






Understanding Multi-Level in Sprint Orienteering

Course Planners are becoming increasingly more creative in their use of multi-level in sprint orienteering. This document seeks to clarify common misunderstandings of how multi-level control sites are described and the fairness of using these sites. Resources on symbols and mapping of complex urban structures can be found on the [IOF Website](#) and [O-Map Wiki](#).

Control Description Columns

It is important to recognise the distinction between the control description columns and understand their function, in particular column C, D and G.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	A	Control number
2	225				8x4			B	Control code
								C	Which of any similar feature
								D	Control feature
								E	Appearance
								F	Dimensions / Combinations / Bend
								G	Location of the control flag
								H	Other information

Column C – Which of any similar feature

This column may be used when there is more than one similar feature within the control circle; e.g. southeastern.

Column D – The control feature





The feature, as shown on the map, at the centre of the circle defining the control site; e.g. clearing; boulder.

Column G – Location of the control flag

Position of the control flag with respect to the feature; e.g. west corner (outside); south foot.

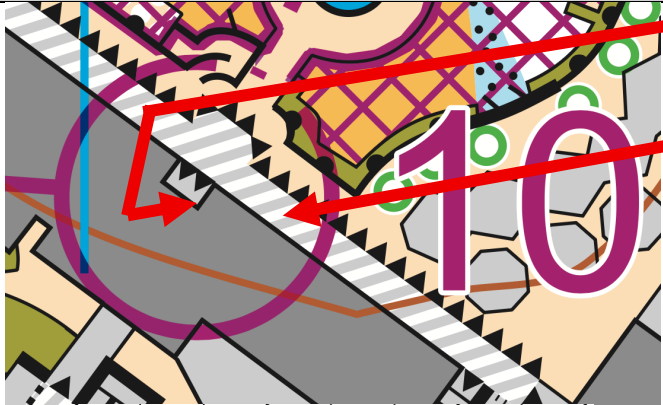
Upper and Lower, or Top and Beneath?

The upper and lower and top and beneath control description symbols are not interchangeable; each has a specific application. The upper and lower symbols are used in column C to describe which of any similar feature the control flag is positioned on. The top and beneath symbols are used in column G to describe the position of the control flag with respect to the feature. The definitions below are taken from the [International Specification for Control Descriptions 2024](#).

12.10		Top	Where the control is located at the highest point of the feature and this is not the default location; e.g. Cliff, top; Stairway, top. The Upper of two levels.
12.13		Beneath	Where the control is located underneath the feature; e.g. Pipeline, beneath. The Lower of two levels.
0.3		Upper	Where the control feature is directly above a similar feature.
0.4		Lower	Where the control feature is directly below a similar feature.

Where a control is positioned on a feature (IOF ISSprOM 2019-2, not 512.3) and there is multi-level of a similar feature inside the circle, the upper and lower symbols are used in column C to distinguish the feature.

Example A



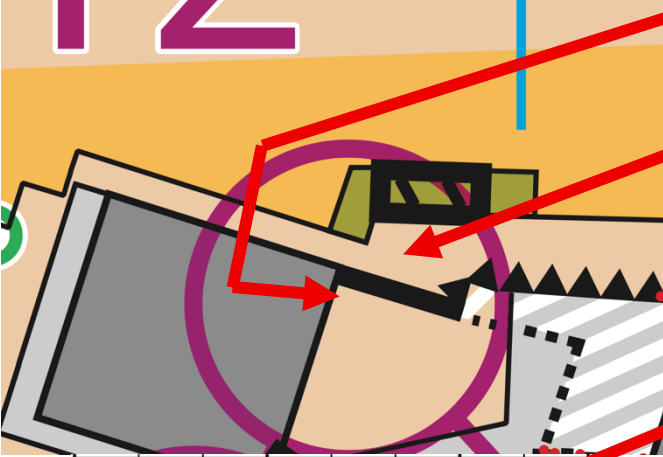
The control feature is a canopy.

There is a similar feature within the control circle. The similar feature has multi-level, so it is necessary to distinguish which similar feature (which canopy) the control flag is on. The lower symbol is used in column C of the control descriptions.

