

Event Guideline E: Urban Events

With the exception of the safety information this Guideline is only intended to provide advice to Organisers and Planners. No compulsion is intended, and it is accepted that the particular circumstances of an event may make it sensible not to take up all of the suggestions made.

1 General Information

Levels: This Guideline is intended to give advice to organisers of Urban Races registered at level B, C or D.

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, usually held in daylight although events may be held at night. 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). Competitors should be reminded of their responsibility towards their personal safety and the safety of others at the start of the course.

Course Lengths: Course lengths are normally given as straight line distances, but due to the nature of urban orienteering the actual distances run by competitors will usually be considerably greater. Guidance should be given on the entry information as to the approximate distance competitors will actually be expected to run.

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.

Safety: Urban orienteering presents a number of potential hazards not normally present at forest based events. The most significant of these is the presence of public roads and moving vehicles. These hazards must be carefully assessed as part of a comprehensive Risk Assessment early in the organising process. Where deemed necessary, busy roads may need controlled crossings with marshals and/or timed-out controls. **Particular attention needs to be given to courses planned for competitors under 16 years of age. In the eyes of the law, the Organiser is acting in loco**

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parents for children under the age of 16 and must be seen to take precautions over and above even what a careful parent would take for the safety of their children. In practice this will mean that courses for M/W16 and below will not be able to cross roads with significant traffic. Roads with traffic management that induce low speeds (15mph as on many campuses) are acceptable but busy public roads are not. It should be noted that disclaimers, signed by parents, are ineffective and would not absolve the Organiser of his/her responsibility in law. M/W16's should only be allowed to run up if they have passed their sixteenth birthday on the day of the race.

Night events: **When the event is to be held during the hours of darkness the risk assessment shall take account of additional hazards arising from this.** It is strongly recommended that competitors wear some form of high visibility clothing and that the Organiser reminds competitors of this in the event details.

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.

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 6 and 7 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.

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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 6 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. Where 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.
- 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.
- Controls on impassable features (walls, fences, etc) may tempt competitors to cross, lean over or reach through the impassable feature. Such control sites are best avoided but, if this is not possible, great care is needed with control (and punch) placement to avoid the possibility of competitors gaining an unfair advantage. (Rule 7.2.7 At events using maps produced to the ISSOM specification, impassable features (as defined in ISSOM) shall not be crossed by any part of a competitor's body. Hence it is NOT permitted to reach through or lean over such a feature to punch at a control site.)

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- 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.
- Where possible road crossings should be avoided towards the latter stages of a course when competitors are becoming fatigued.
- Consider the use of numbered bibs (possibly on front and back) as a way of identifying competitors who are seen to breach the rules
- Having the start and finish in the same arena makes for a good atmosphere.
- For safety reasons discussed earlier in this document, courses 6 and 7 must not cross public roads with any significant traffic. However, if possible, course 6 should be planned to give as much of a technical challenge as possible to older juniors.
- Control descriptions are often more important than at forest based events. Many control sites have a number of possible descriptions. The planner should try to use the most obvious description; the challenge of urban orienteering is to navigate (and chose routes) between controls rather than decipher complicated control descriptions.

	Course Length Ratio	Minimum-Maximum Length (km)	Technical Difficulty	Men Classes	Women Classes
1	1.00	6.0 - 10.0	3	Men Open (M18-35)	
2	0.83	5.0 - 8.0	3	Veteran Men (M40+)	Women Open (W18-35)
3	0.67	4.0 - 6.5	3	Super Veteran Men (M55+)	Veteran Women (W40+)
4	0.50	3.0 - 5.0	3	Ultra Veteran Men (M65+)	Super Veteran Women (W55+)
5	0.40	2.5 - 4.0	3		Ultra Veteran Women

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					(W65+)
6	0.50	3.0 - 5.0	3	Junior Men (M16-)	Junior Women (W16-)
7	0.35	2.0 - 3.5	2	Young Junior Men (M12-)	Young Junior Women (W12-)

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 differ significantly between courses, this should be taken into consideration when determining course lengths. Lines between controls on the map need only be bent where competitors must use a compulsory crossing point. Care needs to be taken when editing the course overprint to ensure control circles and lines are sufficiently broken such that no important detail is obscured.

c) Courses 6 and 7 should only be provided if it is possible to plan courses 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.

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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.