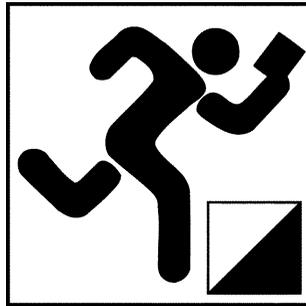


# ORIENTEERING STARTER PACK



**A newcomer's guide to getting started:**

- \* Your first event**
  - \* What you will need**
  - \* Basic skills**
- ...and more**



## **Welcome to orienteering**

This booklet should provide sufficient information to assist you with your first few orienteering events. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask one of the officials at an event, contact the club in your local area or email [oq@oq.asn.au](mailto:oq@oq.asn.au).

## **What is orienteering?**

Orienteering is a sport which combines outdoor recreation with map reading and navigational skills.

It involves navigating through the bush with the aid of a specially produced map and orienteering compass, with the aim being to locate checkpoints (controls) on various natural and man-made features along the way, such as a boulder or track junction.

In competitive orienteering, the person successfully completing their course in the quickest time is the winner.

It is this stimulating mental challenge as well as the physical activity that makes orienteering so popular. Because a variety of courses are offered to suit all ages, levels of fitness and ability, it is a sport the whole family can participate in and enjoy - from beginners through to the elite competitor.

You can walk, jog or run, depending on your level of fitness and how competitive you wish to be. Orienteering is truly a sport for life with people from the under 10's to the over 80's regularly competing.

The basic map reading and navigational skills are easily learnt with instruction available for beginners at all orienteering events.



## Where does orienteering take place?

Areas used for orienteering include parks and forest reserves as well as private grazing land and bushland. In urban areas, there is also street orienteering while areas with complex buildings, such as university campuses, are also used for sprint orienteering.

Most orienteering events are held near Brisbane but clubs in Cairns, Townsville, Bundaberg, the Fraser Coast, the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Toowoomba and the Southern Downs also organise regular activities. The list of coming events and directions to them may be obtained from Orienteering Queensland's web site: [www.oq.asn.au/events](http://www.oq.asn.au/events) or by contacting the club in your area. You do not have to be a member to participate at most orienteering events but if you intend coming along regularly, there are many benefits in becoming a member. You do not have to contact the event organiser in advance - simply turn up on the day (unless it is a pre-enter event). Many events have an on-line, pre-entry system.

Bush orienteering events are held regularly, generally on Sunday mornings from March through to the end of October. Around Brisbane, there is usually an orienteering activity every weekend while the country clubs tend to have an event once a month. Over the summer months, there are twilight or early morning park and street events.

Because of the lack of suitable bushland areas for orienteering close to many of the major cities and towns in Queensland, some of the events may involve a drive of at least an hour. So try and share transport to save on fuel. If you do not have your own car, contact the event organiser to see if you can get a lift with someone.

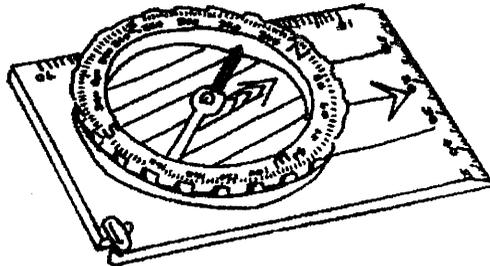


Directions to the events are signposted from the major roads. When you get to the event, go to the Registration and Information table for assistance.

## **What do I need to bring along?**

- comfortable, outdoor clothes - shorts are OK for beginner courses but long pants will protect your legs when going through the bush
- sturdy footwear, such as joggers, are adequate for those beginning orienteering
- bring a hat and wear sunscreen if it is likely to be hot
- a whistle to attract attention if injured or lost (may be purchased at the event)
- a watch
- some water to drink, before and after you compete

Compasses can be borrowed at the event.



Regular orienteers compete in colourful “O suits” made of lightweight, breathable nylon or lycra. These provide protection against vegetation as well as being comfortable to wear in Queensland conditions. Many orienteers also use gaiters to protect their legs against scratches and bruising. There are a wide variety of special orienteering shoes available but many people find that shoes designed for grass sports such as hockey or touch football which are all leather (no mesh) and have rubber studs are also quite suitable. Running shoes do not generally provide sufficient ankle protection in rough terrain. Talk to club members for advice on the best gear to get if you intend to become a regular competitor.

