

# Useful tips for using Ringing Room

Are you all ringing with Ringing Room? I hope so as it's great fun and a good way to keep your band together in these isolated times. Ringing Room has no chat facility so one of the standard online video conference apps (e.g. Zoom, Webex, Skype) must be used concurrently to agree what method is being rung next and to give conducting advice during the ringing.

I do not hold myself out as an expert on Ringing Room but I have picked up a couple of ideas since getting started and from a number of other ART Tutors.

**Small groups work best** – certainly until everyone has had a couple of good practices. If you are adding a Ringing Room novice to an existing group, consider timetabling a 15-minute taster session with them beforehand.

**Laptops** tend to give significantly better results than iPhones or tablets.

**Ringing Room performance can be affected by the Internet browser you use.** Currently Chrome works best for Ringing Room, however this may change in the future. The key message is if you are having problems, change your browser and see if that helps.

Please ask everyone in the session **to use headphones** otherwise everyone else will pick up an echo of the strike through whatever video conferencing app is being employed. If someone has logged into Ringing Room but has no headphones, then their microphone should be muted by the conference host.

**It's very easy to accidentally finish up in a ringing room on your own** just by getting the room number slightly wrong. Note especially that Zoom uses nine digit room ID's the same as Ringing Room, so that can be a huge source of amusement. Once you log on (or straight away if you have chosen "remember me") your name appears at the top right: click on the down arrow and you will see a list of up to five recently-visited towers. This is very handy and avoids mistyping or forgetting those complicated tower numbers.

**Once the bells have been assigned** to the ringers who have logged in, then the screen will rotate so that everyone has their bell in the bottom right. Everyone can then use the J key to cause their bell to strike. If ringing two

bells then F and J are the keys to use. Other keys can also be used to cause bells to strike – the space bar (for just one bell), the sideways arrows and the actual number key for the bell(s). A matter for personal preference once experience has been gained.

**The Ringing Room window must have the focus for keypresses to be recognised.** So, if you click in your chat window (perhaps to mute a microphone), keypresses to sound your bell won't work. You will need to click anywhere in the Ringing Room window, so that Ringing Room has the focus, then keypresses will work again.

**Use the best Internet signal available.** A lot of problems with poor performance in Ringing Room can be laid at the door of poor Internet in the home of the end user. Don't waste bandwidth by keeping the video feed on with whatever video conferencing app you are using. Switch video off so you can keep listening to instructions but are giving your internet its best chance to deliver a good service to Ringing Room. Tell your children to log out of YouTube and read a book for a while!

**Check that new users can see all the ropes.** If they can't then tell them to use the zoom button accessed from the three horizontal dots at the top right of the screen to get the screen size correct.

**Consider dividing your band by experience** to meet on different nights – an advanced group, a standard group and your novices. The repertoire available will be different on each evening and no-one should be sitting out for too long.

**Start slowly.** Even experienced tower bell ringers may need to start out by hunting on just four bells to get used to the graphics – particularly if they have never rung with Mobel. You can then ask them to take the treble to Bastow Little Bob Minor to see making seconds over the 2, then the 4, then the 6, then the 5, then the 3. Get everyone comfortable with the ropesight before embarking on anything too challenging.

Don't be afraid to ask the band **to ring a bit slower** until everyone has got their sea legs.

**If someone is struggling with ropesight ask them to stand behind you while you ring.** What does this mean? While they are standing behind they should be tapping the table at home with their finger when you tap the J key. If you haven't got the luxury of someone spare to replace the novice ask anyone present who rings handbells to ring two bells instead of just one.

If you have met short or want to have a go at ringing more bells than you have ringers don't forget that **a lot more ringers can double-hand in Ringing Room than ever can in the tower!**

**It is not unusual – certainly in the early stages – to double strike.** You have hit the J or (arrow or number) key, it didn't sound so you hit it again – then it reacts to the first hit and the second hit and you are on the wrong stroke. If you can react quickly then hit it a third time to get back the right way around. All the others will cope better with three strikes than two.

Most of the groups I ring with perform at a much lower level than they can manage in the tower BUT there are increasing reports of ringers who could barely handle a bell in rounds up the tower hunting proficiently in Ringing Room and even getting a plain course of Plain Bob Minor to come round.

**Try Bastow Minimus or Plain Bob Minor rather than Plain Bob Doubles as a first method** for ringing novices. Anyone double handing will find even-bell patterns more familiar; the novices will find the pattern of the work making more sense for Minor than for Doubles and of course they aren't bothered about not having a tenor to lead off.

Please encourage new ringers to **practise during the week** on an app of their choosing (e.g. Methodology, Abel, Mobel).

**A final note.** If you haven't used Ringing Room for a while, be aware that you now have to set a username and password. It's easy but may be confusing if you haven't had to do it in the past.

I have hopes that Ringing Room will really pay huge dividends when we get back upstairs. During lockdown many novices will have learned about such things as up and down dodges, where they pass the treble ... all from the comfort of their living room.

Do let us know if you have any other tips?