



Plain Hunting - How to Learn it.

Plain hunting is usually the first step in learning change ringing.

“Change ringing” means that bells are changing places at each pull according to a set pattern called the “Method”. In change ringing you need to learn the method being rung, that is, the path you take through the other bells. You also need to develop a skill called “Ropesight”, the ability to see your place among the other ropes.

A basic rule of change ringing is that a bell may only move one “place” at a time; you may only change places with the bell ringing before you or the bell ringing after you. To do this you need to change the swing of your bell slightly, “holding up” to ring slower when you move “up” over another bell, or to “check” your bell to ring faster when you move “down” in front of another bell.

Good bell control is essential; it is worthwhile repeating the bell-handling lessons to be sure that you can hold the bell up, every time, handstroke and backstroke. Failing to hold up at backstroke is perhaps the most common fault when learning change ringing.

An important part of learning to ring - at all levels - is to **thoroughly** study what you are going to do beforehand, otherwise you are not being fair to yourself or to your tutor. The next step is to study what is involved in plain hunting, then to discuss how it is rung.

Watch the treble when it is plain hunting, that is, when “Plain Hunt”, “Plain Bob” or “Grandsire” are being rung. See if you can follow what is being discussed here. If you can “see” what you have to do first it makes the “doing” that much easier.

First of all, think about two bells, numbered 1 and 2. We can ring them in the order 1 - 2, or 2 - 1. Not very exciting, so now look at three bells, 1, 2 and 3. Study the figures below and write them out yourself - several times!

From rounds:	1 2 3
Change 1 and 2 (the front pair)	2 1 3
Change the back pair	2 3 1
Change the front pair	3 2 1
Change the back pair	3 1 2
Change the front pair	1 3 2
Change the back pair	1 2 3

(which has brought us back to rounds or 1 2 3).

You can see that as you changed the numbers (representing bells) in a regular order they have formed a regular pattern. Look at 2; it becomes the front (“leading”) bell for two rows, then moves one place “up” at a time until it is the last bell (“at the back”) for two rows. It then moves down one place at a time towards the front. If we kept on writing the figures it would do the same thing over and over. All the bells follow this same pattern, each bell starting in a different place. This pattern is called PLAIN HUNTING and it is the basis of all change ringing. Keep writing it out until you can do it without mistakes.

Get some 5 mm (1/4”) squared paper for this - it will help to keep your figures tidy.

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Written by Peter D Wenham

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Now try the same idea on four bells:

Rounds	1 2 3 4
Now you can change two pairs	2 1 4 3
Now change the middle pair	2 4 1 3
Change the outside pairs	4 2 3 1
Change the middle pair	4 3 2 1
And so on - - -	3 4 1 2
	3 1 4 2
	1 3 2 4
	1 2 3 4

You can see that this makes a similar pattern, all the numbers (bells) following a plain hunting path. Keep busy with the paper and pencil until you can write “Plain hunt on four bells”, then try it for five bells and six bells. The figures are shown below if you can’t get it right.

Plain hunt on five bells

1 2 3 4 5
2 1 4 3 5
2 4 1 5 3
4 2 5 1 3
4 5 2 3 1
5 4 3 2 1
5 3 4 1 2
3 5 1 4 2
3 1 5 2 4
1 3 2 5 4
1 2 3 4 5

Plain hunt on six bells

1 2 3 4 5 6
2 1 4 3 6 5
2 4 1 6 3 5
4 2 6 1 5 3
4 6 2 5 1 3
6 4 5 2 3 1
6 5 4 3 2 1
5 6 3 4 1 2
5 3 6 1 4 2
3 5 1 6 2 4
3 1 5 2 6 4
1 3 2 5 4 6
1 2 3 4 5 6

Plain Hunting - How to ring it.

