

Improving Your Striking

Practice the following suggestions one step at a time. Like a lot of things in ringing, improvement doesn't happen all at once!

Listen for your own bell

To do this, first of all listen to all the bells in rounds, **whenever you are sitting out**. If the striking is reasonable you should be able to count the bells to a rhythm:

1-2-3-4-5-6-1-2-3-4-5-6-gap-1-2-3-4-5-6-1-2-3-4-5-6-gap-1-2-3-etc

'Gap' is the open lead. Now think of the bell that you will ring next. (Say it is 3)

Emphasise the count of that bell, thus...

1-2-**3**-4-5-6-1-2-**3**-4-5-6-gap-1-2-**3**-4-5-6-etc. This helps you to listen for the place (and note) of that bell

Now, when you are ringing rounds, still count the bells **as they sound**, emphasising the count of your bell as before. You will find that your bell strikes as your hands move upward past your face, handstroke and backstroke – **this** is the moment when you hear **your** bell. (Note that your handstroke blow sounds as you are reaching up for backstroke, and vice-versa) When you can hear your own bell in rounds, provided that the rest of the band are striking well, you can tell whether you are striking in the right place, no gap, no clash. Next step...

Ring to a rhythm

All good ringing is rhythmic; it only happens when all the band have settled to the same rhythm. If you have 'clashed' with the bell in front of you, were you 'early' – or were they 'late'? Whenever the striking is reasonable, sense the rhythm. With practice you can sense when to pull without watching the bell you are following. Once you have this skill, keep to the rhythm – don't follow another ringer's mistake.

If you have the opportunity, practice ringing rounds on a simulator. Counting places and listening is now essential. Don't be put off by any thought that 'I can't do it'. With practice you can and it's very worthwhile. You will be practising against perfect striking and the other bells will never make a mistake

Count your place

While ringing rounds you will always be in the same place, e.g. if you are ringing the 3rd you are always 'in thirds place'. As you count, keep this in mind. When you progress to call changes or method ringing you will move into different 'places' – but that's something for another time. For now, keep practising listening and counting places. You can't start too soon and it will help you a lot later on

