

Park Orienteering – How to use a permanent orienteering course

The video is an introduction to orienteering, a sport that can be enjoyed in school grounds, parks and forests. The video was filmed in Hove Park and follows two children, Tom and Jess, who navigate an easy course around the southern half of the park. The children use a map to locate red and white orienteering markers which they find on items such as benches, signs and fence posts. The film is accompanied by a voice-over:

Orienteering is a sport for everyone. There are always courses for varying abilities of map reading and of different lengths to match your fitness. You can walk or jog and once you get used to the map you can start to build-up your running speed. This video is about how to use your local permanent orienteering course.

Before heading to the park you're going to need to grab a few things:

- A map of your local park is the most important item. This should be available to download online or perhaps to buy in the visitor centre or cafe.
- A compass is also useful if you have one, though not essential if you don't.
- An answer sheet for noting down which checkpoints you visited.
- A pencil or pen.
- And a watch if you want to time yourself racing a friend or to use it as fitness training.

Today we're in Hove Park in southern England.

Tom and Jess have printed a map of one of the available courses and they've come down with their mum. We're going to follow them round to see how it's done.

The aim is to travel from the Start point on the map (which is denoted by the purple triangle) to the checkpoints in order, choosing whichever route seems the best to get each one. The double circle symbol indicates the finish.

Here is a quick guide on how to use the compass:

1. Firstly, hold the map flat to the ground and lay the compass on top.
2. The aim is to orientate the map to north by getting the red compass needle to line up with the red arrows at the top of the map.
3. To do this, we rotate the two together.
4. The features around us should now correlate to where they are on the map.
5. Once this is done you're ready to go.

Tom and Jess plan their route and Tom checks his watch so that they can see how quickly they get round the course. And they're off!

The first checkpoint is relatively simple: from the triangle Start they run along the path. They know they're going the correct direction because they can see



the 'black line' of the tennis courts on their left meaning their map must be orientated correctly.

As they near control, let's take a closer look at part of the map that can make finding the control much easier. On the edge of the map there are 'Control Descriptions'. These describe where the checkpoint or 'control' will be located and what number it is. For number one, we are looking for control 31, which will be located at the end of a fence.

The children have found it. So now they need to record that they've been there. They note down the unique letter sequence on their answer sheet.

Now for the second control. This one is slightly trickier because there are a couple of options. An obvious route choice is to follow the path all the way there. This is a safer route and unlikely to go wrong. However a more direct route would be to go straight across the grass (which is marked as orange on the map). If they use this option, the children might have to navigate more carefully and could actually end up taking longer.

Jess doesn't feel confident yet so convinces Tom it would be a better idea to follow the path. They run along the path again, keeping the tennis courts on the left. The checkpoint is visible from the path so Tom and Jess run straight to it once they spot it. The control description for number two is 32 and it's on a tree.

Now for number three. This one's even trickier! The checkpoint is located on the map in an area coloured white. This means runnable woods - in other words the trees are spaced far apart.

There are two obvious routes:

1. The first is to go straight across the open, though again this could be risky.
2. The other route would be to go back down to the path and follow it round. The children could then count off two path junctions on their left and then 'attack' the control from the second junction.

Jess and Tom choose the path route – they're going to count path junctions. They count one path junction on their left, then two. This second junction can be referred to as an 'attack point'. They know exactly where they are now and they can head up to the trees to find the control.

In city parks you don't necessarily need a compass if you know which direction is north. The children continue their course, orientating the map to north at each control. Number four is on the gate of the play park. Jess and Tom resist the temptation to have a go on the swings. Number five is on a bench, which is marked on the map by a small black cross.

It's nearing the end of the course and the children are feeling more confident about their navigation skills. To get to number six they could follow the path, though running straight down the hill looks a lot shorter. Once the map is orientated they can follow the direction of the pink line as this will take them directly to the control.



Once number six has been found it's time to head to the finish. From here the children sprint to the end of the course where Mum's waiting for them with a well-earned drink. Nan's come down to find out more about the sport too.

As the courses become longer and more challenging there are lots more skills and techniques to master. Why not find out if there's orienteering at your local park - just *Google* 'orienteering' and who knows what you'll discover?

