

GET YOUR COLLEGE ORIENTEERING

INFORMATION GUIDE

Designed for Colleges to be able to introduce engaging activities utilising nearby spaces.



Summer 2026

Produced by
British Orienteering

For more information, help or support,
please either visit our [website](#) or get in
touch with [Gracie Grant](#) at British
Orienteering.

Introducing Orienteering

What is Orienteering?

Orienteering is an exciting outdoor adventure sport that exercises the mind and body. The aim is to navigate between checkpoints marked on a map. There is no set route so the skill and fun come from trying to find the best way to go!

In competitive orienteering, the challenge is to complete the course in the quickest time.

How Does Orienteering Work and Where Can it Take Place?

At the start of the activity or event participants are provided a map, which details the local area and where the checkpoints (which we call controls) are placed. Participants are able to choose their own routes, at their own pace between the checkpoints.

Orienteering could take place around your college campus, through a town or city, using a local park or in a nearby wood. You can walk, jog or run the course and take it at your own pace.

Types of Orienteering Course

Linear course

A traditional form of orienteering, whereby participants find the controls in a specified order. There is no time limit, so participants can take as long as they need for this course.

Score course

Participants aim to reach as many checkpoints as possible within a set time limit. This is great for newcomers to the sport, as it reduces the pressure on finding the controls in the correct order.

Why Introduce Orienteering at your College?

- ☑ Appeals to a wide audience as it isn't just running
- ☑ Easy to adapt in different locations, whether that be on campus or somewhere nearby
- ☑ It's social and inclusive
- ☑ Low-cost to trial, as you can run tasters without lots of equipment
- ☑ Complements existing clubs (athletics and running societies, hiking, mountaineering)



This is what an orienteering checkpoint looks like- although these activities use more accessible items to mark checkpoints.



How To Get Started

This guide provides low-equipment activity ideas that College institutions, staff or students can look to adopt across their campus or in locations nearby, to introduce students to orienteering.

Please note: if you are leaving checkpoints in a location externally to your college, you will need to ask permission from the local council/land manager.

For each type of activity, we take you through exactly what you need to get started, how to find your map, how to plan your course and what the activity would look like for students on the day.

Whether you're looking to offer a one-off taster session, a welcome week activity, or a series of social events, these activities provide an accessible introduction to navigation and exploration.

The activities include focus on participation, confidence building, and enjoyment, making them suitable for complete beginners with little or no previous experience of orienteering.

The activities in this guide aim to:

- Help participants develop confidence in the local area.
- Introduce students to map reading and navigation skills.
- Provide fun and accessible ways to experience orienteering.
- Remove common barriers to participation by using simple equipment/formats.
- Support colleges, student groups, and staff to deliver activities with minimal planning and cost.

As your College will not be affiliated to British Orienteering as a club, activity will not be covered under our insurance. Please ensure you have your own insurance cover in place through your institution.

What's included?

This pack contains low-equipment activities that can be delivered on campus or in local parks and green spaces.

For each activity, you'll find:

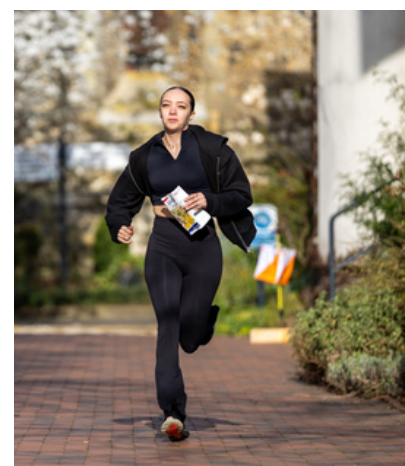
- A description of the activity and its objectives.
- Information about the equipment required.
- Guidance on how to set up the activity.
- Instructions for running the session.
- Tips for creating an enjoyable experience for participants.

You'll also find downloadable templates that can be printed and used straight away, helping to reduce preparation time and make delivery as simple as possible.

Thank you for taking the time to view our college activities, if you have any questions or would like any support with your delivery, please get in touch at

ggrant@britishorienteering.org.uk

If you try an activity with students, please let us know how it goes and tag us on [instagram!](#)



An orienteering course is an activity where participants use a map to find a series of checkpoints placed around an area.

1.

As the organiser, your role would be to:

- Choose a safe area (such as your college campus)
- Create a simple map showing checkpoint locations & checkpoint tags
- Place markers (the checkpoints) for participants to find
- Set the task (for example, visit as many checkpoints as possible in a timeframe)

What are the aims of this activity?

The aim of this Orienteering activity is for students to navigate between a series of checkpoints. We would suggest running this activity as what we call a 'score' course. For this type of course, organisers set a time limit, of which participants can be out navigating between the checkpoints in any order.

Participants will use the map to find the checkpoints, which will have a unique code for them to make note of on a score sheet, to prove they found the checkpoint. Time limits could be between 30 - 60 minutes, depending on your course distance/campus size. Students don't all need to start at once.

Each checkpoint site holds a score value, you can either label all checkpoints to be worth the same value (for example, 10 points), or of varying value (for example, the closer checkpoints could be worth 10 points, while the further checkpoints could be worth 20 points).

What Equipment will you need?

