
Safety Tips – ‘The long and the short and the tall’

How to check a rope is the right length when teaching

Ring the bell up and set it at backstroke. A ringer should be able to comfortably reach the tail end.

If you notice that whilst ringing, a ringer has a lot of spare tail end flapping around, or if they are rising up onto tiptoe, then the rope is not at an ideal length. Ringing on tiptoe means a ringer is in danger of being off balance (this can be especially risky if they are standing on a box).

Rope length

For ringers of any height, learning how to readjust the length of a rope is a useful skill, particularly if in future they begin to ring longer performances such as quarter peals and peals, a comfortable length of rope will be much more manageable for extended ringing.

A knot in a bell rope may also provide a solution, but the drawback is this may damage the rope itself or hit painfully against the ringer’s hands. Permission should be given from the host tower prior to placing knots in ropes.

For shorter periods of ringing, temporary arrangements can be safely made to help if a rope is not at the optimal height for a ringer.

Long tail end

If a ringer is tall, he or she may have to contend with the problem of ringing with a long tail end which can flap about and prove difficult to manage. One common arrangement is for the ringer to use an elastic band around their forearm to hold the extra length out of the way during ringing -this should fit comfortably without any tight pressure to the arm.

Smaller ringers

Shorter ringers are usually offered a box to stand on. Boxes should be large and stable enough so that the ringer does not accidentally walk or fall off the edge during ringing. The top surface should not overhang the sides, nor should the box be so tall as to create a hazard if someone inadvertently steps off it. Ideally, covering the top surface and front edge of a box with carpet will help to reduce rope wear and provide a more stable surface to stand on.

When ringing on a box, it’s important the ringer’s toes do not poke out over the edge of a box and risk getting caught up in a rope.

Teaching ringers of different heights

When teaching bell handling, it’s important for the teacher to be at the right level, so they may have to use a box also, particularly if they need to catch the sally above the ringer’s hands, or guide a rope to keep it straight.