

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.

Ilkley Moor Permanent Orienteering Course

The POC on Ilkley Moor is accessible from two points. The best and least exposed place to start is the car park at Darwin Gardens (GR 117472) at the top of Wells Road, approached from the centre of Ilkley. The alternative – good views – is the Cow and Calf car park (GR 132467). The course has some easy posts – see below – but it can be challenging when the bracken is up, from mid-June to November, and it is exposed and unbounded on the South, East and West. Children will need careful supervision (Danefield or Middleton Woods are easier: less exposed and bounded by fences). On the course, the difficulty of the posts is indicated by stars – more stars is harder to find.

Introducing children

Start from Darwin Gardens. Explain how to keep the map Northed (North arrows facing the Wharfe valley!) and walk with them round a couple of posts (eg P and N) pointing out map features on the way. They can then have a go, in small groups, at finding, say, M and F, meeting at White Wells which is visible throughout. Then give each group a challenge, possibly timed, of finding ten posts, perhaps those they have already found plus Q, L, U (harder), D, I, J and back to P which is the old bandstand. After that, with older children, they could try the posts to the West, 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. Alternatively, if the weather is good and the students competent, drive up to the Cow and Calf and suggest as many as possible in an hour – but taking care as there are some seriously steep crags.

Courses on the 1:10000 map

Easy from Darwin Gardens: P, N, M, F, Q, O(harder), S
Fairly easy but further: P, N, J, I, D, U (harder), L, Q, O (harder), S
Makes you think: V, X, W, Y, Z, K, R, L, H, M, O, P
Hard and steep from Cow and Calf: B, E, A, G, R, L, U, H, I, C
The ultimate: get round all the posts in any order in the shortest time.

To find out more

Nearby POCs include Danefield and Middleton Woods, Roundhay and Temple Newsam Parks, Penistone CP near Haworth. 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