

Hey, Young Ringers! You Can Make Your Own Handbell T-Shirts.

For the past two years my Young Ringers have made their own T-shirts. Our results have been loads of fun. They have enjoyed an opportunity to create their own identity within the group using musical symbols. Depending on the number of ringers "creating" at one time, two or three additional adult helpers enable this artist project to flow without a hitch. Adult helpers are also great coaches and full of praise after each shirt is sprayed. It's a fun way to build team spirit in preparation for attending a festival as well as for use all year with young ringer activities and out-reach projects.

Advance preparation and planning include:

- 1) Order shirt sizes for the ringers plus a few extra. Select solid dark colors for best results. (Make sure to remember the director and any other regular assistants.)
- 2) Make patterns out of thin cardboard or thick heavy-duty paper, creating different sizes and types of bells and music notes. (Keep the shapes simple, without too many cut details, because the patterns need to lay flat on the shirts.) Cover both sides of the pattern with adhesive shelf paper and re-cut the final shape. It is helpful to have several patterns of the same design to enable more than one ringer to be designing at a time and to allow ringers who want to create repeating patterns to do so.
- 3) Set the date well in advance so everyone can plan to attend. I have done this as part of a fellowship party for the young ringers, which has included adult helpers with the shirt making, while games are going on elsewhere. Pizza and/or a handbell sleepover party make a good drawing card.
- 4) Plan enough time for the activity so it can be completed before dark.
- 5) Tell your ringers (and adult helpers) to wear an old shirt that will not be damaged if it is splashed with bleach.

Supplies:

- 1) Bleach
- 2) Spray bottle
- 3) 2-3 pairs rubber gloves
- 4) Dish pan of water OR easy access to a sink
- 5) Small rocks

Directions:

- 1) Select an outside area with a hard, flat surface that will not be damaged by bleach contact. I have used a cement sidewalk that is protected from wind.

- 2) Use a permanent marker to write the name of each ringer on the inside label of the shirt. Have the ringer try the shirt on to see how much of the shirt would be tucked in. (Yes, I require my ringers to wear their shirts tucked in.)

- 3) Lay each shirt flat on the hard surface. Use rocks to anchor the shirts (and patterns if need be) in place.

- 4) Let the kids have some fun and arrange the shapes on the shirts. (Remind them not to place pattern pieces on the section of the shirt that will be "tucked in.") I plan for 3 ringers to do their design work at a time. In these small groups they often enjoy watching each other for ideas and playing around with the patterns until they find something they like.

- 5) When the ringer has completed a layout, an adult wearing rubber gloves will lightly spray with bleach around the designs.

- 6) After the spraying is done, count out loud to 60 and carefully "unveil" the pattern pieces. If you count past 60, the shirt will turn brown after it has been washed wherever it has been sprayed.

- 7) Another adult with rubber gloves should be on hand to assist a thorough rinse of the shirt in water. If the ringers want to help, make sure everyone doing the rinse job is wearing rubber gloves. This step is important to make sure the bleach stops eating through the fabric.

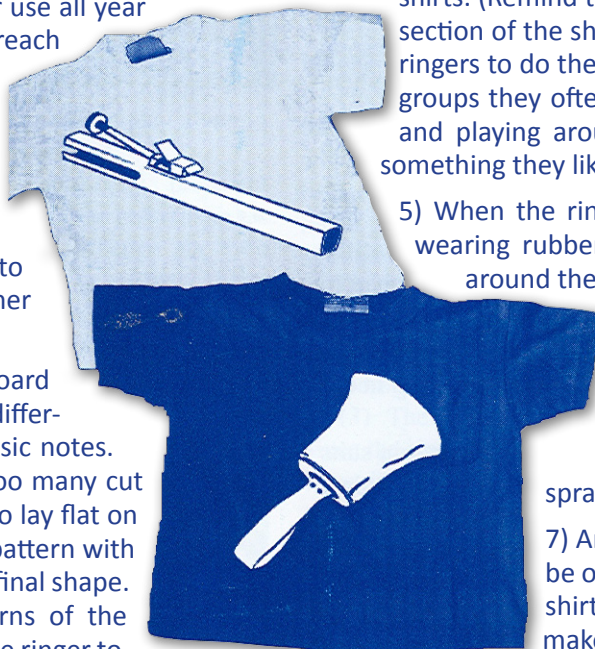
- 8) If patterns need to be shared among ringers, rinse and dry them before they are reused on another shirt.

- 9) Determine a system for letting a few of the kids place designs on the extra shirts. These extra shirts will come in handy when a ringer forgets to bring his for a special outing or for new members who join the group.

- 10) After they are rinsed, put the shirts through the washer and dryer. Usually I have an adult who lives close by take all the shirts when they are done and send them back to the next rehearsal.

- 11) After all the shirts have been sprayed, an adult should either label the spray bottle or empty and rinse it immediately.

- 12) Rinse, dry and store all shirt patterns with your instructions so they can be used again next year.



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