There are many ways of learning to ring Plain Hunt, and you will learn by what is done in your tower. But, whatever method you learn by, a basic fact to appreciate is that when you are hunting “up” from the front to the back you must ring slower than in rounds, “holding up” every stroke, and when you are hunting “down” from the back to the front you must ring quicker than in rounds by “checking” your bell before it reaches the balance.

Another thing that you should know is that most learners find Plain Hunt difficult at first, so don’t be put off if you don’t “get it” first time - or even the twenty-first time! There’s a lot to do when you are controlling the bell at different speeds and watching where you are going; most people need a lot of practice. But this is the gateway to all change ringing, so keep practising. Also, watch others while they are Plain Hunting.

Plain hunt is usually taught on five bells, plus a covering tenor if you are in a six bell tower, so look at the figures for plain hunting on five bells and think of yourself ringing the treble. When “Go” is called you start by hunting “up” from the front to the back so you must hold up at each stroke to move into “seconds place”, then “thirds place”, “fourths place” and “fifths place”. When you move into seconds place one other bell pulls before you do, then as you



move into thirds place two bells pull before you do, then three bells and finally four bells pull in front of you. It won't take you long to realise that when ringing the treble in Plain Hunt you follow the other ropes in the order 2-4-5-3 as you do this, but don't rely on memorising numbers - you will see why later! You need a way of seeing which rope to follow next. Looking at the figures and still thinking of ringing the treble, in rounds 2 is following you and in the first change you pull after 2. Now 4 follows you - and next time you pull after 4. This gives us the basic rule of hunting up:

Follow the bell that followed you.

Knowing that (for the moment) you will meet the other ropes in the order 2-4-5-3, as you pull after 2 look at 4, as you pull after 4 look at 5 - and so on. Watch **all** the other ropes and find the one that has followed you. Later on, when you are plain hunting the treble to a method and the other bells are doing something different, you will still be able to find the bell that followed you, each time you pull, and to follow that bell next pull as you hunt up. This, basically, is what is meant by "Ropesight".

Hunting back down to lead in Plain Hunt you will pass the bells in the same order as when you hunted up, but now you will be ringing faster than in rounds, moving one place nearer the front at every pull. And, of course, there will be one rope less in front of you at each pull. Try to see this - Four ropes in front of you - three ropes - two ropes - one rope - lead!

Leading after hunting down might seem a problem but, by now, you should have a picture in your mind of how the tenor ringer is catching the sally as you pull the handstroke lead. (See Instalment No. 1, page 12.) If the tenor is covering, after your backstroke pull in seconds place look at the tenor and time your leading pull from him/her; it's just the same as leading in rounds.

When you can hunt up and down make a habit of "counting your places" all the time you are ringing. Starting from lead this will be "Seconds - thirds - fourths - fifths - fifths - fourths - thirds - seconds - lead - lead - seconds - and so on. Knowing which place you are in becomes very important in ringing, so get into the habit of counting places now. Try to count your place as your bell strikes; this will also help you to hear your own bell and to listen to your striking.

Keep working on your bell control and learn to ring with the minimum effort. Some points to watch:

- On the backstroke lead always pull sufficiently to be sure of holding up - and you must be able to hold up on **every** pull until you are at the back.
- On the last pull at the back (on five bells this is a handstroke) pull less, because you are going to check on the next pull to start hunting down.
- On the backstroke before you lead pull a little harder; this steadies your bell for the lead, otherwise you might clash with the tenor at handstroke instead of making an open lead.

After some practice with the treble try plain hunting on other bells, having looked to see where each other bell starts. For instance 2 starts with two blows at lead.

Usually the next step is to ring the treble to a method where the treble plain hunts, such as Plain Bob or Grandsire. Hunting up and down, and counting your places is just the same as in Plain Hunt, but you will pass the other bells in a different order each time you hunt up. (This



is why “learning the numbers” doesn’t help in the long run.) Keep working at ropesight and your sense of rhythm, a slow rhythm to hunt up and a faster rhythm to hunt down. Keeping this sense of rhythm helps you to see the other ropes. When you can hunt the treble to method the next step is usually to learn Plain Bob Doubles.

