

Question and Answer

Question. How do you assign bells for the Twelve Bell series that uses C5 to G6 handbells?

Answer. My initial response is - whatever works! These bells do not allow for directors to assign bells in a traditional manner. Sometimes, I wish that the bells needed would include B4 to F6 instead of C5 to G6. Choices depend on the abilities and numbers of the ringers as well as their attitudes. Sometimes, I have given ringers their traditional assignments and assigned one ringer the C5 and G6. Other times, I have assigned the top two ringers 4-in-hand and the bottom two C5D5 and E5F5. I have had four ringers ring three bells (one hand using the 4 in hand and the other hand ringing one bell). Another time, I had three ringers ring 4-in-hand but had them hold the bells up one fifth higher. This allowed the ringer to play C5 to F5 notes but hold G5 to C6. That made the bells much lighter and much more manageable. We have added piano or guitar accompaniment for added variety to this music.

Question: How many mallets do I need and how much do they cost?

Answer: The answer depends on a variety of factors. It depends on how many octaves your choir has as well as the number of ringers. Often beginner choirs can manage with one mallet per ringer. Intermediate and advanced choirs will need two mallets per ringer. Mallets are sold individually. Each mallet is marked with the range of bells that it is to be used on. The purchase of two mallets per ringer is a costly venture. Often, directors have a particular piece of music that requires mallets – they purchase only the mallets that are needed. Then as the budget permits, they purchase more. Other times, directors will initially purchase one mallet per ringer - then add more as the budget permits. below is a chart with the recommended" quantity and kind of mallets required for handbell choirs

<i>Mallet</i>	<i>Bell Range</i>	<i>Number of Mallets Needed</i>
<i>Large Yellow</i>	<i>F#3 & lower</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Navy Blue</i>	<i>G3-B3</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Small Yellow</i>	<i>C4-F#4</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Light Blue</i>	<i>G4-E5</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Red</i>	<i>F5-D#6</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Grey</i>	<i>E6 & above</i>	<i>6</i>

Question: I know my bells need polishing but I don't know where to start.

Answer: Generally, choirs polish their bells once or twice per year. It can work well as a group activity with each ringer helping out. Some ringers can take apart the bells, while another group can be polishing. Another group can put the bells back together with the final group checking the scratch marks and handles and making adjustments so the bell will ring properly.

Check your supplies:

- one or two tubes of polish (depending on how many octaves of bells you have and when the last time they were polished). It is recommended by manufacturers that you only use handbell polish on handbells. It is less grainy so it does not scratch the surface of the bells. You generally only need to use polish about the size of a pea for each bell. Therefore one tube should polish a three octave set of handbells. If you have not polished your bells in while, you will need more.
- soft cotton cloths.
- tools so that you can take the bells apart to polish the entire casting. If you have Malmark handbells, you will need to polish both the inside and outside of the casting. Schulmerich handbells have a jeweller's finish on the outside only.
- storage containers such as plates or small boxes. When you take apart the bells, you will need to make sure that all the parts stay in the same place.

Polish your bells:

- remove the handle screw and place the handle, clapper, casting, washers and screws into the same plate or box.
- polish and buff the bells as you would your mother's silver!
- put bells back together and make adjustments. When you put them back together, ensure that the scratch mark is lined up with the strike point of the clapper head.
- Adjust the bells so they ring easily.
- Test the bells by ringing, marting, shaking and using a ringing motion to ensure the springs are neither too tight or too loose.

Question: I'm a new handbell director. What should I do about a cracked handle?

Answer: If you have a cracked handle on your Malmark handbell, please contact your Malmark sales rep for assistance in ordering a new one. It is important to try to determine the cause of the handle crack. Incorrect handling of the bell may cause added stress on the handle thus shortening its life. Ringers should always hold the bell around the entire handle. The bell should never be held by the end of the handle or through the handle loop. Another cause may related to the restraining springs. If they are too tight, the ringer needs to work harder to ring the bell thus putting extra strain on the handle.