

Ringling a bell up & down

Safety

If you're not sure if a bell is "up" or "down" you can test it, by either:

- Hold the rope as if ready to ring normally (i.e. as if it is up, holding the tail ready for rounds) and pull the sally – if it swings gently it is down; if it is up then you'll pull the bell off and can safely ring it and then set it.
- For light bells (or those with good bearings) simply pulling the rope gently with two fingers should be enough to get it swinging gently, but isn't (usually) enough to pull it off. If the bell has plain bearings (or is really heavy) this method is not always conclusive, but if the bell does not swing when you pull with two fingers then assume it is up anyway.

Generally (but not always) a bell that is "down" will have its rope tied up with a bowline

Before you start, make sure any knots are taken out of the rope.

And try not to let the rope run through your hand as the sally rises. You see some ringers make a loop with thumb and index finger and let the rope run up through it to backstroke.

- This will take energy out of the bell in a raise making it harder work, and often brings the bell down too quickly when you start lowering in peal.
- It can take chunks out of your hand if there is a knot in the rope

Good Ringing Technique

As with all ringing there are just TWO key aspects to good ringing technique:

- Keep tension on the rope for as long as you possibly can. This means giving a nice LONG steady pull (which will also mean you don't have to pull so hard).
- Pull down vertically. If you move your hands out of the vertical, either side-to-side or away from you then the rope will follow, and it will start to snake about.

Ringling Up (See also "Small steps for the beginner" below)

- Take some coils; this will stop slack rope snaking around: usually two coils are enough, or perhaps three on a big bell. If they are too big then they'll whack you on the back of the head when you reach up; if you have too many you'll have a fist full of rope and then you can't pull so hard. Hold the rope end with your usual hand, slide the other hand up the rope and bring it back down over your first hand, and repeat.
- The first pull, pull down hard and then slide your hands down the rope as the sally swings up: if you hang on and resist the bell you'll be stopping it rising.
- As the bell rises then make the coil smaller by feeding rope from the coil through your hands. If you let rope out too quickly your hands won't rise very far and you'll only get a shortened pull down, making it hard work (so take a bit back in if you can), and if you don't let it out soon enough you'll stop the bell rising. A sure sign that you need to let out more rope is your heels coming off the ground at backstroke ... the bell is ringing you!
- On each backstroke, let the bell rise as far as it can before you pull down. If your arms don't go up straight you've let out too much rope so don't let any more out until they do go up straight; if you feel a little tug from the bell at the top of the swing you can let some more rope out.
- When the coil is as small as it will go, and you want to let more rope out, then release the small coil.
- Try to pull straight down (not slightly sideways or forwards) – otherwise you throw the rope across the room; when the bell is nearly up you might not even be able to reach to catch the sally.
- Keep your back straight – don't lean forward when pulling. If you are struggling to get the bell up then bend your knees as you pull down (keeping your back straight and vertical as possible) – you are then using all your weight (not just arm muscles) to pull the bell up.
- When the bell is nearly up and the sally starts bouncing, just steady it with your hand that is not holding the coils. At first it will bob up and down and you won't have time to pull it, then as the bell rises further you may have time for a quick pull too, but your main focus should still be on pulling the backstroke. If you concentrate too much on catching the sally and forget to pull the backstroke then the bell will start to ring back down again.
- As the bell gets close to being fully up it will take longer between strokes and the handstroke will rise just as it would when ringing rounds. EASE UP WITH THE PULLING or you'll bash the stay. When you can, ring with both hands catching the sally and finally set the bell.



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Ringling Down (See also “Small steps for the beginner” below)

A bell that is pulled off will ring itself down eventually; your job is to control its speed of descent and keep the rope under control.

You can hasten the bell down by not pulling so hard, and perhaps also checking the rope as the bell rises at backstroke. You'll still need to keep tension on the rope as your hands come down to stop the rope snaking about, but don't use much force or you'll be pulling the bell back up again.

- Once the bell starts to drop, you'll find your hands don't go so far up at backstroke. Some people shuffle both hands up the rope end so you still get a nice long gentle pull, others shuffle one hand up to separate their hands progressively if they find it easier to take coils like that. Only move your hands up GRADUALLY to shorten the rope, a little bit of rope at a time!
- As the bell starts to drop you'll also find the bell rings more quickly and it becomes more difficult to catch the sally in time without flicking the rope about: best to catch with just one hand on the sally! Use the one that is not holding the rope end. When the bell drops further then the handstroke will reduce to nothing and you can then just concentrate on the rope end alone.
- Pretty soon after starting the lower you'll have spare rope that has a tendency to flick about: you'll need to think about taking a coil.
- Take a REALLY SMALL coil as you pull down at backstroke; bring the rope in your upper hand down into the palm of your lower hand, then use your upper hand to steady the sally on the handstroke. From then on at backstroke your upper hand should be on the single rope just above the coil, and you can feed a little bit of rope through to make the coil larger when necessary.
- Each coil you take should start REALLY SMALL; a big one can bring the bell down really too fast, or on a big bell might lift you off the ground or even give you rope burns!
- Make coils bigger very gradually. If it gets too big the coil will flop around and may start to hit you in the face or on the back of the head at backstroke. It is time to take another REALLY SMALL coil.
- As your hands move up the rope they will eventually reach the sally you can start chiming (see below).
- When ready, stop the bell so the rope does not swing at all.

- Each tower may do different things with ropes when the bells are down: most tie “down knots” (a “bowline”); a few leave them on the floor; some hang the ropes up on a “spider”; some down a heated piece of drainpipe that keeps the ropes supple in a damp tower.

Chiming

When chiming, the clapper is being bounced off the side of the bell. It is the clapper that is swinging rather than the bell, and you're hitting the bell against the clapper to make it swing. The timing of the check should be just before the end of the swing, causing that the clapper to overtake, strike and bounce off the bell, then give a follow-through to put the energy back into the bell that was lost by checking it.

Do you want to watch someone doing it?

Look on the internet; Ringing Up (a single bell): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWVXIWOe7J4>

You will find many other examples on the internet, including ringing up & down in peal.

Small steps for the beginner

- First attempts at ringing up: let an experienced ringer take the rope end and coils, you start off on the sally, and your job is to do all the pulling! As the bell rises you gradually slide off the sally and down the rope, and the experienced ringer gradually feeds you more rope; when the sally starts to bob, the experienced ringer steadies that too. When the experienced ringer runs out of rope, you take full control of the ropes end. You can do similar in reverse when lowering.
- Practice taking and releasing coils when you're not actually raising & lowering the bell, until you can do it almost automatically.
- More advanced attempts: get an experienced ringer to do the handstrokes, while you concentrate on the backstrokes. This gives you much more time to take in & release coils.



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