Plain Bob Doubles - Learning about it.

You will have heard the term “Plain Bob doubles” (or just “Bob doubles”). “Plain Bob” is a “method”, “doubles” means that it is rung on five bells, usually with a covering tenor in towers with six or more bells. To explain further,

Changes on	Are called
Three bells	Singles
Four bells	Minimus
Five bells	Doubles
Six bells	Minor
Seven bells	Triples
Eight bells	Major
Nine bells	Caters
Ten bells	Royal
Eleven bells	Cinques
Twelve bells	Maximus

When ringing Plain Hunt you probably noticed that the bells frequently came back into rounds. The reason we have “methods” is to keep the bells ringing longer before they come back into rounds - and to make the ringing more interesting.

Write out the first lead of plain hunt on five bells up to the treble’s handstroke lead. The basic rule of Plain Bob on any number of bells is that “The bell the treble takes from lead strikes twice over the treble and leads again”. As the treble comes down to lead your figures should be:

5 3 4 1 2	
3 5 1 4 2	
3 1 5 2 4	
1 3 2 5 4	and the next row is:
→ 1 3 5 2 4 ←	Now carry on plain hunting:
3 1 2 5 4	
3 2 1 4 5	and so on.

The treble takes 3 from lead so 3 strikes twice over the treble and leads again. Striking twice in the same place is called “making a place”, so 3 has “made seconds place over the treble”.

Because 3 made seconds place 2 could not hunt down. Instead, it stepped back from thirds place to fourths place, then carried on hunting down again. This step back is called a “dodge”. 2 has dodged from thirds to fourths place whilst hunting down, so this is called a “3-4 down dodge”.

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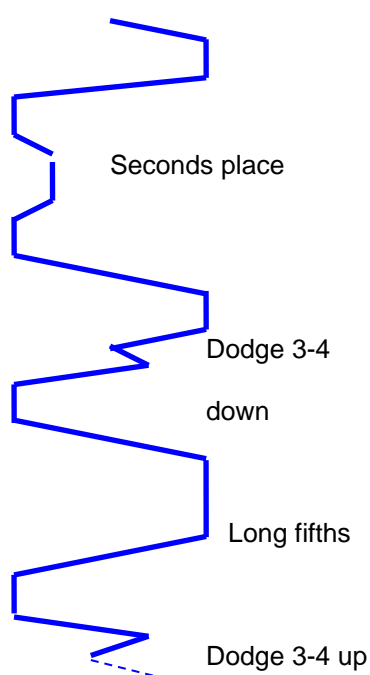


5 was hunting up and has “dodged with 2”, so this is a “3-4 up dodge”.

4 hasn't got anyone to play with; it strikes four blows in fifths place (or “at the back”) before it can hunt down. This is “long fifths” or “four blows behind”.

Carry on writing plain hunt until the treble leads again, then do the same thing - the bell the treble takes from lead makes seconds place and leads again, the bells in 3-4 dodge, and the bell left over makes long fifths. Keep doing this until, when the treble leads for the fourth time, you should come back into rounds. This is the “Plain course” of Bob doubles. The figures are given later in case you go wrong.

When you have written the plain course of Bob doubles draw a line through all the “3's” . If we squeeze it up a bit it will look like this:



The line that traces the path of a bell is usually called the “Blue Line” because in ringing books a blue line is normally used to show the “path” of a “working” bell. (The treble is usually shown with a red line.)

You will see that there are four pieces of “work”, that is, when the bells are not plain hunting.

These are:

Seconds place, Dodge 3-4 down, Long fifths, Dodge 3-4 up.

