

Cambridge University Massage Society

Beginners' Course, Michaelmas 2012

Welcome to the Cambridge University Massage Society Beginners Course.

PLEASE NOTE:

This is not a professional course; you will not have a massage qualification at the end.

Introduction

The course is designed to introduce you to the Swedish style of massage. The instructors are professionally qualified members of the society who donate their free time to teach you. The techniques you will be learning are similar to those employed by professionals, but we do not cover the anatomy and physiology required to become qualified.

To make the course as relaxing as possible we ask that you bear a few simple things in mind. For the comfort of both yourself and the person you are working with we ask that you **don't wear jewellery** (including watches) while giving a massage. Short nails are desirable. Be sure to check that neither you nor your partner has any medical condition which may be aggravated by massage (see *Contraindications*, below). You always have the right to refuse to give (or receive) a massage. **Finally, bring two towels (one small, one as large as possible) to every class, together with this hand-out and the oil you will receive at the first class.**

Your own health

Massage can be physically demanding. Pay attention to your poise, particularly when working at the table: there would be a cruel irony in developing back ache while helping relieve it in someone else. Use your ankles, knees, and hips to help bring you to the client, and adjust the table when possible to a comfortable working height.

You are under no obligation to massage someone with a contagious disease. Contagious skin diseases such as warts and verrucae are local contraindications.

Contraindications

Contraindications are factors indicating massage should not be undertaken, typically the client's pre-existing medical conditions. It is essential that you determine whether any of these apply before starting a massage. *We expect you to learn the list:*

Untreated medical issues: can be either a general or local contraindication.

General contraindications

Nut allergies: we use nut free massage oils. Supermarket oil (even grapeseed) may not be nut free.

Heart conditions: low or high blood pressure. Massage can both relax and stimulate, making extreme blood pressure conditions a contraindication.

Endocrine / hormonal disorders (e.g. diabetes). We are having an effect on circulation and absorption. Diabetics can have nerve damage and not be able to give accurate feedback on pressure.

Contagious diseases: either in us or in them. We don't want any contagion to take place.

Cancer: professionals do massage cancer sufferers, but only with medical permission. This is a contraindication for us.

Epilepsy

Intoxication: alcohol, drugs, medication.

Unsavoury characters: you always have the right to refuse to give (or receive) a massage.

Pregnancy: massage can increase the likelihood of miscarriage.

Local contraindications

Major injuries: e.g. broken bones. Bruises: the bruise can be rather larger than is visually apparent, so one gives bruises a wide berth.

Scar tissue: Major scars (e.g. from operations) must be 2 years old, minor scars 6 months old, before massage over the area is considered safe.

Skin conditions: rashes, redness, cuts, burns, swelling, lumps, athlete's foot, warts, verrucae.

Assessment

If you wish to represent the society in June it will be necessary for you to pass an assessment.

We ask you to bring along a 'client'; we observe you give a back massage to your client. We assess both client care (towel etiquette, getting the client on and off the table, soliciting feedback on the pressure, etc.) and massage quality. You must work from memory: notes are not permitted.

You will also be asked to give the assessor a massage; possibly hands, more likely seated back, shoulders & neck. This gives us a better idea of the physical quality of your massage, and allows us to examine how you respond to requests for changes in pressure.

We score you out of 10, anything below 6 being a fail. The ball coordinators are more likely to pick individuals with high scores when deciding on event allocations.

Course Timetable

We are likely to follow one of the timetables below, at the discretion of the instructor:

1. Hands and Feet
2. Arms and Stomach
3. Legs
4. Back
5. Face, Neck, and Chest
6. Seated Back, Shoulders & Neck, through clothes

Or:

1. Arms and Hands
2. Legs and Feet
3. Back
4. Face, Neck, and Chest
5. Seated Back, Shoulders & Neck, through clothes
6. Stomach + revision

Hands and Arms

The **hand massage** will probably be taught first. Logically the hand massage comes at the end of the arm massage, but hands provide an elementary starting point. No rings or bracelets please, either when giving or receiving the massage. At some point, usually early in the massage, *ask your client for feedback on the pressure*.

