

You may have noticed some browsers warn that this site is not secure. This is incorrect because specific pages where you can type personal information are automatically switched to the secure HTTPS protocol.

Welcome to Orienteering

What is orienteering?

Orienteering is an adventure sport that tests navigational skill and fitness in order to complete a course in the fastest possible time.

But Orienteering is also a recreation suitable for all members of the family from age 2 to 92. It gives healthy exercise at whatever pace is comfortable to you.

Maps are specially drawn to a large scale. You navigate from a starting point to the finish visiting ten to twenty control points along the way. There is no route marked on the ground. Each control point is positioned on a particular feature where a red and white control flag is placed showing a unique control code.

An electronic chip is carried on your finger. To prove that you have been to each control flag the small end of this 'dibber' is inserted into an electronic box at each control, the red LED flashes and a short bleep sounds to confirm you've punched correctly.



A control site showing a kite on a stake. The Control Box is on top of the stake, and is activated by using the dibber worn on your finger.

Finishing position on the course is determined by the time taken to register at every correct control point in the correct order with the quickest time determining the winner. Courses are of varying difficulty with easier courses being all on paths with the most difficult encountering complex terrain with only limited path running. Winning a course can require a great deal of fitness and ability to navigate precisely at speed although orienteering can also be a leisure activity to be enjoyed by all.

Orienteering is an easy, painless way of staying fit or getting into shape. Orienteering is a great sport to take up with friends and family, allowing you to share your adventures afterwards. At the elite level, orienteering is a highly competitive sport involving intense concentration, skill and fitness. There are many international competitions, and world and continent championships.

Orienteering is most usually done on foot ('Foot-O'). There are also regular competitions using mountain bikes ('MTB-O') and, in appropriate climates, on skis ('Ski-O'). In the technically-based challenge of Trail-O, competitors are confined to paths and tracks, and 'visit' correct controls by identifying them by sight. This challenge especially suits those unable to cross rough terrain, and wheelchair users. Time taken to travel along the course is not relevant - accuracy in identification is crucial instead. For the really keen Foot-O can also be done at night!

Where do events take place?

Orienteering events take place on an immense variety of terrain. Generally orienteering events are held in forests, woods, moors and parkland. Events such as 'urban' and 'sprint' events are held in the city streets and university campuses. In Nottinghamshire we have maps of all but moors for orienteering events.

Who can participate?

Orienteering is a sport for everyone male, female, young or old. The majority of events have courses to cater for everybody, whatever their ability. At our larger events, we have special string courses for even the very young (2½+ year olds). Whilst it is usual to take part by oneself, it is quite normal for beginners to tackle White, Yellow or Orange as groups.

Where can I find an event near me?

Nottinghamshire Orienteering Club has a fixtures list of all our events which include details of each individual event. The current fixtures list can be [found here](#). Look for the learner symbol  indicating that the event is suitable for beginners. Alternatively a full list of events around the UK can be found on the [British Orienteering website](#)  or on other club websites.

What do I need for my first event?

You should come prepared as you would for a walk in the woods. Your first event will be mostly on paths but it may be muddy so old trainers are advised, you may wear hiking boots although these can significantly slow you down if you want to run. Full leg and body cover is compulsory at the majority of events so no shorts, but T-shirts are fine. It is a good idea to bring along a pen for filling out registration slips. It is sometimes compulsory to carry a whistle when on your course and it is always advisable to have one anyway. Don't forget your money, the cost varies between events but is generally up to £7 for adults and £3 for Under 21's and students. There is sometimes a car parking fee to be paid as you drive into the car park. These details can be found in the event details on the club website prior to the event.

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What types of events are available?

There are four levels of domestic races:

- Level D events encompass a wide range of formats and types of event that clubs wish to stage to provide opportunities for participants to orienteer at a venue near to them. These events may be of any format and type in any terrain: clubs decide what suits the needs of the prospective participants and usually provide opportunities for newcomers of all ages as well as orienteers in the local region. The format may be quite informal.
- Level C events provide opportunities for participants seeking competition at a wider variety of venues and against a varied group of competitors but without wishing to travel great distances. There will be normally be beginner courses available
- Level B events provide opportunities for more experienced competitors who seek a wider variety of terrain, challenging courses and competition. Competitors are prepared to travel longer distances to attend these events.
- Level A events are the most prestigious events intended to provide opportunities for competitors to take part in the ultimate orienteering challenges in the UK.

Find events on the [National Fixtures List](#) . You will also see Relays and Score events, and a sprinkling of other occasional formats.



Orienteering map segment of a typical Nottinghamshire area (Blidworth Woods).

How difficult are the different courses available?

Courses are categorised by colours defining length and difficulty. White, Yellow and Orange courses are the most suitable for beginners, with your choice depending on your level of fitness, confidence and how adventurous you are feeling. For the more athletic beginners longer versions of Orange courses are occasionally available. Here is a list of the commonly available courses in the colour scale and the level of difficulty and distance of each:

and distance of each.

Explanation of Colour Coded Courses

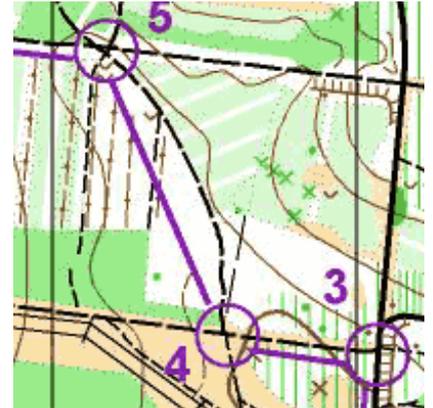
Colour coded courses are related to ability in navigation and provide a progression for all ages and standards. Colour coding allows standardisation between different courses at different venues. The selection of courses available at events may vary according to the terrain and relative importance of the event.