With respect to the lower canopy, the control flag positioned in the southern inside corner.

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Example B



The control feature is paved area.

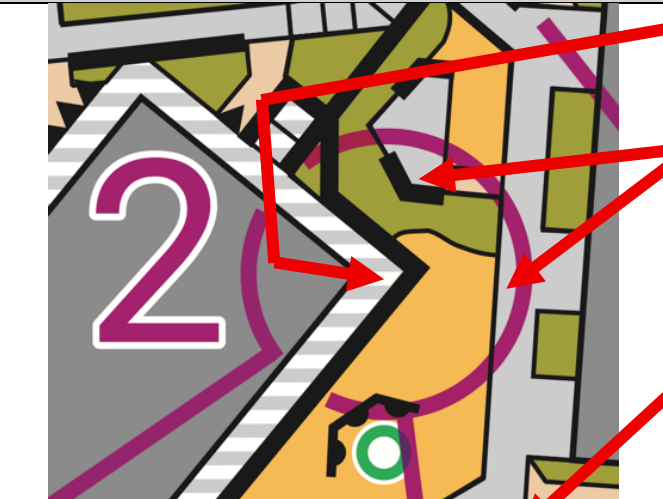
There is a similar feature within the control circle. The similar feature has multi-level, so it is necessary to distinguish which similar feature (which paved area) the control flag is on. The upper symbol is used in column C of the control descriptions.

With respect to the upper paved area, the control flag is positioned in the northwestern inside corner.

12	33				
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Where a control is positioned on a multi-level canopy feature (IOF ISSprOM 2019-2, 512.3 & 522), the top and beneath symbols are used in column G to distinguish the level. An example of how this would appear on the map and control descriptions is shown below.

Example C



The control feature is a canopy which can be passed at two levels (multi-level).

There is a similar feature within the control circle, so it is necessary to distinguish which similar feature (which canopy) the control flag is on. The southwestern symbol is used in column C of the control descriptions.

With respect to the southwestern canopy, the control flag is positioned at the upper level of two levels. The top symbol is used in column G of the control descriptions.

2	53				
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Where a control is positioned on a multi-level feature (IOF ISSprOM 2019-2, 512.3 & any symbol except 522), the upper and lower and top and beneath symbols are not required. It is assumed that the lower level is always canopy. An example of how this would appear on the map and control descriptions is shown below.

Example D	
	<p>The control feature is a canopy, specified by control descriptions, thus, it is at the lower level.</p> <p>There is a similar feature within the control circle, so it is necessary to distinguish which similar feature (which canopy) the control flag is on. The northwestern symbol is used in column C of the control descriptions.</p> <p>With respect to the northwestern canopy, the control flag is positioned in the northern inside corner.</p>

The purpose of a control description is to give greater precision to the picture given by the map of the control feature, and to indicate the location of the control flag in relation to this feature, thereby helping the competitor to better visualise the control site. However, a good control is found primarily by map reading. Descriptions and codes can assist in this task, but should be kept as short and simple as is necessary to locate the control.

In Example A and B, it is possible for there to be an alternative control description. Example A could be described as the southern inside corner of building. Example B could be described as the northwestern inside corner of building and wall junction. It remains the responsibility of the Course Planner and Controller to determine which control description best fits the purpose mentioned above.

In Example C and D, there is no alternative control description.

Fairness

Fairness is a basic requirement in competitive sport. Unless the greatest care is taken at each step of course planning, luck can easily become significant in orienteering competitions. The course planner must consider all such factors to ensure that the contest is fair and that all competitors face the same conditions on every part of the course.

In multi-level areas, it should be possible to understand from the map (generally while running at high speed) where it is possible to enter and exit the structure, on which level, and how to move from one level to another. It is also important to be able to identify quickly and easily which detail is on the upper level and which is on the lower level, and also to identify if steps go up to the upper level, or down to the lower level. It is almost never appropriate to map a structure with more than two levels.

Where there is a complex structure in the terrain that is difficult to interpret quickly, clarification can be provided in an event bulletin with a map extract. An example of this from the 2025 Uster World Cup is provided on the last page of this document.