Very little oil is required for a hand massage – a few drops will do.

1. Effleurage over entire hand & wrist.
2. Around wrist bones (e.g. petrissage: small circles with balls of thumbs).
3. Top of hand: tendons from wrist to fingers, and on down sides of fingers.
4. Top & bottom of fingers and pull-off.
5. Spread top of hand.
6. Turn hand palm up, massage palm with knuckles.
7. Thumb circles on palm, giving attention to dense areas, e.g. root of thumb.
8. Work around root of fingers, down each finger, and pull off.
9. Spread palm.
10. Final effleurage and sandwich off hand.

For the **arm massage** we require access to the very top of the arm, at the shoulder joint. A *sleeveless top is effective*; otherwise the client must remove their top, in which case some towel etiquette becomes necessary. The client will be lying on their back.

1. Effleurage: can be achieved with the arm on the table, or with us supporting the arm with one hand.
2. Thumb circles and strokes on forearm (top and bottom of arm), our other hand supporting the arm.
3. Thumb circles and strokes on upper arm (**contraindication: a woman may have an implant**). We support the arm with our other hand, typically at the elbow.
4. Drain upper arm (placed across client's body).
5. Traction at shoulder (one hand supports the arm, the other the client's shoulder).
6. Figure-of-eight movements to mobilise shoulder joint.
7. Effleurage and continue into hand massage, or sandwich off hand to finish.

Legs and Feet

Legs require much more oil than most other parts, particularly if hairy. Varicose veins and deep-vein thrombosis are local contraindications.

Work with the hand on the outside thigh in advance of the hand on the inside thigh. Also be careful to keep the pressure light when passing directly over the knee, front or back.

We require access to the top of the leg; high cut shorts can be effective, otherwise trousers/skirts come off. We will practice the towel etiquette in either case.

Back of Leg

1. Effleurage, apply more oil as required.
2. Ovals over calf, using knuckles, or fist, or edge of hand.
3. Ovals over thigh, as above. Careful on inside of thigh.
4. Knead over thigh.
5. Percussion on outside of thigh. Joining effleurage to calm.
6. Wringing, from ankle to hip, careful over knee.
7. Drain calf. Careful with pressure on the knee.
8. Circles either side of (but not on) Achilles tendon.
9. Final effleurage of entire back of leg and sandwich off foot.

Taking care over towel etiquette, ask your client to turn over. Work on the same leg (which is now on the other side of the table!)

Front of Leg

1. Effleurage, outer hand leading.
2. Ovals over lower leg, as above.
3. Circles around knee with fingers, or thumbs, or palms.
4. Ovals over upper leg, as above.
5. Knead thigh. Gently, or not at all, on inside of thigh.
6. Percussion on outside of thigh.
7. Effleurage and go into foot massage, or sandwich off foot to finish.

Feet

We clean the client's feet with an antiseptic wipe. **Verrucae are a common local contraindication.** Employ deep slow movement if the client is ticklish.

1. Effleurage foot and ankle.
2. Mobilise ankle (gentle flexion-extension and rotation at the ankle).
3. Circle ankle (using fingers, thumbs, or palms).
4. Work down tendons from ankle to toes; then continue down toes.
5. Spread.
6. Scissor top and bottom.
7. Immobilising root of toe, circle each toe under tension and pull off.
8. Thumb pressure down medial (inside) arch to heel.
9. Grip and squeeze heel.
10. Knuckles on heel, then over whole of sole.
11. Final effleurage and sandwich off foot.

We may clean the client's foot once more with a wipe in order to remove any excess oil, an important consideration if the floor is smooth.

Back

Most people find the back massage very enjoyable. It is a long massage, worth getting right. In general we **avoid direct pressure on the spine** and we **never perform percussion below the rib-cage** (in order to protect the kidneys).

