



Thames Valley Orienteering Club

A Newcomer's Guide to Orienteering...

Getting started in the world of orienteering is very easy and you need no special equipment to attend your first event - just a sense of adventure! This guide will tell you everything you need to get started.

What is orienteering? It's a race with no set route - you have to find your own way between a series of checkpoints, using a detailed orienteering map. The checkpoints are marked by flags on the ground and the challenge is to decide your own route around the course, using your map. Will your checkpoints be along paths, or hidden on earth banks, ditches or vegetation? At each event, there are longer courses for runners plus shorter junior and family courses. Events traditionally take place in woods and forests, but over recent years there have been more urban and shorter ("sprint" events) around university campuses. Help is always available and it's a great sport for all ages and abilities, from under 10s to 80 plus!

You decide how serious and competitive you want to be - at an elite level, orienteering is a competitive running sport that improves all levels of fitness and stretches the body and the mind, however it's perfectly ok to walk around a course as a family - it's up to you.

To record your progress around the course you use a small electronic timing chip that you take around the course with you. At each control site there is a small box which records on your chip what time you passed through. After you finish you are then able to see what your total time was and how long you took for every leg of the course. Overall results will be displayed on the organising club's website later that day. Although orienteering is a competitive sport, many people come just for the challenge of completing the course and enjoying the scenery.

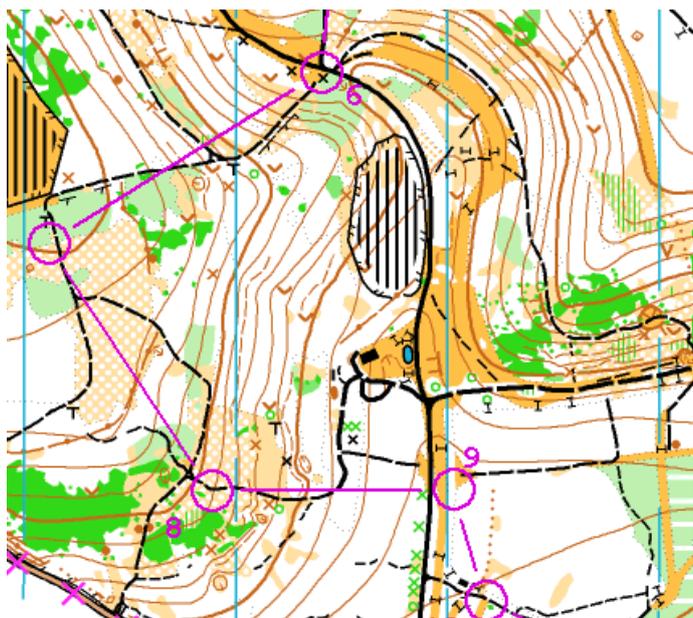


Thames Valley Orienteering Club is the local club for Oxfordshire and Bucks. We have around 250 members and we organise around 35 events a year, including our monthly Saturday Series aimed at newcomers, larger regional and national events for experienced orienteers competing in national leagues (and newcomers too), plus various training sessions and activities including our summer evening series. We have detailed orienteering maps of many woods and forests across the Thames Valley, plus urban maps of Didcot, Abingdon, parts of Oxford, Aylesbury and Bicester.

Where can I have a go? There are several permanent orienteering courses across Oxfordshire and Bucks, including at Shotover Country Park and University Parks in Oxford. These are a great way to get started, at your leisure. Orienteering maps of the permanent courses can be requested by contacting us at poc@tvoc.org.uk

Why not come along to one of our **Saturday Series** events to experience the excitement of a proper orienteering event. We have coaches and experienced orienteers available to get you started at your first event and there are always plenty of people trying the sport for the first time. Details of the next few events are on our website at www.tvoc.org.uk (see the Events tab) and on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/tvoclub. Don't forget to 'like' us on Facebook to receive notifications of our future events.

The map



Orienteering maps are very detailed and at scales much larger than OS maps; they are commonly at 1:10000, which is five times the scale of a typical OS map. Black is used for man-made features such as buildings and paths. Brown shows landforms such as contours and ditches. Blue shows water features such as ponds and streams. White and Green show the density of woodland and the extent to which it is runnable. Open runnable woodland is shown as white, with darker shades of green showing more wooded areas. Yellow is used for open areas. Maps will have a legend and the symbols are easy to recognise after a few events.

Your course will be printed onto your waterproof map (which you get to keep) and will show a series of circles (controls), which you must visit, in order, as fast as you can!

At an event

The first thing to do is register at the registration tent. Plenty of help will be available to help you choose a suitable course. Most courses are "colour-coded", where the colour represents the length and navigational difficulty. White, Yellow and Orange courses are normally recommended for newcomers, or Light Green if you're confident. The course length is the straight-line distance between the controls and you will run/walk quite a bit further than this, depending on the route you choose between the controls.

Typical courses, who they are aimed at and typical lengths:

White	The easiest course, with controls on paths	Children, family groups	1.0-1.5km
Yellow	Fairly easy, uses linear features like paths & streams	Newcomers, children, families	1.5-2.0km
Orange	More challenging - use of compass & route choice	Adult newcomers, children, families	2.5-3.5km
Light Green	Challenging - uses contours and more route choices	Improvers and experienced orienteers	2.5-3.5km
Green	Very challenging & shorter - lots of route choice	Experienced orienteers	3.5-5.0km
Blue	Very challenging & longer - lots of route choice	Experienced orienteers	5.0-7.0km
Brown	Very challenging & long - lots of route choice	Experienced orienteers	7.5-10km

When you register at an event, you will be given your electronic timing chip ("Emit card"). You need to touch this against each control point that you visit and it will record your progress around the course. Then make your way to the Start, where you will head off into the woods on your course - everyone starts at staggered intervals, and you can normally start between 10.30am and midday (some events do vary). When you finish your course, the Emit card will be downloaded and you will receive a printout of your split times. You must always go to the download point, even if you don't finish, so that the organisers know you are not still out in the forest.

What next?

Check out our next Saturday Series events and come along to have a go (£6 adults / £2 under 21s): www.tvoc.org.uk

See the national event fixture list here: www.britishorienteering.org.uk/page/event

Like us on Facebook to keep up to date with our events: www.facebook.com/tvocclub

Please do email us if you have any questions: publicity@tvoc.org.uk

We hope to see you in a forest soon!



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