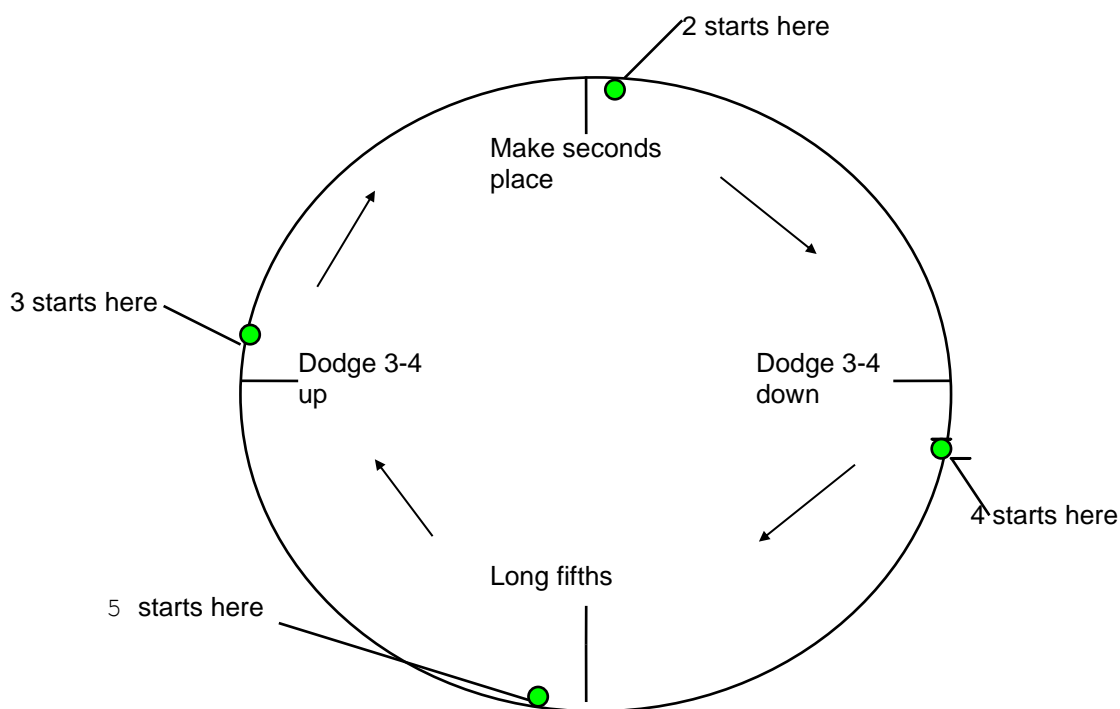
All the “working bells” do the work in this order, but starting in a different place. Follow 4 from your figures; at the first treble lead it makes long fifths, then dodges 3-4 up, makes seconds place and dodges 3-4 down as the bells come back into rounds. It does the same work as 3, but starting in a different place, as do 2 and 5.

To ring Bob doubles we know that the bells start by plain hunting and we must learn the sequence of work - for each bell. This can be shown with a diagram:

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Each bell starts from rounds by plain hunting until the treble leads, then does the next work shown around the circle. Learn the work of the plain course of Bob doubles, starting from any bell, and in the next session we will discuss how to ring it.

Bob Doubles.

1 2 3 4 5	↗	1 5 4 3 2
2 1 4 3 5		5 1 3 4 2
2 4 1 5 3		5 3 1 2 4
4 2 5 1 3		3 5 2 1 4
4 5 2 3 1		3 2 5 4 1
5 4 3 2 1		2 3 4 5 1
5 3 4 1 2		2 4 3 1 5
3 5 1 4 2		4 2 1 3 5
3 1 5 2 4		4 1 2 5 3
1 3 2 5 4		1 4 5 2 3
1 3 5 2 4		1 4 2 5 3
3 1 2 5 4		4 1 5 2 3
3 2 1 4 5		4 5 1 3 2
2 3 4 1 5		5 4 3 1 2
2 4 3 5 1		5 3 4 2 1
4 2 5 3 1		3 5 2 4 1
4 5 2 1 3		3 2 5 1 4
5 4 1 2 3		2 3 1 5 4
5 1 4 3 2		2 1 3 4 5
1 5 3 4 2		1 2 4 3 5
1 5 4 3 2		1 2 3 4 5



Plain Bob Doubles - How to ring it.

