

The words *chimes* and *bells* are used interchangeably throughout this text. Directions that apply only to *chimes* or only to *bells* will be clearly identified.

1. ASSUME NOTHING; TEACH EVERYTHING

- a. Those who have no musical experience will need to learn everything.
- b. New ringers who *can* read music and/or play other instruments need to learn the basic techniques for ringing bells or chimes.
- c. New ringers who have been accustomed to playing every note in keyboard music or a single line instrumental part will need to adjust to a problem unique to bells: *being responsible for only 2 staff notes.*

Point out that even though some of the new ringers might already know some of the things you are teaching, it will make it easier for the group as a whole if everyone learns to use the same terminology.

- d. Explain each new step so that everybody has a chance to learn it.
 - i. Demonstrate whenever possible.
 - ii. Have them *watch you and listen* while you demonstrate the concept.
 - iii. Then *you watch them* as they attempt to do it.
- e. Be aware that things you, as a ringer and an adult, do automatically will *not* be automatic for the children whose physical coordination is much less developed.
- f. You might be surprised how much difficulty some new ringers have with the basic ringing stroke *but* most of them will eventually get it. It just takes...
 - i. Patience from the teacher
 - ii. Constant reminders to “keep the chime moving” and/or “make a large, slow circle”
 - iii. Lots of repetition

UP and RINGING: Book 1-Building Basic Skills has many exercises using whole notes, giving the ringers lots of practice on that basic stroke without playing the same song over and over and over. Half notes and quarter notes have a similar number of pieces to provide plenty of drill on these skills also.

2. ESTABLISH GOOD GROUP CONTROL WITH SIMPLE RULES

- a. Look at me (the director) when I am talking to you.
- b. Watch me, *without ringing*, when I explain something.
- c. THEN be ready to try it *together*.
- d. STOP LOOK, and LISTEN when we finish the exercise.
- e. Wait for a clear signal to begin playing again.

3. ASSIGN CHIMES ACCORDING TO THE STANDARD BASIC RINGING POSITIONS

- a. Standard ringing positions will allow your group to expand from 2 octaves to 3 octaves without expecting the current ringers to learn new notes.
- b. At the beginning levels most music takes these positions into consideration for page turns, bell changes and other difficulties.
- c. Any music by the Dares is definitely scored with these positions in mind.

4. USE ONLY THE NATURAL (white) NOTES FOR THE FIRST LESSON

Sharps and flats associated with the natural notes of each basic position can be introduced when they occur in a key signature. (See Item 5c for more details.)

5. KEY SIGNATURES, DIATONIC MUSIC AND BELL CHANGES

- a. The number of sharps or flats in a key signature does not pose a problem for ringers *as long as* the music is *strictly diatonic*.
- b. Each ringer is responsible for the two natural staff notes assigned to him.
- c. A sharp or flat for any letter *replaces* the natural note.
- d. Even if *both* assigned notes use the chromatic note instead of the natural note, the ringer still has only two chimes, one for each hand.
- e. Bell changes (This name is used with both bells and chimes.)
 - i. Accidentals (chromatic alterations to diatonic music) require **bell changes** because they add a *third* and maybe even *fourth* note for a ringer, making it necessary to put down the diatonic note in order to ring the altered note.
 - ii. **Beginning music does not (or should not) have bell changes.**
 - iii. Some easy music might have a few bell changes; these changes should allow at least one or two measures *before* each bell change.
 - iv. Intermediate music has more changes *with less time* to make the change.
 - v. Difficult music will have many, very quick bell changes.

6. USE TWO BASIC CHORDS TO TEACH NEW RINGING SKILLS

Rote drills allow the ringers to watch *you* and you to watch *them*. Many directors use the basic assignments for rote drills **but** my ears do not like the sound it creates. Why practice something that is not pleasing to the ear! Here is my solution:

- a. Ask every ringer to take a C - E - or G in their LEFT HAND.
- b. Position #7 (A5/B5) is the only ringer who will not have one of those notes.
Tell this ringer to put A5 in their LEFT HAND.
(*R4, R5, R6 & R11 must put the requested note in their "wrong" hand.*)
- c. Tell them to take their other basic bell or chime in their RIGHT HAND.
This produces two distinct chords (C major and D minor, each with an added 6th) across the full three octaves, providing a more musical experience than the discordant sounds that result when everyone uses their normal left hand and right hand notes.
- d. Use these chords to teach new note values and rhythm patterns.
(They are also good for teaching bell techniques; chimes don't use many techniques.)
- e. Be sure the ringers understand these two basic chords are for "drills."
I call them our "warmup chords" and use them for simple, rote drill warmups to...
 - i. Teach or work on a good basic stroke and ringing position
 - ii. Teach or review basic note values
 - iii. Work on striking together
 - iv. Work on clean damping
 - v. Isolate and drill a specific rhythmic pattern, problem rhythm or technique
- f. Remind the ringers to *put their basic chimes back in the correct hand* when you switch to printed music.

7. GIVE BEGINNERS A GOOD, CLEAR SIGNAL TO BEGIN

- a. Count one free measure in the meter of the piece.
- b. 4/4 = 1-2-3-4 *or* 1-2-ready-ring
- c. 3/4 = Two measures works better: 1-2-3 1-ready-ring
- d. Set the tempo by counting at the speed of the quarter notes.
- e. Help the ringers understand the concept that *your counting establishes the speed of the steady beat*.
- f. Later, when the ringers are accustomed to following the director's baton, you can drop the audible counting.