



Orienteering – finding the controls with a map

AT A GLANCE



Place

Outdoors in a manageable area of woodland or park with clear boundaries



Key idea

Reading and setting a map and finding controls in teams – while keeping the right path in view



Effort

Materials 15 min · Preparation 60 min



120 minutes



teams of 2–3



12–16 years



map 1:10,000 or 1:25,000



Materials

- ☐ copies of a map of the area with the controls marked (one per team)
- ☐ 8–12 controls with letter or number codes
- ☐ compasses and control cards
- ☐ one whistle per team
- ☐ watch and list of start times



Schedule

0–20'

Understanding the map – Explain the key, scale and contour lines. Set the map: turn it so that it matches the terrain.

20–30'

Safety – Show the boundaries of the area, set a return time, agree an emergency signal.

30–90'

The run – Teams start at intervals and look for the controls in any order. Note the codes on the control card.

90–105'

Review – Check the codes and trace the routes on the map: where did you go wrong, what helped?

105–120'

Devotion – Hebrews 12:1–2: “Let us run with perseverance ... fixing our eyes on Jesus.” Whoever keeps the goal in view finds the way.



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How it works – simply explained

- 1 Set the map – with the compass or using clear features such as paths and streams.
- 2 Find your position: where exactly are we on the map?
- 3 Plan the route: better a safe detour along paths than straight across unknown terrain.
- 4 As you go, let your thumb travel along the map with you (“thumbing”).
- 5 At the control, note the code and only then head for the next one.

 **Example:** “If you no longer know where you are: stop, set the map, look for clear features. Panic never helps – pausing does.”

Safety

- Mark the area with clear lines (roads, streams, edges of woods); roads are not crossed.
- Teams stay together; fixed return time; emergency signal: three whistle blasts.
- Every team has an emergency number; check for ticks after the run.

Variations

- Score orienteering: each control earns points – collect as many as possible in 45 minutes.
- Night orienteering with head torches for experienced groups.

Something to think about

Where are you heading in life – and what do you steer by?