You may also like to bring along some drinks and food to have after the event. Orienteers frequently stay on after they have competed to socialise with their friends and share a picnic lunch in the bush.

## When you arrive at the event

If this is the first time you have been to an orienteering event, go to the Registration/Information area for assistance on what course to choose and how to get started. A sign should indicate what courses are available for that day. You will need to choose a suitable course and associated list of control descriptions, fill out a control card and pay for your entry at the Registration table.

## Orienteering courses

A range of courses are provided at most events and these are colour coded to indicate their navigational difficulty.

- **Very easy**, the beginner's course, is usually about 1-2km in length and follows easily identifiable, linear features such as tracks and fences.
- The **Easy** course encourages some simple, off-track route choices
- **Moderate** courses are of a moderate standard of navigation
- **Hard** courses are the most technically difficult and vary in length to suit age and standards of fitness as well as the type of terrain. In fast, open forest, the longest Hard course may be up to 15km long while the shortest one may be 2 – 3km in length. Course distances are set to achieve a certain winning time so will vary depending on the type of terrain. Even for very fit young orienteers, it is rare for them to achieve a kilometre rate better than 5mins per kilometre in most Australian terrain.

Adults who are familiar with map reading eg. from bushwalking, can usually go straight to an Easy or Moderate standard course but for children and those with no map reading experience, it is better to choose a Very Easy course to begin with. If you are unsure about what

course to choose, ask for advice at the Registration table. As you learn the basic navigational and map reading skills and gain confidence, you can progress to the next standard of course.

## Getting started

After you have decided which course you would like to do, select a control description for that course. This lists the information about the controls you have to visit on that course ie. a description of the feature you are looking for as well as the number on the control flag that marks that feature. See Fig. 1 below for a typical control description.

For the Very Easy, Easy and Moderate courses, these descriptions will be written in English but for the Hard courses, international symbols are used.

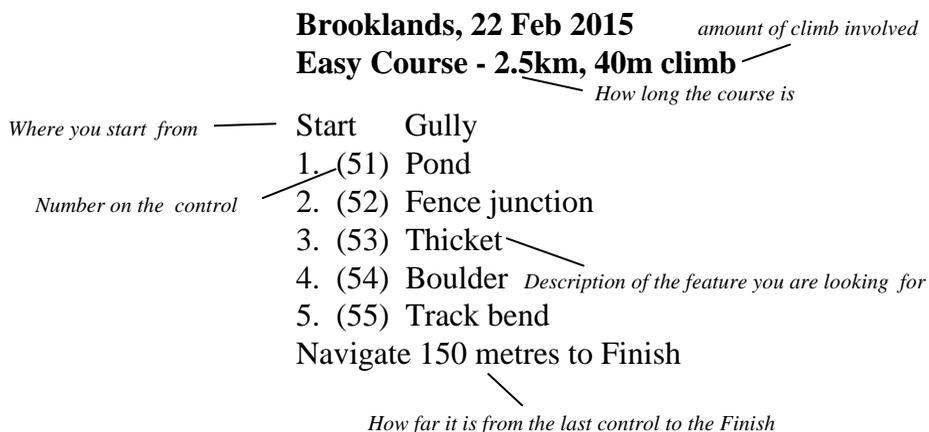


Fig. 1 - Typical control description

You may also need to complete a control card. It is important to complete both sections of this card as the tear off slip at the bottom enables the organiser to check that all competitors have returned safely. Fill in all the information that you can on the card, especially your name and phone number and the course you are doing.

## How to enter

Once you have selected a suitable course and taken a copy of the appropriate control description, go to the Registration table to pay your entry fee. When you are ready, make your way to the Start. Copies of the map being used for that day's event, overprinted with the course on it, will be available here.

At all major and most local events, an electronic timing system, Sportident, is used instead of a control card. Because the units for this system have to be mounted on a support, the controls for these events will generally be metal stands, with the unit mounted on top and the control flag hanging off it. The control number will be on the SI unit, not the flag. In some events where stands are not used, the units will hang below the control flag.



The system consists of a small, plastic electronic stick (SI-stick) which is of oval shape and 5cm long. It is attached by a strap to a competitor's finger. Regular competitors purchase their own SI

stick but they might be hired at events for \$2.