If the area is not sufficiently explained in the bulletin, it is difficult to work out how to best map the structure, or it is difficult to understand even looking at the map when not running, then it is probably

too complex to understand for athletes during a competition. Thus, it is not suitable as a control location.

It is reminded that courses and control sites should conform to the degree of navigational difficulty in sprint orienteering as set out in section 3.2 of Appendix 1 'General Competition Classes' in the [Orienteering Australia Competition Rules](#).

Very Easy	All control markers must be visible on the approach side and straightforward to interpret on the map.
Easy	Control markers should be visible from the approach side by any reasonable route and easily identified on the map.
Moderate	Correct interpretation of the control description may be required to identify the control location.
Hard	Correct interpretation of the control description may be required to identify the control location.

In the examples given above, A may be an appropriate control site for an Easy because it is easily identified on the map but would not be appropriate for a Very Easy because it not straightforward to interpret. Example B may be an appropriate control site for an Easy and a Very Easy because it is both easily identified and straightforward to interpret on the map. Example C and D are not appropriate control sites for Easy or Very Easy because correct interpretation of the control description is required to identify the control location. All examples are appropriate control sites for Moderate and Hard courses.

New Precedent at 2025 Uster World Cup

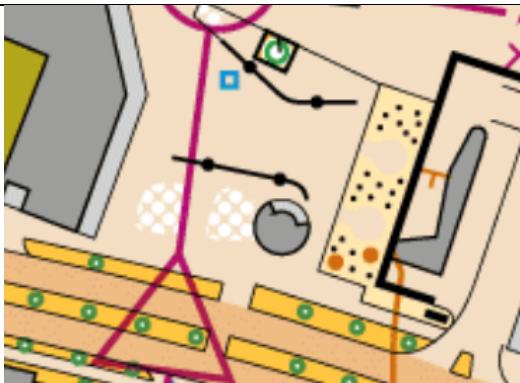
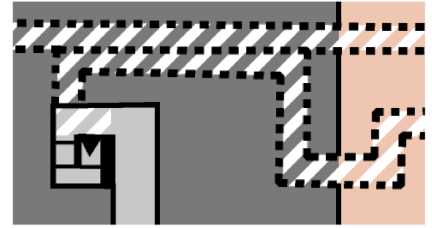
At the 2025 Uster World Cup, the Knockout Final featured a leg through an underground carpark marked by artificial fencing and tape to a control situated in a section of multi-level. This passage did not appear on the Semi Final map.



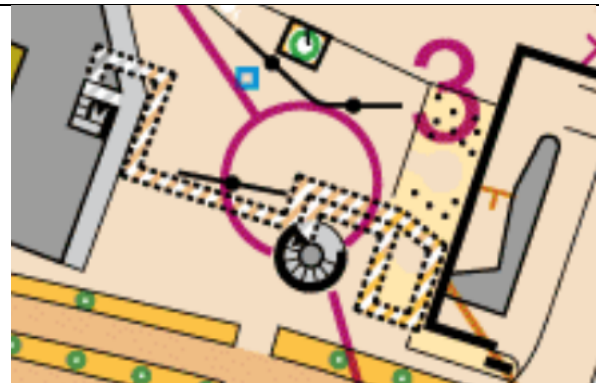
Terrain

Urban terrain with smaller and bigger buildings and park areas. Parts of the courses and controls may be inside of buildings, both on the ground floor and underground. There may be leading tape and guided passages indoor which are mapped, without the entire interior area being mapped. Such passages will be clearly taped to guide competitors through the area.

The underground passages are drawn as 512.2 Underpass on the map (see map example). It is not allowed to leave the marked corridors or to cross over from one corridor to another across the dotted line.



Knockout Semi Final Map



Knockout Final Map

Conclusion

For athletes to remain prepared and competitive at an international level, it is a necessity that Course Planners take advantage of and exploit multi-level at sprint orienteering events in Australia. Should any further clarification be required on the information covered in this document or for other case-specific examples, please email technical@oq.asn.au.

Dylan Bryant

Chair Technical

Orienteering Queensland

v10 Nov 2025