

## Event Guideline E: Urban Events

### 1 General Information

**Levels:** This Guideline applies to Regional (Level 2) and Local (Level 3) Urban Races.

**Purpose:** To provide domestic competition for orienteers of all abilities. However, due to the nature of the terrain, it may not be possible to provide safe courses for the youngest competitors.

**Nature of Event:** Cross-country competition held in daylight. Runners compete as individuals on courses designated by number. Urban races are normally staged in town and city centres, utilising public open spaces, pedestrianised and trafficked streets and parks. The terrain is similar to that which might be used for Sprint races but the nature of the race is different in that courses will be longer than for a sprint, with many longer legs incorporating multiple route choices. The nature of the terrain usually limits the maximum technical difficulty to TD3 since control sites are rarely far from line features. However, the perceived technical difficulty is often higher than this because of the high decision making rate required to execute an Urban course satisfactorily. This means that fewer courses are required than at an equivalent forest based event as juniors can run the same courses as adults (if it is deemed safe).

**Age Class Competition:** It is expected that some of these events will also be used for age class competitions, for example Urban Leagues or other traditional events. The appropriate relationship between the numbered courses and age classes is included within the course table later in the Guideline.

**Officials:** See Rules 4.1 to 4.4 (roles), and Appendix C parts 1.2.1, 1.3.1 (recommended experience for organisers and planners), and 1.4.1 (level of controller).

**Responsibility:** The organising body shall take financial responsibility unless prior agreement has been reached with British Orienteering. [Rule 2.3.1]

### 2 Map and Terrain

**Quality of Terrain:** Any area of the 'built environment' may be suitable for urban orienteering. The best areas tend to be the older areas of towns and cities which have developed haphazardly over many years. Areas with a regular grid type pattern of streets are less suitable. Consideration should always be given to the issue of traffic. Both vehicular and pedestrian traffic can be a major issue and careful consideration (via the use of a risk assessment) needs to be undertaken before selecting an area for an urban race. Risks can usually be reduced by holding the event early on a Sunday morning.

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Map: Maps should be produced to the latest version of the International Specification for Sprint Orienteering Maps. The map scale should normally be 1:5,000 or 1:4,000. See also Appendix H of the BOF Rules.

### 3 Course Planning

Courses: The Planner should decide which courses are to be provided. The suggested range of courses indicated in the table below should be sufficient for most urban events. Courses 3 and 4 are often combined. Course 5 should only be provided if there is a suitable piece of traffic-free (or virtually traffic-free) terrain. It is most important that it is advertised in the pre-event publicity which courses are offered and which age classes are recommended to run which course.

Planning Philosophy: Urban racing doesn't fit exactly any of the IOF recognised formats, but is most closely associated with the Sprint discipline. Sprint distance orienteering tests the athlete's ability to read and translate the map in complex environments and to plan and carry out route choices whilst running at high speed. Urban racing should test athletes in the same way as much as possible but, with a lower control density, will also inevitably test running speed over longer distances. Longer legs should, wherever possible, include an element of route choice and require competitors to continuously navigate during the leg, so punishing anyone who 'switches off', even for a short while. Longer legs should ideally be interspersed with a series of shorter legs.

Technical Difficulty: The definitions of the levels of Technical Difficulty, as used in the following table, are explained in Appendix B. These were defined with forest based orienteering in mind and so do not easily equate to urban races. Courses 1 to 4 should be planned to be as technically difficult as possible, which will generally mean TD3.

Practical Planning considerations: The following issues need consideration over and above the usual issues relevant to forest based events:

- Controls may need to be manned to avoid vandalism.
- Alternatively controls may need to be securely fixed to permanent objects such as street furniture. If this is done using ties through the hole in SI boxes, care needs to be taken to ensure it is still possible to punch easily, even with the latest, thicker, SI cards.
- It may be necessary to use marshals at road crossings and at exits from narrow passageways.
- Take care to ensure that all gates, etc which are marked as open on the map are actually open on the day.

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- Courses must be planned to avoid tempting competitors to take short cuts through private property or other out of bounds areas.
- Where there are impassable walls/fences/hedges, competitors will invariably try to cross them. Provision of warning tapes and marshals should minimise this.
- Where a busy road has to be crossed it is preferable to plan a long leg crossing the road diagonally in order to give competitors more opportunities to cross safely.
- Consider the use of numbered bibs as a way of identifying competitors who are seen to cheat.
- Having the start and finish in the same arena makes for a good atmosphere.

| Course | Course Length Ratio | Minimum-Maximum Length (km) | Technical Difficulty | Men Classes                  | Women Classes                  |
|--------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1      | 1.00                | 6.0 - 10.0                  | 3/4                  | Men Open                     |                                |
| 2      | 0.83                | 5.0 - 8.0                   | 3/4                  | Veteran Men (M40+)<br>M16/18 | Women Open                     |
| 3      | 0.67                | 4.0 - 6.5                   | 3/4                  | Super Veteran Men (M55+)     | Veteran Women (W40+)<br>W16/18 |
| 4      | 0.50                | 3.0 - 5.0                   | 3/4                  | Ultra Veteran Men (M70+)     | Super Veteran Women (W55+)     |
| 5      | 0.45                | 2.5 - 4.5                   | 2/3                  | M14-                         | W14-                           |

Notes: a) The course lengths are given for guidance only. There is no obligation to stick to the recommendations, but the ratios do give an indication of what different age classes expect in relation to the Open Men. Large variations from the recommendations should be highlighted in the event advertising to help prospective competitors make a decision before entering.

b) Course lengths are given as straight line distances. Obviously, due to the nature of urban orienteering, the actual distances run by competitors will usually be considerably greater. If these variations

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differ significantly between courses, this should be taken into consideration when determining course lengths.

c) Course 5 should only be provided if it is possible to plan a course without crossing any major roads.

**Course on Map:** Courses should be marked on the map in accordance with Rules 5.2, 5.4 (master maps), and 6.2.4 (proximity of controls); and Appendix B parts 4.1.1-13 (symbols), 4.1.14 (map cases), 4.2 (map corrections), 4.4.1 (start position).

If pre-marked maps are not being used, competitors may be allowed to copy their courses from master maps either before or after the timed start (Rule 5.4.1).

**Control Descriptions:** See Rule 6.1.2/3 (course length and climb), 6.6.2 (issue to competitors) and Appendix A (layout of description sheet and symbols to be used).

Control Descriptions may be written or pictorial. They should be produced in accordance with Rule 6.6 and Appendix A. Course distance and climb should be calculated according to Rules 6.1.2 and 6.1.3.

Loose control description sheets should be available to competitors in the start lanes.

## 4 Further Information

**Other Information:** Appendices B (Course planning), E (Event safety), and G (Juries, protests and appeals).

**Further Advice:** If you cannot find the answer to a question within the published Rules, Appendices and Guidelines then please contact your Association's representative on Rules Group, or failing that the Chairman of Rules Group via the British Orienteering National Office.