At the Start, Finish and control sites, special electronic punches (SI-units), mounted in plastic boxes, are attached to the controls. To record their start and finish times as well as the time at which each control is visited, a competitor simply places their SI-stick in this unit. It will then flash a light and produce a beep to indicate the information has been successfully transferred from the unit to the stick.

The control number was visited will be stick. After completing information is a computer, producing the total elapsed time individual split times

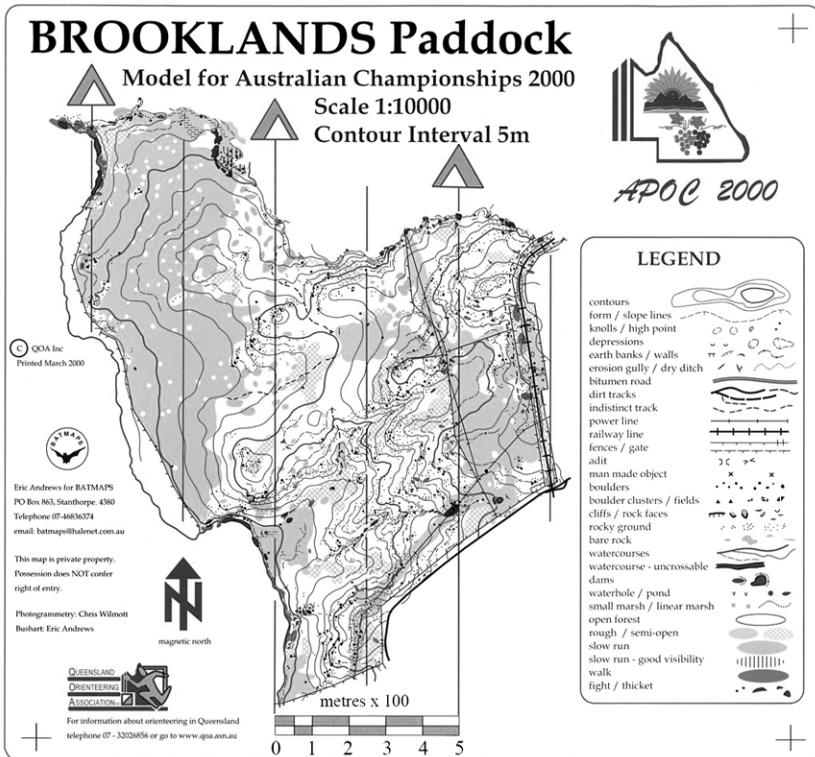


and the time it recorded on the the course, this downloaded into information on as well as the for each leg.

Should a unit fail for some reason ie. not produce a flash or beep, the controls still have ordinary punches and the competitor should punch the reserve boxes on their map instead.

## The orienteering map

An orienteering map is a specially produced topographic map and, as it shows a lot of detail, allows for precise bush navigation. Such maps



depict natural features such as contours, watercourses, rock detail and vegetation as well as constructed features such as roads, buildings and power lines.

Most orienteering maps are produced at a scale of 1:10,000 (ie. 1cm on the map equals 100m on the ground). For park and school maps of

small areas, the scale may be even larger eg. 1:5,000 enabling a lot of detail to be shown.

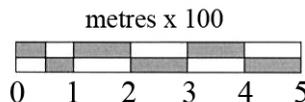
Maps produced for orienteering are printed in colour, allowing a variety of features to be clearly shown.

For the vegetation, the colours on the map indicate how “runnable” the terrain is from an orienteering perspective.

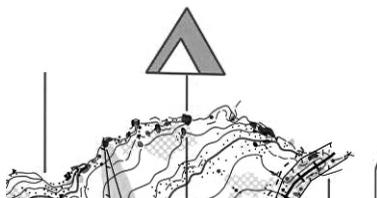
- **white sections** depict generally open bushland;
- **green areas** show vegetation, with the darker shades indicating very thick areas;
- **yellow areas** indicate more open ground where running is easier;
- **black** is for tracks, fences, powerlines and buildings but is also used for rock features such as boulders and cliffs;
- **grey** represents areas of open rock, typically found in granite country
- **blue** is for water features such as creeks, dams and marshes (although these may be dry, depending on the season);
- **brown** is used for contour lines which join points of equal height but is also used to depict earth features such as ditches, earth banks and knolls.

