

PARALLEL ERRORS

This is the confusion of one part of the map or terrain with another similar section. Usually it involves choosing the wrong gully or ridgeline as a handrail or attack point, at a spot where there are several possibilities, or where there is the potential for confusion. Whenever you cross a ridge or hill, or complex set of watercourses, and have to find a gully or ridge on the other side, there is the possibility of a mistake, and subsequent parallel error. Course setters delight in setting this type of problem, particularly on hard courses, and will be pleased to have tricked you, as it indicates their course has been challenging.

Preventing the error lies in spotting the difficult area in advance, and being careful! You need to look for distinctive landmarks to identify the correct handrail, perhaps go to the top of the hill to make further navigation easier, or use aiming off techniques, particularly when crossing a linear feature. Look for slight changes in the contours to identify your exact position along a ridgeline - a saddle, knoll, or change in the steepness or direction of the slopes for example. Along a watercourse, checking any changes in direction, or distinctive side gullies, may help.

Parallel errors often occur fairly close to the control. If you don't find the control immediately, or there are no other orienteers around, consider the possibility of a parallel error. Think back along your route prior to the attack point, and where you were last sure of your location, relocate and continue.