

Course Handbook





Bell Choirs for Care

ABOUT THE ROOM 217 FOUNDATION

The Room 217 Foundation is a health arts organization with a vision see music change the care experience. Our mission encompasses producing and delivering designed music care products, training, and education; collaborating in applied music care research; and consulting/coaching with care organizations around music optimization.

ABOUT CHELSEA MACKINNON & BRAD HAALBOOM, ONLINE INSTRUCTORS

Chelsea Mackinnon is a music and health educator and researcher with extensive experience integrating music into the long-term care context. Chelsea holds a master's degree in music and health sciences, a master's degree in innovation, entrepreneurship and management in healthcare, and an undergraduate degree in health sciences. Brad Haalboom is a recreation therapist who completed his undergraduate degree at Wilfrid Laurier University majoring in Psychology. He has been using music as a primary care tool in his recreation therapy practice for many years. Chelsea and Brad co-created IMHope, which is a social enterprise whose goal is connecting communities and improving the quality of life of community members using music and intergenerational programs. Chelsea and Brad are also sessional instructors at McMaster University where they teach on the topic of music and health within the faculty of health sciences.

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Welcome to Bell Choirs for Care

This handbook is a tool designed to accompany you through the course. The handbook is organized into topic sections and is referenced in the videos throughout the eight course modules. Under each heading, you can find an icon indicating the module in which the information is discussed.

Types of Bells



Module 1 – Introduction: What is a bell choir?

Handbells

Handbells are the traditional instruments used in the original bell choirs. They are bell shaped and small enough to be held with one hand.



Hand-chimes

Hand-chimes are tubular-shaped metal bars that have a mallet on a hinge, which makes the bar resonate when struck.



Key Learning Outcomes



Module 1 – Introduction: What is a bell choir?

1. Understand music fundamentals of melody and harmony and how they relate to bell choirs
2. Demonstrate bell playing ability and capacity to teach others
3. Define appropriate goals, outcomes and planning strategies for a bell choir in your care context
4. Demonstrate clear communication strategies while leading a bell choir
5. Analyze leadership techniques and practices that can be used to support participants (of different capacities) to participate in the bell choir



Bell Choirs for Care

Bells Buyer's Guide



Module 2 – Your new responsi-BELL-ity: Purchasing and caring for your bells

There are two main places where you can purchase bells: a local music store, or an online store. To find a local music store, you can search online by typing “local music store” in any search engine. We suggest giving the store a call first to determine a) if they sell handbells and/or hand--chimes, and b) the types/prices of handbells/hand-chimes they sell. It’s always great to get some answers before you make your way there! Some benefits to purchasing at a local store are that you have access to experienced musicians who will be able to help you, as well as the ability to try out the instruments in person before purchasing. You can get an idea of how the different bells sound, and which set may suit your context the best.

On the other hand, the benefits of purchasing bells online include being able to shop from home, getting delivery, and a wider variety of stores to choose from. The downside of shopping online is that you don’t have access to professionals who can help you make an informed decision, and you also will not be able to try out the instruments before purchasing. When purchasing from an online store, it’s always a good idea to purchase from a reputable source, such as recognized music stores and suppliers. Be careful when purchasing from individuals or unfamiliar sources as you can never be sure of the exact outcome of what you are going to get (as with any online purchase).

Here is a list of some online stores that we have ordered from in the past:

- [Long and McQuade](#)
- [Amazon](#)
- [Walmart](#)

As mentioned in Module 2, there are a few different price ranges that most handbells/hand-chimes fall under:

1. \$30-\$100
2. \$100-\$300
3. \$300-5000+

Every bell choir we have worked with in a community care context has been able to launch a successful bell choir with bells in the first price range. Remember, the higher the price, the better quality of the metal used. This usually means that you will have a better, quality sound the more expensive the bells, but that is not always a bell choir’s priority when purchasing. Think back to what your goals and priorities are for your program to make a decision on what bells may work best for you.

You may be interested in push-button bells. They are referenced in Module 4 and could be suitable for your care context to address accessibility needs of certain participants. You can purchase bells that are

designed to sit on a flat surface, where you press a button on the top which makes the bell ring. This is an alternative to the traditional handbells which require that flick-the-wrist motion.

[Click here](#) to be directed to a site that sells push-button bells. But feel free to do your own research elsewhere!

In Module 2 we also mentioned hand-chimes. The main difference between handbells and hand-chimes is the shape and feel of them. While there are inexpensive handbells and inexpensive hand-chimes, in our experience, it is much easier to find a set of less expensive handbells than it is to find hand-chimes at a comparable price. That being said, you still may be more interested in hand-chimes, so you can find them by checking at your local music stores, or online.