The legend shows the symbols used for the various features on the map.

In the margin of the map is a scale bar from which you can measure distances on the map.



The lines with arrows on the top of the map show the magnetic north. Orienteering maps are always produced with the top of the map aligned to magnetic north.



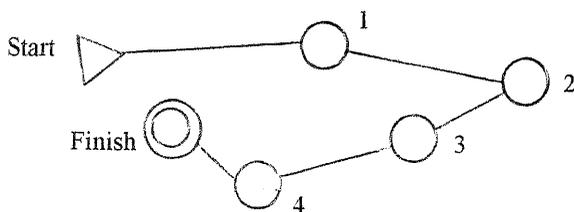
## Start

The start of the event may be some distance from the registration area, so before you set off, check that you have:

- your map and a plastic bag to protect it
- the control description list
- your SI stick
- a compass
- a whistle for safety
- a watch to check the time

The route to the start will be indicated by signs or streamers. For events using Sportident, you will be required to ‘Clear’ and ‘Check’ your SI stick before starting.

At the start, wait behind the sign indicating your course for the start official to allocate you a start time. Competitors doing the same course are separated by at least two minutes at the start to minimise following. While you are learning about the sport, you may go around a course with a friend or family members if you wish. Once the starter calls out the start time or the clock sounds its long “beep”, move to the relevant map box to collect your map. In major competitions such as a Badge event or State Championships, and many local events, a pre-marked map will be provided for each competitor.



On the map, a red triangle marks the positions of the Start of the course. The position of each control is depicted by a red circle and the Finish is marked by a double circle. The numbers beside each control indicate the order in which they are to be taken and correspond to the control description list for that course.

## **On the course**

Once you have picked up your map, leave the Start area and decide how to navigate to your first control.

Control sites are marked by orange and white, triangular markers, called flags. These will usually be hung from metal stands with the SI unit and a plastic punch on the top. The control number can be found on the SI unit, control stand or flag.

You must visit the controls in their listed order, unless it is a scatter or score course.

Orientate your map using linear features or your compass so that it is lined up with your direction of travel and the features on the ground. Try to match map features with what you see around you and vice versa.

Near controls, look for ground features that match those on your map rather than just searching for the orienteering flag.

Be aware of the distance you are travelling.

## **At the control**



When you get to the control, check that the feature and code number on the control flag or stand match your control description list.

If you are sure it is the control on your course, insert your SI-stick into the unit.

Move a short distance away from the control site and then plan your route to the next control.

## **If you are uncertain where you are**

First try and relocate yourself.

Use obvious, linear features such as tracks, fences or creeks, if available, or go back to your previous control.

If you think you are completely lost and are unable to find where you are on the map, ask another orienteer for help or wait for assistance at any control you find. Someone will collect the controls after the course closure time and will be able to take you back to the assembly area.

If you follow the safety bearing given at the start, you should be able to get back to the assembly area on your own.

If all else fails, or if you are injured, stay still and blow your whistle.

The emergency signal is six blasts at ten second intervals, repeated every two minutes. Anyone hearing this must come to your assistance.

## **At the finish**

There will be an SI unit at the Finish control and you should then proceed to the download computer that will provide you with a print-out of your elapsed time and splits. The SI stick will retain the course

information until you download. Please remember to return a hired SI stick at the download station.

**Even if you have not completed your course, you must report to the Finish area so that the event organiser knows that you have returned safely.** You should ensure that you return no later than 3 hours after you started or a search will be mounted.

## **Safety**

It is recommended that you always carry a whistle with you when you are competing so that you can attract attention if lost or injured.

Water is generally provided at some controls on the courses. However, if it is a hot day, you may like to carry some water with you as well as having plenty to drink both before and after you compete.

It is recommended that you carry a watch so that you know how much time has elapsed since you started.

As with all sports, injuries can occur. Ankle sprains, cuts and scratches are the most common problems. Many orienteers strap their ankles with strapping tape to help prevent injuries. A first aid kit is available at the registration area but it is suggested that you also bring a simple first aid kit with you to the event.

Snakes are rarely encountered during orienteering events as they tend to be scared away by the noise of competitors moving through the bush. However, if bitten, stay still and try and immobilise the affected limb and apply a pressure bandage from some of your clothing. Blow your whistle to try and attract the attention of other orienteers.

