



Something a little different

One way to make it easier to learn new methods is to pick ones that are a bit like those you already know. For most of us that means a similar blue line, but some special tricks exploit the way things 'fit together' in a method. This is called the 'structure' of the method, and it is useful to learn about it, as well as the blue line. It helps to know where the treble is (not just where you pass it) where you meet other bells, and what they are doing.

If you have not thought about methods in this way before, you might find it a little difficult at first, but give it a try. Many people find that once they get the hang of it, they can remember methods better, even after not ringing them for a while. So if called to ring it unexpectedly, they are less likely to have to dive for their diaries and look sheepish when the tower captain says 'We all learnt this two months ago'.

Back to front

To get something that feels quite different, but does not need a lot of learning, try reversing a method. Just turn everything front to back (first place to last place). The work under the treble then becomes a mirror image of the work that was over the treble in the original method, and vice versa. The blue line is a front-to-back mirror image of the original, but the starting positions are not quite where you would expect them to be. They are all moved half a lead, otherwise the Treble couldn't start at the front!

Quite often, the reverse of method 'XYZ' is called 'Reverse XYZ' as you might expect, but not always. For example, Reverse Bob could be called 'Reverse Plain Bob', but it isn't.

You can see how reversing works by comparing the diagrams for Plain and Reverse Bob shown here. The examples are Minimus to save space, but the same principle applies to any number of bells. Each method is drawn twice, to help you to look at it in two different ways. The upper diagrams show the line of every bell, so you can see how the whole structure is mirrored and how the work fits together. The lower diagrams just show the blue line of a single working bell, which is probably more familiar, and allows you to see the reflection in the line. In all diagrams, the thin line is the Treble. The dots show the starting positions.

Double methods

With a simple method like Plain Bob, you can go a step further and combine the original method with the reverse method to produce a double method. Double Bob is shown alongside Plain and Reverse Bob. Compare the diagrams to see how it works.

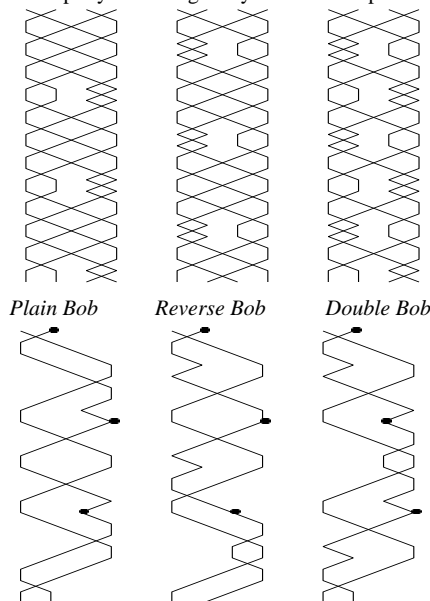
Look at the blue line, and you will see it is a back to front mirror image of itself, as well as having the end to end symmetry that most methods have anyway. End to end symmetry means you can find 'pivot' points where what follows reverses what came before.

Common examples are: Double Bob, Double Court, Double Oxford (and more complex methods like Superlative and Bristol Surprise).

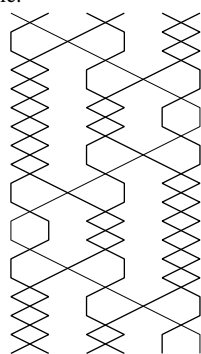
Double Bob has twice as many dodges as Plain Bob, and you come to them twice as fast too. In fact, you can use the order of the work in Plain Bob to help you, but you have to think about it relative to the Treble, rather than in terms of the actual places. For example, 5ths under the Treble at half lead is equivalent to 2nds over the Treble at lead. Dodges are a bit harder. For example 5-6 down at lead and 1-2 up at half lead are equivalent, since both are 'furthest from the Treble and dodging towards it'. If this sounds too difficult for you, don't worry. If you persevere, you will probably find after a while it begins to be 'obvious'. Thinking pictorially helps.

Double methods can seem easier to learn but there are pitfalls. You might remember a quarter of the line and rely on reflecting it end to end and front to back in your head as you ring.

This probably works best if you learn the line as a picture, but if that is all you do, you might make more mistakes. Things often feel different when you are ringing them backwards or upside down! You can confuse yourself thinking '3-4 places' when you are really in 5-6 ringing an upside down bit of Major. It's best to mix this technique with others, especially by making sure you know where the leads are, and where each bell starts. That way you are more likely to be able to put yourself right if you make a slip.



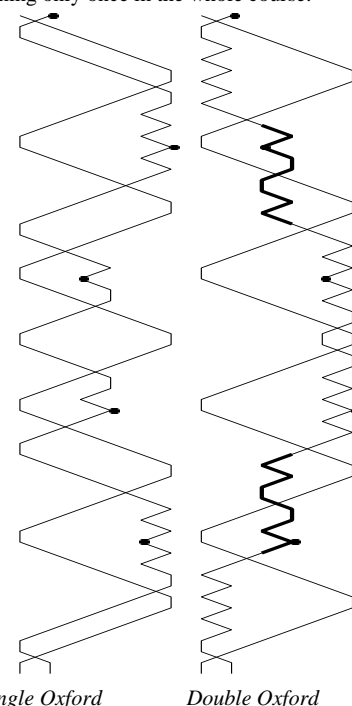
Now let us look at a more interesting double method - Double Oxford. Its structure is shown below. Notice that the work in 3-4 is sandwiched between the triple dodging and the place over or under the Treble.



Structure of Single Oxford

Now compare the lines for Single and Double Oxford, shown in the final diagrams. Notice that all the work over the Treble is the same in the two methods (but it does not come in the same order). Notice also how each piece of work appears somewhere upside down under the Treble in Double Oxford.

Double Oxford is interesting - it produces some work that looks rather different from the original method it is based on. If all you had was the blue line for Single Oxford, you would expect Double Oxford to have triple dodging on the front, but you might not expect the emergence of 'places in 3-4' (shown bold). You might also wonder what happened to the familiar pattern of hunting up and down between each piece of work, as you see the blue line work very slowly from front to back and returning only once in the whole course.



Single Oxford Double Oxford

Mixing and matching

The one thing that does not change in any of this is the path of the Treble. If you look at the examples, you will see the Treble line divides the whole work into completely separate areas. If you cut the diagrams along the Treble's path you would produce triangular shaped pieces of paper, corresponding to what is 'over the Treble' and what is 'under the Treble'. To make Reverse Bob from Plain Bob, we swapped these over, and to make Double Bob, we copied the pieces above and used them in both places.

What if you cut up different methods like this and then mixed up the pieces? You could put method A above the Treble and method B below it to get a new 'hybrid' method. (Not all combinations produce proper methods, so you need to check).

Perhaps the most humorous name for such a hybrid method is 'Boat Race' (an unofficial name for Morning Exercise). It can be described as 'Cambridge below and Oxford above'. Of course alumni of Cambridge don't like this description and prefer to describe it as 'Cambridge in front and Oxford behind', which amounts to the same thing in ringing, but not in rowing.

Tail End

This article is adapted from *The Tower Handbook*, from: Central Council Publications