Parts of the Handbell



Module 2 – Your new responsi-BELL-ity: Purchasing and caring for your bells



Music Fundamentals

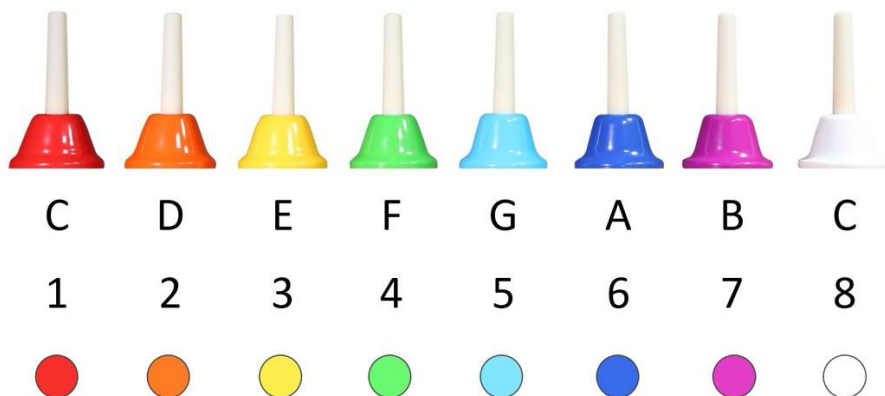


Module 3 – Fundamentals of Music

Key Definitions – Music Fundamentals

Pitch: a single musical note, also called a tone. A bell choir is composed of 8 pitches in a specific order. This is called the bell choir scale, and is represented using one of the three following notation systems:

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Melody: a set of pitches played across time and sometimes called the tune

Harmony: multiple different pitches played at the same time

Timbre: the sound quality or sound character that is created by a specific musical instrument

Songsheets



Module 5 – Bell-ieve in yourself: Leading a Group

A **song sheet** tells the bell choir leader what order the bells need to be played. Song sheets can be physical pieces of paper or electronic documents viewed on a tablet or computer. Bell choir song sheets progress from left to right, just like words on a page. They can be set up in any of the bell choir notation systems, including letters, colours, or numbers.

Arranging the Choir



Module 5 – Bell-ieve in yourself: Leading a Group

Bell choir players should be arranged from low C on the left to high C on the right (i.e. when you, the conductor are facing the choir, low C should be on the left of your view). You can arrange players in a straight line or a semi-circle formation:



Image 1: straight line choir arrangement. Note this arrangement is typically easiest when you are just learning to lead a choir.



Image 2: semi-circle choir arrangement. Once you are comfortable in the leadership role, we suggest you give this formation a try!

Bell Choir Practice Structure Template



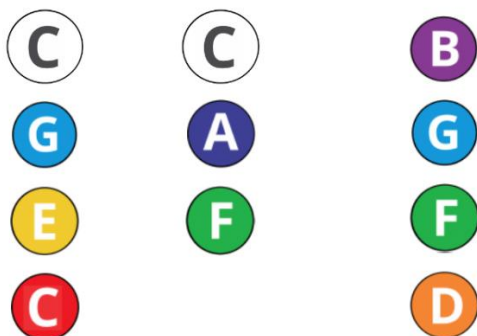
Module 6 – Staying in time: Planning a Bell Choir

Section	Description	Content
Overview	A brief description of the practice plan, so that players know what is on the agenda today.	
Warm-Up	A group playing or practice exercise that is easy for your bell choir, to orient the group to the time and place and purpose. Ex. simple scales.	
Lesson	Review and/or teach the main skill or task of focus for the practice. Ex. describe or demonstrate a skill; discuss or listen to the song to be learned; review a difficult section of a song.	
Drill	Put the Lesson into practice. Reinforce the skills through bell choir drills, slowing down the tempo, repetition, etc.	
Wrap-Up	End practice with a fun, easily achievable song or drill, so that the practice can end on a high note!	

Three Bell Choir Chords



Module 7 – Warm-up, Drills, and Skills



C Chord

F Chord

G Chord

In the song sheet below, the chords are notated in black boxes:

When the Saints Go Marching In

Oh when the saints

Go march-ing in

Oh when the saints go march-ing in

Oh how I want to be

In that num-ber

When the saints go march-ing in



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Preparing for a Performance Checklist



Module 8 – It Rings a Bell: Program Ideas

We suggest completing this checklist when considering if your bell choir (in a care context) is going to perform:

- ☐ Recruit bell choir members
- ☐ Run bell choir practices for 2-6 weeks
- ☐ Once the group is comfortable practicing and rapport has been built between members and leader, bring up the possibility of performing
- ☐ Practice for performance
- ☐ Prior to performance, ensure all members are feeling comfortable and confident performing for others!



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Bells for Care Links Page

YouTube Channels – play-along-bells:

Note that when searching for play-along bells videos, you can also use “boomwhacker” play-along videos as they use the same notation system.

Handbell Star - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbPOO11UfOO3_wofeZj5-hQ/videos

Musication - <https://www.youtube.com/c/musication/videos>

Resources and Bell Choir Information:

Handbell ringing - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_Gv0ZmkpHE

Room 217 Music Care Partners Documentary:

Note: this documentary features a bell choir in the long-term care context in Ontario, Canada.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XNWDtzxQGA>

Advanced Ringing Techniques

<http://www.agoboston2014.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Teaching-Treble-Techniques-Piehl.pdf>

<https://larryandcarla.com/our-handbells-and-techniques/british-style-four-in-hand-ringing/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYKqhGJqomk>

The Academy of Neurologic Music Therapy:

This organization was referenced in Module 8, when discussing the use of bells for cognitive and physical rehabilitation.

<https://nmtacademy.co>



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