White

1.0 - 1.5km

Easy

The course is along paths or following walls or fences. There will be a control at every junction, and it is placed to show the direction you should leave the junction. You are given your map before your start to allow you time to familiarise yourself with it.



Yellow

1.5 - 2.5km

Fairly Easy

As White, but not every junction has a control, so you have to make some decisions of which way to go. Some controls may be a few paces off the paths (but clearly visible). Compass may be used, but are not essential.



Orange

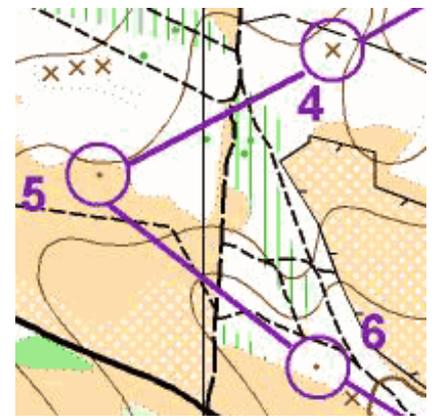
2.5 - 3.5km

Long Orange

4.0 - 6.0km

Moderate

Controls may be a short distance off the path but may not be within view. You will also have to make decisions about route is quickest - you can cut corners if you want. You are no longer given your map before your start - you pick up your map just after you have started and all decisions are made while on the course. A compass is now very helpful.

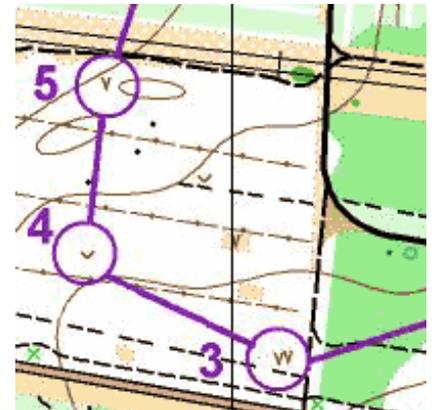


Light Green

2.5 - 3.5km

Hard

There will be lots of decisions to be made along the way and control points may be anywhere but there is normally something big and obvious not too far from the control to help. Compass now necessary equipment.



Very Short Green

2.5 - 3.5km

Short Green

3.0 - 4.0km

Green

3.5 - 5.0km

Short Blue

4.5 - 6.5km

Blue

Short Brown

Brown

Black

5.5 - 7.5km

7 - 10km

8 - 12km

10 - 14km

Very Hard

There will be many route choice decisions to be made and controls can be in very complex terrain requiring accurate map reading. There is limited running on paths and distance between control points can be well over 1 km.



How do the maps differ from other types of maps?

Maps are specifically drawn for orienteering normally at a scale of 1:10,000 or 1:15,000 with 5m contour intervals. Here is a quick guide to what the colours on the maps mean:

- White - shows an area of forest which is easy to run through.
- Green - Indicates the density of vegetation, the deeper shades of green indicates thicker forest with lower visibility and generally slower running speeds. Dark green indicates impenetrable forest such as rhododendrons. Green can also be used to indicate features such as distinctive trees or individual trees in open land.
- Orange / Yellow - Indicates open land (no trees) with pale orange indicating rough open land (longer grass, heather etc.).
- Brown - Indicates land height and small earth features such as contours, small hills (knolls) and pits (small vertical cavities in the ground).
- Black - Constructed features such as tracks, paths and buildings. Rock features such as cliffs and boulders.
- Blue - This indicates water features such as lakes, ponds, rivers, ditches and water holes.

If you can't remember these don't worry as the maps will have a legend on that will label all of the different features.

Unlike most normal maps orienteering maps have north lines that point to magnetic north rather than true north so that using the compass is as simple as possible.

What do I do when I get to my first event?

If the event is not at a major tourist destination (i.e. brown signs), there will be temporary direction signs from nearby major roads. Please park as instructed and pay any required parking fee; once you have arrived at the event you will need to register to run. This is normally obvious and is conducted at a tent or from a car; where it is not, signs will normally indicate the way to registration. Once you are there, there will be displayed the courses on offer with the length and difficulty. Pay your money and register on the course that you would like to compete on, make sure you have a pen handy as you may have to fill in a slip with your details. If you need

to hire a 'dibber' this is also done at registration.

When you register you will be handed a control description sheet, this gives the codes of each control flag and the feature that it is located on. If you are competing on the White or Yellow course you will also be given the map with the route marked on it, this allows you to familiarise yourself with the map and the features. Once you are ready make your way to the start, which will be signed from the registration area (at local Level D events registration may also be the Start and the Finish).

At the start, the official will tell you when you can 'Go!'. You will need to punch the start box, and then pick up your map (unless on Yellow or White, in which case you will already have your map). Follow the course and punch each control in sequence finally punching at the Finish.

Once you have crossed the finish line you must make your way back to 'Download'. The official will check you have completed the course successfully and they know you have returned safely. Don't forget to return your hired dibber. **IMPORTANT** If you decide not to complete the course, you must still come back to report you are safe, otherwise the organiser will have to launch a full search for you when Course Closing Time is reached (or earlier for children or poor weather).

The event results will be on the club website (probably that evening - maybe even before you get home!), and using RouteGadget you will be able to draw the route you took, and see where other people went. You can also add your comments to the club Facebook discussion of the event.

How do I join Nottinghamshire Orienteering Club?

Full details of how to join and the benefits can be [found here](#) on the club website.

Where can I find further information?

Further information can be found on the [British Orienteering Website](http://www.britishorienteering.org.uk): www.britishorienteering.org.uk .

