

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.

Northcliffe Park & Heaton Woods Permanent Orienteering Course

The POC at Northcliffe & Heaton is on a 1:7500 map. Parking is best in the car park on the west side of Bradford Road, Shipley (A650), opposite The Branch pub. Post code: BD18 3DE. From there the Start and Finish post is through the main park gates and 100m uphill. You can run or walk between the controls in any order you want or you can follow some of the courses recommended below. You may get a bit muddy on any of the courses – the more so the longer the course is - it is worth wearing old trousers and some shoes with a bit of grip. On the harder course you may encounter some steep and slippery slopes where shoes with good grip will really help. Please note that the longest and hardest course involves using minor roads and is not suitable for unaccompanied children.

Introducing children

Use the Easy course first. Explain how to keep the map Northed (North arrows point between the bowling green and tennis courts from the start.) and walk with them round a couple of posts (eg F and I) pointing out map features on the way. They can then have a go, in small groups, at finding, say, S and Q. Then give each group a challenge, perhaps timed, of finding five or six posts, which could include those they have already found. After that, with older children, move on to a harder exercise. 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 (but **do not include the controls in Heaton Woods M, P & O** because of the roads crossed). 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 and handover to the next pair.

Recommended Courses

Easy, 1.1km: S-Q-B-I-F

Fairly easy but further, 2.0km, I-K-A-H-B-Q-S

Makes you think, 2.7km, J-T-D-L-K-H-E-C-U-G-S

Hard and steep, 4.9km, D-T-H-U-G-M-P-O-E-L-J

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

To find out more

Nearby POCs include Ilkley Moor, Middleton Woods Ilkley, Penistone Hill at Haworth, Danefield at Otley, Roundhay and Temple Newsam Parks in Leeds. For information about orienteering locally see:

www.aire.org.uk or nationally: www.britishorienteering.org.uk