Eleven), T = 12 (Twelve). Things get sillier on 16 bells.