

Under 18s



Parents' Guide to Bell Ringing

Produced by the CCCBR Young Ringer's Workgroup

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1. Introduction

This article is to help parents to understand what to expect for themselves and for their children in their bell ringing journey. It covers both those who are considering learning Bell ringing as part of a school group or directly joining a local tower.

1.1 What is Bell Ringing

Bell Ringing is a special and unique part of our nation's heritage for the people who hear ringing as well as the people in the ringing band.

There is more to ringing than pulling a rope. It requires working as part of a small team, using physical and mental skills to create a unique and joyous sound which can be heard far and wide.

Few people have been inside a bell tower. Most towers have between 6 and 12 bells, ranging in weight from the lightest bell (Treble) to the heaviest bell (Tenor). Some Ringing rooms are on the ground floor, and others are on higher floors accessed via steps or stairs.

1.2 Why do people ring

For the sheer joy of being part of a band and creating music, plus many other reasons;

- the physical activity
- the mental stimulation
- making new friends
- camaraderie
- giving back to the community
- a busy social life; outings, meals and weekly get togethers
- Cake and chocolate!



INTERESTING FACT

English bell ringing is known as Full Circle Ringing; originally bells were chimed, but once bells were mounted on special frames it became possible to have much greater control and to ring many different methods (tunes).

1.3 Who are my local bell ringers?

You probably know someone who rings locally; bands are from all backgrounds, from 8 to over 85 years old. They are a friendly group who welcome new learners, especially young people as they are the future of bellringing.

You don't need to be a churchgoer; most towers are a mix of people of which only some will attend church.

1.4 What makes a good bell ringer?

Ringers need a sense of coordination, rhythm and listening skills and they need to be able to work as part of a team.

They don't need to be musical as they follow patterns and numbers to ring methods, a little like learning to follow dance steps. New ringers will start with called changes, by listening to a conductor who tells them which bell to follow.



TIP

Your child will receive recognition, badges and certificates as they progress through their bell ringing journey.

2. What is involved in learning to ring

Taking the first step can be hard, but all towers will welcome new learners and structure a child's learning according to their skills and time available.

2.1 How long will it take to learn?

It takes about 20 hours to learn how to handle a bell competently, so we ask that learners commit to attending regularly, usually once or twice per week, so that together we can develop their skills.

Once they can handle a bell competently, a whole world of new experiences and challenges opens learning to ring the thousands of methods (tunes).

They can stay with their local tower band or take it as far as they wish. They will have the opportunity to ring at different towers, with different bands and to ring

in local and national competitions. Of course, they can stay and ring with the local band too.

2.2 What skills will they develop?

Ringling develops lots of transferable skills which will impress on any job or University application.

Children don't need to be strong, they use technique, listening, feel and timing to control their bell.

Ringling develops confidence, team working, coordination, concentration, leadership, listening and following instructions as well as analytical thinking.

They will follow a structured programme of learning, such as the Sherborne Teaching Aids, Association of Ringing Teacher "Learning the Ropes" and achieve awards, badges and certificates as they progress.

Ringling can count towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award, children can progress through bronze, silver and gold awards with a set program of development.

2.3 Do I need to accompany my child?

Not necessarily, although you are welcome to come and have a go too, we often find parents stay and become ringers themselves.

If your child starts as part of an after-school Bell Ringing Club, the school will have established procedures and will explain what will happen.

If your child starts directly at a local tower, you will be asked to follow their Safeguarding procedures and tower rules.

- All towers will follow Central Council of Church Bell Ringers Safeguarding policy and procedures and will have a CRB checked Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding manual will be readily available in the Tower for you to read. It will be based on the guidance provided by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers. [CCCBR guidance can be found here:](#)

You will always be required to collect your child from the tower after the practice session.

2.4 What does it cost?

Bell Ringing is a very cheap activity. All bands are volunteers and give their time freely. Your child will need to wear appropriate clothing, which allows them to raise their arms above their head.

2.5 What are the risks?

All activities have risks, but bell ringing is not inherently dangerous.

Safety: Each tower will explain safety procedures, such as keeping feet firmly on the floor and not touching ropes without permission. There is no swinging round as shown on TV sometimes!

Noise: The sound of bells is thrown upwards out of the tower, so noise in the ringing room is controlled. Ringers need to talk to each other as they ring!



TIP

Competent ringers are welcomed wherever they find English style ringing. When they approach a local tower on holidays or days out, they are treated as a friend and encouraged to join in the ringing.

Conclusion

Bell Ringing is a special and unique part of our nation's heritage for the people who hear ringing as well as the people in the ringing band.

Your child will be starting on a lifetime of fun and learning and can take their practice as far as they wish.

They will gain confidence, learn new skills and be part of a national and international community of ringers. They will have the opportunity to ring for special events such as weddings and national celebrations.

Why not join them? You will be very welcome!