Most of Plain Bob is plain hunting, but each time the treble leads we have to do something different; we may have to:

Make seconds place
Dodge 3-4 down
Make long fifths or
Dodge 3-4 up.

If you ring the third you will start by hunting up, then down to lead and your first work is to:

Make Seconds Place.

As the treble takes you from lead you strike over the treble at handstroke; your backstroke blow is also over the treble, then lead again (handstroke/backstroke) and carry on plain hunting. Your next work is to:

Dodge 3-4 down.

Your last blow in fifths place is a handstroke; you hunt down into fourths place on a backstroke; **the bell you meet here is the bell you are going to dodge with.** Hunt down into thirds place (handstroke) then **hold up** into fourths place, over your dodge bell, on the backstroke, then hunt down again. Look at the figures for Bob doubles to see this. Count your places as you are ringing: “Fifths-fourths-thirds-**fourths**-thirds-seconds, lead”.

Your next work is to:

Make long fifths.

When you “lay” in fifths place you normally strike over two different bells, call them A and B. When you make long fifths in the “plain course” (that is, no-one is calling bobs,) strike over **the same two bells again** in the order A-B-A-B, then hunt down.

Your next work is to:

Dodge 3-4 up.

Notice which bell takes you from lead; your next blow will be over the treble (look at your figures!) and your next blow, a handstroke, will be over the bell you are dodging with. **Check** on the next backstroke to come back down into thirds place, striking over the bell that took you from lead, then **hold up** into fourths place, striking over your dodge bell, and then up into fifths place. Your counting from lead will be : Seconds-thirds-fourths-**thirds**-fourths-fifths - -. The next work is to make seconds place, so we are back to where we started.

Dodging requires something extra in bell control because we have to change from hunting down to hunting up to hunting down - or the reverse - each time we dodge. To do this with minimum effort and good striking we need to think ahead.

Dodging down.

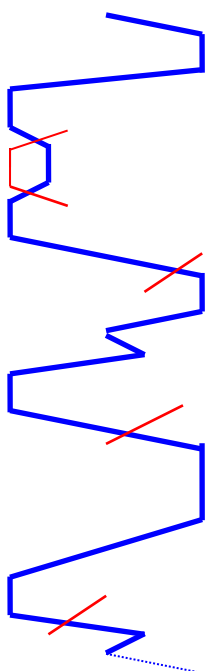
Hunting down to thirds place we are checking the bell slightly to ring faster than in rounds. On the blow in thirds place **pull harder** to hold up into fourths place (the dodge), and now **pull less** because on the next pull you must check to get back down into thirds place and so to lead. (Always pull less if you know that the next pull will be a check. Try always to think one pull ahead.)



Dodging up.

On the pull which brings you up into fourths place **pull less** because on the next pull you will check into thirds place (the dodge), but on this pull **check and pull harder at the same time** so that you can hold up into fourths place and hunt up. As with the down dodge, try to think ahead and pull according to what you will do next. It saves energy, improves the striking and it makes ringing more enjoyable when you feel the bell following your guidance rather than having to use brute force.

There are many “signposts” in ringing, guides to what to do next, and one of the most important signposts is knowing where you “pass the treble”. In Plain Bob think about where you pass the treble when hunting up. (“ — ” in the next diagram shows where you pass the treble.) If you pass the treble when moving up from fourths place to fifths place this is called “Passing the treble in 4-5 up”.



Treble takes you from lead - make seconds place.

Pass the treble in 4-5 up -

Dodge 3-4 down.

Pass the treble in 3-4 up -

Make Long Fifths.

Pass the treble in 2-3 up - dodge 3-4 up.

