



Learning all eleven

"Could you say something about learning the starts of different bells? I am trying to learn all eleven Minimus methods and, while I can learn 2nd place bell fine, there seems to be no pattern in how and where the other bells start. Perhaps there isn't any pattern."

When that request landed in *Tail End's* in-box, it received a quick, off-the-cuff answer. *The Learning Curve* has extolled the virtues of ringing Minimus before (June 2004, Volume 3, Chapter 6). Doing it well is a good test of bell control and rhythmic ringing, and can add interest if you meet short. Learning the 'complete set' of anything has an attraction, and most of us will probably never learn all of the methods at higher stages, so why not tick off the eleven Minimus methods?

How to start

You could take the first method, write it out, learn the blue line, then repeat the process for all eleven methods. For many ringers, that might seem a daunting task, but there is a better way, as the questioner above hoped. It involves looking at the methods from a slightly different perspective – understanding their structure. *The Learning Curve* has often discussed it, because it is a powerful way to help understand new methods if you can make the mental change.

Table 1 lists the eleven methods. Look at the names first. Many are related, with names like 'Abc', 'Reverse Abc' and 'Double Abc'. This gives a clue that their structure is related. In fact they all form such groups – Reverse Bob and Double Bob are shortened forms of 'Reverse Plain Bob' and 'Double Plain Bob' and Single Court Place could just as easily have been called 'Court Place'. So why aren't there twelve of them? There is no Double St Nicholas Bob, as will be explained later.

1 Plain Bob	- 14 - 14 12
2 Double Bob	- 14 - 34 12
3 Reverse Bob	- 14 - 34 14
4 Reverse Court Place	- 14.12.14 14
5 Reverse St Nicholas Bob	- 14.12.34 12
6 Canterbury Place	- 14.12.34 14
7 Reverse Canterbury Place	34.14 - 14 12
8 Single Court Place	34.14 - 14 14
9 St Nicholas Bob	34.14 - 34 12
10 Double Court Place	34.14.12.14 14
11 Double Canterbury Place	34.14.12.34 12

Table 1: Definitions of the methods

Reversing and doubling

You can use this grouping to reduce the amount of learning. In May 2000 (Volume 1, Chapter 12) *The Learning Curve* explained what reverse and double methods are – here is a brief recap. A reverse method is a complete mirror image of the basic method. It is what you would get if you drew the method on transparent paper, and turned it over (like the page of a book) so first place exchanges with last place, and so on. Whatever work is done over the Treble in one method is

done in reverse under the Treble in the other, and vice versa.

There is a slight twist to this simple view, because if you only did that, then the Treble line would start at the back. You need to start all the lines half a lead earlier or half a lead later, to make the Treble line start from 1st place.

Double methods are a bit more subtle. The basic principle is to combine the work of the base method and the reverse method (subject to a practical limit, see St Nicholas, below).

Building blocks

The second column of Table 1 gives the place notation of each method, and the third column shows the place notation for the lead end. Figure 1 shows how the place notation translates into the lines of the first lead. (*The Learning Curve* explained place notation in April 2004, Volume 3 Chapter 4.) The numbers show the places made, and everywhere else the pairs of bells swap. The changes where no place is made are shown as a '-' in Table 1 (which is extracted from the Central Council methods collection) and with the equally common 'x' in Figure 1, which more graphically represents all the pairs crossing over. The places for the second half the lead the reverse of the first half, so they don't need to be specified, and by convention are omitted.

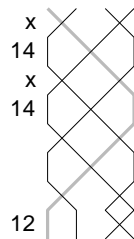


Figure 1: Plain Bob

The lead is a natural block of the method, but it is also useful to look at the work over and under the Treble as blocks. Figure 2a shows work over the Treble in Plain Bob.

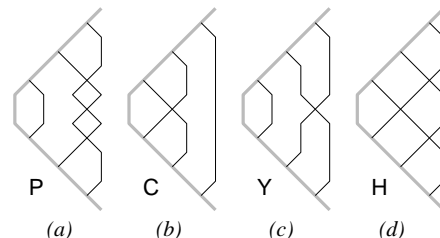


Figure 2: Building blocks – over the Treble

The only possible blocks are those shown in Figure 2, and their mirror images under the Treble in Figure 3. The eleven methods are made from these blocks. In Figure 3, (d) shows the plain hunting under the Treble in Plain Bob, and (a) is the work under the Treble in Reverse Bob.

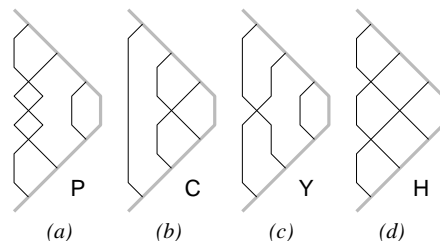


Figure 3: Building blocks – under the Treble

Putting them together

Check through all eleven methods, and you will find they contain different combinations of these blocks, as shown in Figure 4. The letters are: Plain, Court, Canterbury and Hunt.

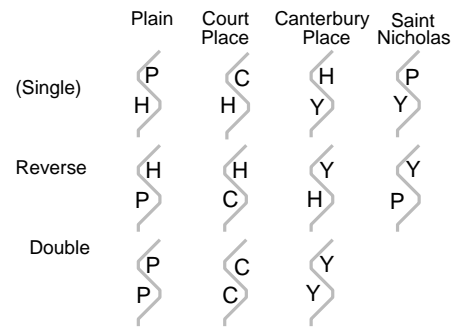


Figure 4: Structure of the eleven methods

The three base methods: Plain, Court Place and Canterbury Place, all include hunting, but Canterbury Place is unusual in having the hunting over the Treble in the base method (so many people think of Reverse Canterbury as the 'base' method). In the double methods, the hunting disappears to make room for the other building block above and below the Treble. St Nicholas doesn't include any hunting, which is why it doesn't have a double version.

Learning and ringing the methods

Now you know how the eleven methods are built of just three blocks of work, plus a plain hunt block, you could assemble any of the methods by joining blocks together. Learning to ring each block as you come to it, is much easier to do with Minimus than with higher numbers, because there are fewer bells – only two bells as well as you and the Treble, so it is much easier to learn to see where they all are. When you can do that, you can let the blue line take care of itself, and save yourself the effort of remembering eleven separate blue lines.

Here's how to do it. Look at each block – it contains three fragments of blue line, each starting and ending where it crosses the Treble's path. You must learn these fragments thoroughly. It helps to learn the work in each block as a set of interlocking pieces. For example in the P block, one bell makes the place next to the Treble, and the other pair dodge. In the Y block, the other pair make places instead of dodging (note that the extra blow, to give a total of three at the back – or front in the reversed block). In contrast, the C block has two bells doing a mini hunt with the Treble, leaving the odd one out to lie (or lead in the reverse block) until the Treble returns.

When ringing, you must be aware of when you meet the Treble. Each time you do, you pick up the fragment of line for the next block, and follow it to your next Treble crossing point.

What about starting from Rounds (which was the original question)? There are two types of start (as the Treble hunts off the lead, just past half way down the over blocks). In the P and H blocks, you hunt until you meet the Treble. In the C and Y blocks, the 3rd and 4th make places for the first blow (which puts the third over the Treble, so it must then go down).

This might sound difficult if you are used to relying just on memorising the blue line, but it is easier to learn than it sounds, especially with Minimus, and to see where the other bells are.

Tail End

The Learning Curve: Volume 1 (1999-2001 and Volume 3 (2004-2005) are available price £3 each post free from: CC Publications, c/o Mrs Barbara Wheeler, 2 Orchard Close, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 1XE.