

## Introduction to Rote Drills

### REASONS FOR TEACHING RHYTHMIC VALUES WITHOUT MUSIC

1. Ringers can focus their attention on watching you, the teacher.
2. *You* can focus on *watching them*.
3. Ringers can concentrate on the *physical aspects of a good ringing stroke* and/or *the new rhythm or technique* without the complication of learning to follow music at the same time.
4. All ringers are using the same hand at the same time. This unison motion helps because
  - a. it creates a unity of motion across the entire choir
  - b. the ringers sense that they are ringing correctly when their motions match the motions of the ringers around them
  - c. the teacher can easily spot mistakes
5. Rote drills allow the teacher to *teach one thing at a time*; breaking new concepts down into smaller segments is especially important for new ringers who must also learn to read music.
6. Basic steps for teaching rhythmic values to beginners
  - a. Establish the *concept* of the underlying basic beat in music.
  - b. Help ringers internalize the *feel* for this underlying basic or **steady** beat of music.
  - c. Help the ringers develop the muscular response for moving the bell or chime throughout a specified number of steady beats.
    - i. When the ringers can do it, teach them the specific name of the note value.
    - ii. *Then* they can look at music with more understanding.

### USE TWO BASIC CHORDS FOR ALL ROTE DRILLS

Many directors ask the ringers to use the natural notes of the basic ringing assignments for the left hand and right hand when playing rote drills **but** my ears do not like the sound it creates across the 2 or 3 octave range. Why practice something that is not pleasing to the ear? Here is my alternative.

1. Ask every ringer to take a C - E or G in their LEFT HAND.
2. Position #7 (A5/B5) is the only ringer who will not have one of those notes.  
Tell this ringer to put A5 in the LEFT HAND.  
(*R4, R5, R6 & R11 must put the requested note in their “wrong” hand.*)
3. 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.*
4. Use these chords to teach new note values and rhythm patterns.  
(These chords are also good for teaching and refining bell techniques; chimes don't use many techniques.)
5. Be sure the ringers understand these two basic chords are for “drills.”  
I call them our “warm up chords” and use them for any rote warm ups or drills.
6. Remind the ringers to *put their basic chimes back in the correct hand* when you switch to printed music.

Suggestion: When using a rote drill for the very first session with non-music readers...

1. Put the natural chimes out in the correct “warm up” position for each ringer *before* you assign the ringers a place at the table. Since the new ringers have not been introduced to *standard ringing positions*, they will not realize that some chimes are in the “wrong” place.
2. Point out that each chime has a letter name with a number after it.
3. Explain that as they begin to learn the basic ringing skills, they should have a **C – E – or G** in their LEFT HAND. The person assigned to A5/B5, should use **A** in the LEFT HAND.
4. All ringers should use put the “other” chime in their RIGHT HAND.
5. Keep all explanations as simple as possible so that they can begin ringing quickly.
6. Don't bog the first ringing experience down with an explanation of ringing assignments or details about the staff.