



The Education Column

1. Introductory rumbblings

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.

Most of the articles will aim to take a very practical look at a particular teaching technique or practice method, but this first one deals with teaching skills in general, suggesting some that are not always practised in ringing.

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What makes a good teacher?

There are dozens of answers to that question, but here are some of the skills that are particularly relevant to teaching ringing:

1. **LEVEL OF EXPLANATION:**
Always explain at a level appropriate to the student, not the teacher.
2. **VARIETY OF APPROACHES:**
If one way of getting a point across isn't working, try a different approach.
3. **SPLIT INTO SMALLER STEPS:**
If the step you are asking your student to make is too big, split it into smaller steps.

These may seem obvious to anyone who has done much teaching of children, but they are too often lacking in the context of ringing. Let's think about **1 (EXPLANATIONS)**: few of us would have to rack our brains to recall a well-intended explanation of some ringing detail where we had no idea what the speaker was talking about, because they were speaking at their level, not ours. And did we then dare to communicate our total lack of understanding, or did we just nod sagely and walk away? **2 (APPROACHES)**: ever heard anything along the lines of "*Look, I've been teaching it this way for decades, and everyone else has understood, so it must be your fault!*"? And, moving away from the bell tower for a moment, it has anecdotally always been the tactic of English speakers, when overseas and failing to get their message across, to ignore **3 (SMALLER STEPS)** and instead to say the exactly same thing again, a bit slower and a lot louder.

Jargon

Is comparing ringing to a foreign language a bit unfair? Well, if you read Steve Coleman's article "*Je Parle Clochais*" (*Ringing World* 5492, 29 July 2016) you'll realise how much of our terminology is indeed foreign to non-ringers. For example, when a learner starts plain hunting in the wrong direction and someone helpfully shouts "*Three – hunt up! UP! UP!*" that's exactly the "*say it louder*" tactic, and the language really is not standard English. *Three* probably means three people, but which three? *Hunting* could be something that used to be done with horses and hounds, now illegal, but definitely involves searching. And *up* involves rising vertically into the air. So some ill-defined subset of the ringers is being exhorted to seek something that lies above them?

Which steps are too big?

The last point may be a bit of an exaggeration, but I suspect that few of us could claim to have always got points 1, 2 and 3 right. So the coming articles will concentrate on steps that we sometimes ask our learners to take which may be too big for some of them. I'm not suggesting that we *always* need to split *every* big step into small sub-steps for *every* student – the capable student who is making good progress may become frustrated if we slow their advancement by inserting too many extra steps. But we most definitely need exercises in our toolkit to help those many students who struggle with one of these big steps.