

A Short Guide to Permanent Course Orienteering

About Orienteering

Orienteering is finding your way, usually on foot but sometimes by bike, from one marked point on a map to another. At the top level, it is done against the clock and is very competitive. However, it is also a recreational activity, providing extra interest to a walk in nice surroundings.

The Map

An orienteering map is large scale, usually 1cm on the map representing 100m on the ground (1:10000) or 75m on the ground (1:7500). It contains detail which is not shown on Ordnance Survey maps - for example, the density of trees and undergrowth in green, open and lightly wooded land in yellow and ditches and marshes in blue. An orienteering course is marked in purple: the start is shown with a triangle, the control sites are marked by circles, and the finish is two concentric circles, or a circle over the start triangle.

Permanent Orienteering Courses

Around the country, there are a large number of POCs. Each POC has a set of permanent posts, sited at places marked on a map which is usually available locally, and via the local orienteering club's website. In a POC, there is a post at the centre of each marked circle. The post is inscribed with a letter, which corresponds to a letter on the map, and a number which you can record to prove you've found the post.



Starting out

If you are new to orienteering, you need to get used to the map. The easiest way to do this is by keeping the map **orientated**. This means that North on the map – shown with arrows – faces North on the ground. You can use a compass or GPS to decide where this is, or, in good weather, shadows in the middle of the day also point North. Keeping the map orientated, put your thumb so that it is behind your position on the map and walk around some nearby features. Each time you change direction, North the map again by turning it round, keeping your thumb on your current location. Once you can do this, you can look for some controls.

Danefield Permanent Orienteering Course

There are two POCs in Danefield: a starter course, especially for children with easy posts and a large scale (1:4000) map, and a harder course on a 1:7500 map. Parking is on East Chevin Road, SE of Otley at GR215443. On the harder course, the difficulty of the posts is indicated by stars – more stars means harder to find. In summer, undergrowth makes some of the forest hard to get through, and controls H and Q are in bracken. The paths are fine at all times of the year.

Introducing children

Use the starter course first. Explain how to keep the map Northed (North arrows facing the Wharfe valley!) and walk with them round a couple of posts (eg X and E) pointing out map features on the way. They can then have a go, in small groups, at finding, say, T and D. Then give each group a challenge, perhaps timed, of finding six posts, which could include those they have already found. After that, with older children, move on to the harder (1:7500) map, noting that the difficulty of the posts is indicated by stars. The easiest strategy is to give them a time limit, say an hour, and tell them to get as many posts as they can in the time. With younger children, the same challenge on the easier course is feasible although repetitive. Alternatively, set up a small race with teams of six in three pairs, with each pair having to find a post or pair of posts and return to a central point (the open area South of D is good) and handover to the next pair.

Courses on the 1:7500 map

Easy, 1.5km: E, J, I, F, D

Fairly easy but further, 2.3km, E, J, L, M, P, I, F, D

Makes you think, 3.4km, E, J, M, N, O, R, P, K, G, F, D

Hard and steep, 4.8km, D, A, B, C, G, H, K, P, Q, R, O, N, M, I, E

The ultimate: get round all the posts in any order in the shortest time.

To find out more

Nearby POCs include Ilkley Moor and Middleton Woods, Roundhay and Temple Newsam Parks. For more details, including maps, and for more information about orienteering, see:

In Airedale and Wharfedale, www.aire.org.uk

In Britain, www.britishorienteering.org.uk