

Planning Courses for SO Events

A Basic Guide by

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White	1.0-1.5 km
Yellow	1.5-2.0 km
Orange	2.5-3.5 km
Lt Green	3.0-4.0 km
Green	3.5-4.5 km
Blue	5.0-7.0 km

The exact length of each course will depend on the nature of the terrain ie flat, hilly, open, brambly etc. Target lengths for each course are published in Southdowner and your 'controller' will give further advice.

White Course

The white course is designed for young children and is meant to be very, very easy. Never be tempted to make it harder.

- 1) The entire course should be on paths and tracks.
- 2) Whenever the competitor is required to turn off a path a control should be placed at the junction and sited as to lead them towards the next control.
- 3) If the intended route is not clear mark it by means of a control or tape.
- 4) Controls shouldn't be more than 200m apart.
- 5) There is absolutely nothing wrong with every control having the description 'path junction'. Only features on the path such as bends, bridges, gates etc should be used for variety.

Yellow Course

The yellow course is designed for beginners and young children and is meant to be easy. The competitors will gain satisfaction from completing it without mishap and perhaps quickly.

- 1) The course should, wherever possible, stick to paths. Legs can follow linear features such as fences, streams and field edges but only when these are obvious and do not cross rough terrain.
- 2) There should only be one obvious route between controls.
- 3) If the intended route is not clear mark it by means of a control or tape.
- 4) Competitors should be given the opportunity to turn off one path onto another without a control being placed at the junction. Limit the number of such decisions to one (at most two) per leg.
- 5) Controls may be placed on features adjacent to paths, eg earthwalls, knolls etc, but the control flag should always be clearly visible and should not mislead the competitor (eg by using a feature just past a turning point)

Orange (or Red) Course

The orange course is planned for competent beginners and improvers. The planner has to set a course that is neither too easy nor difficult.

- 1) Controls do not need to be on, or next to, paths. However they should be close to an obvious feature that can easily be reached via paths or clear linear features.
- 2) Competitors should be offered a choice of routes to reach each control.
- 3) Competitors should be encouraged to take 'short cuts' across narrow blocks of forest.
- 4) If the control is not by a path or other obvious linear feature then there should be one behind the control to stop the competitor 'overshooting'.
- 5) Do not make the legs too long on an orange course.
- 6) On a red course longer legs are encouraged.

Light Green Course

An intermediate course between orange and green. Legs should be testing but best to err on the side of caution when considering particularly difficult ones.

- 1) Encourage use of compass to either:
 - a) cut across large blocks of forest
 - b) navigate short distances to a control
- 2) Avoid placing controls in particularly barren or complex areas where re-location would be difficult.

Green and Blue Courses

Both of these courses are designed for experienced orienteers and should be made suitably difficult but not unfair.

- 1) Legs should test the full range of orienteering skills.
- 2) There is nothing wrong with placing controls on paths or other obvious features - it's how the competitor gets there that's important. Blue and White courses can share controls!
- 3) The biggest mistake is to try and make these courses more difficult by 'hiding' controls. **DO NOT:**
 - a) Place a control at the bottom of a pit or in the middle of a featureless block of forest.
 - b) Place a control in the middle of a block of thick forest, through which navigation on a bearing is impossible.
 - c) Place controls in the middle of dense blocks of bracken etc unless there are clearly visible features available to lead the competitor to the control feature.
- 4) If you're not sure about the identity of a feature don't use it.
- 5) Even if you have found the correct feature do not place a control here if the map around the control is wrong or misleading.
- 6) Start by planning the legs before the control sites. Pick legs that would make you think 'how would I get from there to there'.
- 7) You may have heard that "long legs are good". This is only true if the terrain forces you to navigate throughout the length of the leg.
- 8) You may have heard that "doglegs are bad" - these are where competitors approach and then leave a control the same way. Try and avoid this where possible but don't worry too much about it either.
- 9) Plan shorter courses where there is a lot of climb or thick undergrowth. Plan longer ones in fast, open areas.

Producing Written Control Descriptions

What follows is an example of good practice when producing written control descriptions for a SOG or colour coded event. Note that the purpose of the description is to clarify the location of the control. It describes the map feature at the centre of the control circle, not necessarily what the control site looks like in the forest. For example a control is placed by a dead tree in a re-entrant - the description should quote the mapped feature *re-entrant* not the unmapped feature *dead tree* however accurate or useful this may appear.

The description also confines itself to what is in the control circle - which should be 6mm in diameter. If there is only one knoll in the control circle then the description can simply say *knoll*, by default this would mean that the control is placed on the top of the knoll. If there is more than one knoll in the circle then the correct knoll must be specified eg *Northern knoll* or simply *N knoll*. Note that the start has its own description, but the finish doesn't. The finish should be obvious to all approaching competitors by means of tapes and/or a banner. The description should include the name of the event, the name of the course, its length and climb. Calculating climb is a bit of an art, the simplest way is to count the number of contours the course crosses, divide by two and multiply by the contour

interval (5m, 2.5m etc). This is assuming that the start and finish are at similar heights. Information on how to get to the finish from the last control should be given as well as the course closing time. A 12pt font such as Times New Roman is perfectly adequate. Although larger text might be easier to read the control descriptions probably won't fit in the wrist holders many orienteers now use.

Although not obligatory, legibility may be improved by putting the odd blank line into the description. This is often done either side of a road crossing, or taped route instruction.

Hurst Wood 30th Feb 2013

Blue Course 5.5km 120m climb

(Comments)

Start	Path	(The start should have its own description)
1 120	Path junction	
2 88	Ditch bend	
3 101	N knoll, E side	(On the eastern side of the northernmost knoll)
4 121	Clearing, W edge	(Clearings have edges not sides)
5 111	Path, Ditch crossing	(Sometimes they are crossings not junctions)
Follow tapes to next control		(Or "Follow tapes 100m to path" etc)
6 112	Gate	
7 113	Boulder, 0.5m high	(Useful if on one of RLM's 0.1m boulders)
Take care crossing road		
8 116	Between thickets	(Easier than N thicket, S Side)
Use compulsory crossing point		
9 122	Middle re-entrant	(Only if there are an odd number of features)
Navigate 150m to finish		(Or "Follow taped route 150m to finish")
Courses close at 12:30		(The finish does not have its own description)

If you are using OCAD to prepare your courses then you also have the option of preparing pictorial descriptions for some or all of the courses. Detailed information on using OCAD for course planning can be found on the SO website. Finally don't forget to put the course closing time on the descriptions for SOGs this is always 12:30.

Using SI equipment at events

All of SO's events now use electronic punching and the equipment that we now have is very easy to use. The following points are the main ones to note:

- 1) None of the units need turning on or off - just put them out and bring them back in (note that the stakes for the clear/start/finish units have bigger base plates than those for the controls).
- 2) Only one Start and Finish unit need to be on a stake. Place the backups on the ground next to the stake.
- 3) The clear unit should be on a stake near the start. The start official normally performs the check manually.
- 4) Should a unit be missing or not working then another can replace it. The number on the new unit should be replaced by the number of the previous unit eg by writing on a piece of tape that is then placed over the new number. Tell whoever is running the results software of which unit number has been replaced by which.
- 5) Should a control go missing mid-event then if possible try and replace it with something - even just a flag.