1. Effleurage – go up from crest of pelvis with hands next to the spine; then come back down outside of body.
2. Circles around sacrum (sacral dimples).
3. Circles along crest of pelvis, moving laterally from middle.
4. Pull up and knead side of hip (both sides).
5. Circles along side of spine (moving up and then away). Both sides.
6. Move to head. Finger circles over upper back region, thumb movements over shoulders (from collar bone region to upper back). Work around collar bones.
7. Arm lock (warn client), work under edge of shoulder blade. From top, along inner border, around bottom, towards armpit. Knead over blade afterwards. Both sides.
8. Percussion over upper back. *Not over lower back.*
9. Plucking and clawing.
10. Iron up spine, then fork down. Repeat. Third time rake down.
11. Scrubbing. Take a moment to get breath back.
12. Nudging down spine from neck to pelvis. Upper & nearer hand stabilises, lower & further away hand rotates away from client's spine.
13. Spreading.
14. Final effleurage.

Face, Neck, and Chest

No necklaces or large earrings please. Very little oil or pressure is required on the face.

The pectoral and collarbone region can be sensitive, particularly for women.

You remain in one place, at the head of the table, for the entire duration of this massage.

Free articulation at ankles, knees, and hips, is required in order to maintain healthy use of your back.

1. Effleurage from chest, round shoulders, under head, lifting and pulling gently.
2. Spread from eyebrows to hairline, working from middle to outside of forehead.
3. Spread forehead bilaterally from middle.
4. Circles on temples.
5. Work along / under edge of cheekbones.
6. Circles / strokes along chin (can use pinching action).
7. Circles over jaw muscle: can apply more pressure.
8. Circles on ears (can use pinching action again).
9. Tapotement (“raindrops”) over entire face.
10. Effleurage as in (1), to end with one hand ready to support weight of head.
11. Warn client and turn head towards supporting hand.
12. Circles (fingers, thumbs, knuckles) along shoulder and up neck, several different paths, covering whole area. Can apply significant pressure over back of shoulder region.
13. Transition to circles along base of skull.
14. Massage scalp.
15. Warn client; turn head to centre, then to other hand, repeat (12) – (14).
16. Effleurage as in (1), with some traction at end of each stroke.

Seated Back, Shoulders & Neck, through clothes

There's no disrobing required for this massage, but *necklaces must come off*. A chair, or stool, with a suitably low back is necessary. When working on the neck it can be helpful to apply a small amount of oil to avoid leaving the client with sore skin, but otherwise oil is not used.

1. Warm up the back and shoulders using palm of hand.
2. Circles up side of spine (from level of lower ribs), moving out over the shoulders, taking a different path each time. Can use fingers, thumbs, or knuckles.
3. Move to side of client, take client's arm / elbow to provide better access to the shoulder blade. Work around and under the edge of the blade (rhomboids). Both sides.
4. Thumb circles on back of shoulders.
5. Pick up and squeeze muscles on top of shoulders. Three different locations, working outwards.
6. Push down with forearms. Three different locations, working outwards; can slide off down arms (but be careful not to take a lady's dress straps with you).
7. Move to side of client. Use front hand to support client's head. Work neck with other hand; e.g. thumb and finger circles. Work entire region from sternocleidomastoid to spine. Both sides. *Did you ask the client to remove their necklace?*
8. Can transition to head massage (check with client).
9. Percussion on upper back (champissage: hands together as if in prayer).
10. Repeat (4); then gently rest hands on client's shoulders for some moments of stillness to finish.

Stomach

Always use a clockwise motion. (This follows the organisation of the intestine.) Stand to left side of table (so on the side of the *client's* right arm).

Menstruation is a contraindication.

1. Effleurage (diamond shape).
2. Two or three fingers together, make two strips up, one across, and two strips down the other side (clockwise path). Repeat.
3. Knead and pull up waist. Both sides.
4. Clockwise effleurage to finish.

A full body massage

A possible organisation of a full body massage goes as follows:

1. Back
2. Back of leg × 2
3. Client turns over
4. Face, Neck, and Chest
5. (Arm + Hand) × 2
6. Stomach (if acceptable)
7. (Front of leg, possibly with foot) × 2
8. Feet, if not included as part of (7)

This can take a long time. It is usually best not to have the client on the table for such an extended period of time, so the full massage would rarely be undertaken. Some thought must be given to keeping the client comfortably warm.