

Coursing order

It's not just for conductors!

Knowing the coursing order can help everyone. If you (or the ringers around you) are a bit unsure of the method, it helps to know the order in which you would meet other bells, especially at the back or the front.

In some methods the coursing order helps more than in others. If you are told 'it's Plain Bob coursing throughout', that means that everywhere you pass the bells (apart from the Treble) in the coursing order.

What is the coursing order?

In a plain hunt, it is the order that the bells follow each other to the front or the back, and also the order that they pass each other in between. It is a cyclic order (so you can start anywhere) but easiest to remember as 'down the odds and up the evens': 75312468.

In Plain Bob, the Treble doesn't keep in step with the working bells, but if you omit the Treble, and think about the other bells, the coursing order throughout is (on eight) 7532468. Again it is cyclic, so you can start anywhere and keep going round: 753246875324687532468.

In Major, 7&8 normally course together, so people take them as read and just say what the others are, so instead of '7532468' people just use '53246', which means the same thing.

A call alters the coursing order, but since we ring plain courses of most methods, especially new, unfamiliar ones, most of the time, the coursing order is 7532468.

Most methods (the so called regular methods) have Plain Bob lead ends, ie the rows with the Treble leading are the same as Plain Bob, even if they aren't in the same order. The coursing order is defined in terms of the lead ends, so it is always the same, even if the order the bells actually meet each other between the leads is mixed up.

How can I meet myself?

The coursing order includes all the working bells, including yours. You can't 'meet yourself', but when you get to your number in the sequence you will always be at either the back or the front. So if you are ringing say 4, and hunting up, after meeting ...7 5 3 2 you will be at the back, and as you hunt down you will meet 6 8 7 5 ...

What about dodges and places?

When you meet a bell and dodge with it, you could say that you passed it three times (twice one way and once in reverse) but it is simpler just to think of passing it once, in the sequence.

If you make a place and turn round, you will obviously meet some of the bells you have already passed. Depending on the structure of the method, you might or might not meet them in the same order, but if you do, then just think of it as part of the coursing order repeating before moving on.

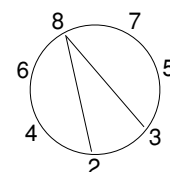
If you make two places (one each way) and keep heading in the same direction, one bell 'overtakes you', out of order. But if that bell is the Treble, you might still continue to meet the others in the normal order.

Course & after bells

In most methods, the bells next to you in the coursing order are more significant than the rest, for example you often meet them at the back, and sometimes at the front. Sometimes they are collectively called your course bells, and sometimes the distinction is made between the one ahead of you in the order (your course bell) and the one behind you in the order (your after bell).

Other special pairs

If you think of the coursing order as a circle, your course bells are next to you, and you do quite a lot of things with them, like dodging at the back. Some things you do with your 'opposite' pair, for example fishtails in London.



Which methods does coursing order help with?

The table below shows some methods (common ones, and some less common ones that we have rung recently) where the coursing order is visible by the working bells all or some of the course. The final column shows what the Treble sees of the coursing order. That's worth knowing because when we ring a new method, the Treble is on familiar ground, and so ought to be able to help out anyone nearby who trips up.

Method	Working bells view of coursing order	Treble's view of coursing order
Plain Bob	Visible throughout	Visible throughout, with last bell repeating after the lead
Little Bob	Visible throughout	As above, but last three repeat after making 4ths
Bastow Little Bob	Visible throughout	Visible throughout
Ashford Little Bob	Visible throughout	Bells come under the Treble in coursing order
Double Norwich Court Bob	Visible throughout	No
Stedman	No	n/a
Erin	Visible throughout	n/a
Duffield	Visible back and the front, but not in the middle	n/a
St Clement's College Bob	Course bells met on the front. Incomplete order on the back – the two bells on the front are missing – they would be where you meet the Treble	Mostly visible, but the bells on the front are missing when you get to the back.
Kent Treble Bob	Slow bell sees the others in coursing order. Other bells see coursing order with the slow bell missing where they meet the Treble	Mostly visible, but the bell in the slow is missing when you get to the back.
Oxford Treble Bob	No	Less visible than Kent because pairs swap over.
Double Oxford Bob	Visible throughout	No
Single Oxford Bob	Meet course bells at the back. Otherwise no.	No
Norwich Surprise Minor	Bells move between back work and front work in the coursing order. 1-2 and 5-6 dodges are with course bells	No
Bristol Surprise	Lots of work (fishtails, points and dodges back & front) with your course bells	
Cambridge Surprise	Meet course bells at the back. 3rds place bell sees full coursing order. Otherwise no.	No
Yorkshire Surprise	Meet course bells at the back. 3rds place bell sees full coursing order. Coursing order mostly visible if you allow for alternately overtaking and being overtaken by your course bells while making places. Also swaps over the orders of two pairs in 5ths and 2nds place bells.	No