Knowing where you pass the treble is useful for three reasons:

1. It reminds you what to do next if you have forgotten.
2. It's a bell you haven't got to look for - you know who it will be.
3. Later on, if a learner is on the treble and is out of place you will realise this and (hopefully) ring on and not get lost yourself.

When you are used to looking for where you pass the treble **before** a dodge, etc., look out for where you pass it **afterwards**. Again, it is another bell you don't have to look for - you know who it will be. Notice how, when leaving the 3-4 down dodge or long fifths, the next bell you meet is the treble.

Practice ringing the plain course from each working bell; the next session will be about making bobs.



Plain Bob Doubles – Now for the Bobs!

40 changes long, but the “Extent” of changes on five bells is 120. In other words, you can write 1 2 3 4 5 one hundred and twenty different ways.

To ring the extent we have to move the bells around more than happens in the plain course, and this is why we have “Bobs”. Bobs are called as the treble comes to lead, and they cancel the usual rules of making seconds place and dodging for that one lead.

Don’t think that bobs are going to be more difficult than ringing plain courses because in some ways bobs are easier than plain leads. There are three things to remember about making bobs:

Instead of:	You will now:	And your next work is:
Making seconds place	Plain hunt up and down again. This hunt up is called “Run out”.	Make seconds place
Dodging 3-4 down	Hunt down to lead and back up again. This hunt down is called “Run in”	Dodge 3-4 down.
Dodging 3-4 up	Hunt up to fourths place, “make” fourths place and hunt down to lead. Making this place is “Making the bob”.	Make long fifths.

So, if the bob calls you to run in or to run out you get a “free lead” of plain hunt, and then do the same work at the next lead instead. If you are called to make the bob you plain hunt to make fourths place instead of fifths place (so remember to count your places!) and back to lead, then hunt up and make long fifths. **There is no dodging at a bob!**

Compare a plain lead to a bob lead:

Plain lead	Bob Lead	
3 5 1 4 2	3 5 1 4 2	
3 1 5 2 4	3 1 5 2 4	←Bob called here
1 3 2 5 4	1 3 2 5 4	
1 3 5 2 4	1 2 3 5 4	←Bob made here
3 1 2 5 4	2 1 5 3 4	
3 2 1 4 5	2 5 1 4 3	

The bob happens (or “is made”) at the treble’s backstroke lead; the call is made on the previous backstroke, so you have a “whole pull” warning of what you have to do. In the example above,

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- Instead of making seconds place 3 has “run out”; it will make seconds place next time.
- Instead of dodging 3-4 down 2 has “run in”; it will dodge 3-4 down next time.
- Instead of dodging 3-4 up 5 has “made the bob” Which is just plain hunting up to **fourths** place and back to lead; it will make long fifths next time.

The bell making long fifths is not affected by the bob - it still makes long fifths, but it strikes over the other bells differently. Making long fifths in the plain course you strike over two bells in the order A-B-A-B. But at a bob you strike over three different bells in the order A-B-B-C; look at the figures on page 9. Notice especially that for the middle two blows you strike over the **same bell**, handstroke/backstroke

As always, writing out what you intend to ring helps to fix it in your mind. If you write Bob doubles and put in a bob at the first lead your figures should be the same as those shown for the bob lead on page 9. If you write another bob at the next lead you should come back into rounds.

If you write a plain lead followed by a bob lead then repeat this twice you should have a “touch” of 60 changes (6 leads) finishing in rounds.

To write the “extent”, write out three plain leads followed by a bob lead, and repeat this twice, usually shown as “P P P B, twice repeated”. If you do this successfully, finishing with rounds, you will have written 120 changes (12 leads), every possible combination of 1-2-3-4-5. Notice that the same bell has made long fifths each time; it is “unaffected” by the calls.

You can also call 120’s as PPBP, PBPP or BPPP, each one twice repeated. If you do this you will see that each calling leaves a different bell unaffected. Writing these extents, remember to put three plain leads between each pair of bobs.