## **Care of the environment**

Our sport relies on the co-operation of private landowners and government agencies for the use of their land so we need to ensure that our activities are environmentally responsible and do not cause any damage.

Please respect their land, do not leave any litter, take care when crossing fences and leave gates as you find them. Try and keep any disturbance to stock and wildlife to a minimum.

Dogs are not allowed at bush events and open fires and smoking are prohibited.



## **The basic rules of orienteering**

Orienteering is an individual sport with the emphasis being on self reliance and making your own decisions. While you are learning about the sport, you may go with a family group or other people but as you gain in experience and wish to be competitive, you need to be able to complete a course on your own.

On most courses, you are required to visit the controls in the designated order. You should not follow, talk to or interfere with other competitors unless you are completely lost and unable to relocate yourself on your own. Younger children should not be allowed out on a course without an adult until they have demonstrated an ability to successfully navigate on their own.

Orienteers should return to the Assembly Area within 3 hours of starting their course, even if they have not completed it, otherwise a search will be mounted.

## **Results**

Provisional results for the event are displayed in the assembly area.  
Final results are published on the OQ's web site:

**[www.oq.asn.au/results](http://www.oq.asn.au/results)**

## **After the event**

You might like to discuss any problems you had on your course with a more experienced orienteer or coach so that you can learn from your mistakes. Keep your map so that you can study it and perhaps draw in the route you took between controls. You may be able to see a better route choice than the one you took.

## **Becoming a member**

If you have enjoyed a few orienteering events and would like to participate regularly, then you should consider becoming a member of Orienteering Queensland.

Membership of the Association automatically gives you membership of the local club of your choice. While you do not have to be a member to participate at most events, there are a number of advantages in doing so.

- Entry fees for members are cheaper
- You receive weekly email bulletins and subscription to the quarterly *Australian Orienteer* national magazine. These give you details about coming events, results and useful tips and articles on the sport.
- The opportunity to participate in club training days and social activities and borrow orienteering books from club libraries.

Membership forms are available online from the OQ web site:  
**[www.oq.asn.au/membership](http://www.oq.asn.au/membership)**

## For further information, please contact:

Orienteering Queensland  
PO Box 114, Spring Hill 4004  
Ph 1300 799 736

**[www.oq.asn.au](http://www.oq.asn.au) or  
[oq@oq.asn.au](mailto:oq@oq.asn.au)**

or contact your local club:

### **Brisbane**

Northern suburbs	Enoggeroos Orienteering Club <a href="mailto:enoggeroos@oq.asn.au">enoggeroos@oq.asn.au</a>	0410 428 003
Western suburbs	Ugly Gully Orienteering Club <a href="mailto:uglygully@oq.asn.au">uglygully@oq.asn.au</a>	3369 0880
Southern suburbs	Toohy Forest Orienteering Club <a href="mailto:tfo.enquiries@gmail.com">tfo.enquiries@gmail.com</a>	0427 948 465
Multi Terrain Bike O	<a href="mailto:info@mtbo.com.au">info@mtbo.com.au</a>	0418 871 193

### **Far North Qld**

Far North Orienteering Club  
(Cairns) [farnorth@oq.asn.au](mailto:farnorth@oq.asn.au)

### **Townsville**

Totally Tropical Orienteering Club  
[ttoc@bigpond.com](mailto:ttoc@bigpond.com)

0418 154 026

### **Bundaberg**

Bundaberg United Scrub Harriers  
[bush@oq.asn.au](mailto:bush@oq.asn.au)

4159 6524

### **Fraser Coast**

Fraser Region Orienteering Group  
[frog@oq.asn.au](mailto:frog@oq.asn.au)

4123 2730

### **Sunshine Coast**

Sunshine Orienteers

[info@sunshineorienteers.com.au](mailto:info@sunshineorienteers.com.au)

0439 979 261

### **Toowoomba**

Range Runners Orienteering Club  
[rroc@oq.asn.au](mailto:rroc@oq.asn.au)

4698 1538

### **Southern Downs**

Bullecourt Boulder Bounders Club  
[bbb@oq.asn.au](mailto:bbb@oq.asn.au)

4683 6374

### **Gold Coast**

Paradise Lost  
[paradiselost@oq.asn.au](mailto:paradiselost@oq.asn.au)

0404 509 924



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