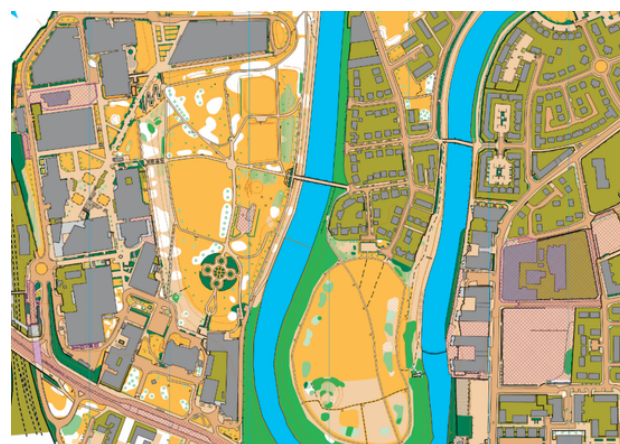
- Printed map of the area with checkpoints
- Checkpoints score sheet for checking that participants have been to the locations
- Streamers/tags to mark checkpoints and to hold the code
- Pens/pencils
- A timer (watch or phone)



Example activity:

A college runs a campus activity with 12 checkpoints placed near lecture buildings, green spaces, and key landmarks. Participants are given 30 minutes to find as many as possible.

Or you could have 24 checkpoints to be found in 45 minutes, with a total course distance to be roughly 5km.



How could you market this activity?

- Campus Dash
- Explore & Score
- Checkpoint Challenge
- Mission: Checkpoint
- Campus-O

This is an orienteering specific map, please see an explanation of what each feature means [here](#) or [here](#).

Step-by-Step: How to set up an Orienteering Score Activity Course

Step One: Identifying the area you would like to use

- We would suggest that for your first activity, you use your campus or an area close to your college buildings. Remember to check necessary permissions for access, particularly if running an activity off campus.
- Areas could include: College campus, local residential area, local park

Step Two: Find the map online of this chosen area

- There are a few ways you could get a hold of a map for this orienteering activity:
 - **An Existing Orienteering Map**- Your campus may have been mapped by a local orienteering club, we would suggest running a google search of 'Orienteering map "your college"'. If it appears your college has been mapped, you could reach out to the local club and we are sure they would be happy to share this with you
 - [OpenOrienteeringMap](#)- This is a simple online tool, where you can search your postcode and find a simple version of your area - for Uni Campuses, use the PseudO map format for intricacy
 - **A Google Maps Screengrab** (although we would suggest using OpenOrienteeringMap over this)
 - If you need any help with finding a suitable map, please get in touch at ggrant@britishorienteering.org.uk

[Additional guidance on the course planning platforms here](#)

Step Three: Plotting your course

- There are a couple of different platforms you could choose to plot your course with:
 - [OpenOrienteeringMap](#)
 - If you are taking your map from OpenOrienteeringMap, it may be easiest to also plan your course using this platform. It can be done in your browser, and doesn't require the download of an app.
 - Please see a short video [here](#), explaining how to plan your course in OpenOrienteeringMap
 - [PurplePen](#)
 - A free, downloadable to Windows, platform which allows you to plot orienteering courses.
 - Best used if you are using a google maps screengrab or an orienteering specific map.
 - Please see a short video [here](#), explaining how to plan your course using PurplePen. There are lots of written tutorials if you search 'planning an orienteering course on purplepen'.

Top Tips for Planning a Course:

- Place checkpoints on obvious features where you can securely attach a checkpoint tag, such as trees, fences, benches, statues, signposts, railings.
- Make checkpoints easy to find, rather than using difficult hiding places.
- Make sure checkpoint tags can be seen once participants reach the feature.
- Spread checkpoints around the area to encourage participants to explore and choose their route.
- Think about safety. Avoid placing checkpoints near busy roads, construction areas, steep slopes, dense vegetation or anywhere participants may be tempted to take unnecessary risks.
- Remember that checkpoint numbers don't need to follow a logical route. Participants can visit checkpoints in any order, so don't worry if Control 1 is next to Control 10.
- Test your course before the event. Walk around and visit each checkpoint location to ensure it is accessible, easy to identify and accurately marked on the map.
- Keep it fun! The aim is to encourage people to explore and enjoy the challenge, especially if they are new to orienteering.

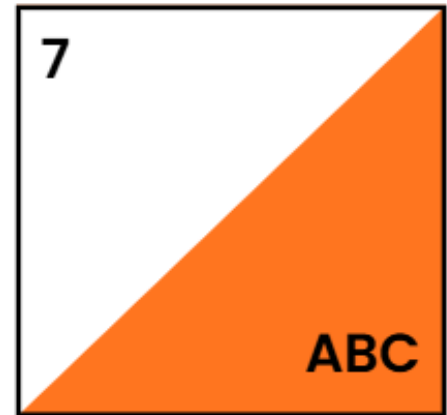
View example 'score' courses that local orienteering clubs have planned across college campuses here:

- [Score Course - Example 1](#)
- [Score Course - Example 2](#)

Step-by-Step: How to set up an Orienteering Score Activity Course

Step Four: Preparing your other resources

- You will need to prepare your 'checkpoint' tags- usually orange and white kites are used, but for this activity, we suggest using an orange tag.
- When you have your tag, you will need to add a code to each, along with the checkpoint number. Participants will then write down the code on a score sheet (see below) as they make their way around the course
- You can either add the numbers and code before printing, or after printing with a marker
 - There is a template you can print, [here](#)
 - If you laminate your tags, and its not raining, you can write control numbers and codes on them with whiteboard pens, allowing them to be wiped clean and reused.
- Participants will need a score sheet, to write down the code they find at each checkpoint - this is one of the best ways to track that a participant has made it to a checkpoint without electronic tracking!
 - The Score Sheet only needs to be simple and could look like this- [Orienteering Course Score Sheet](#)



Example Tag- Checkpoint number (7), with a code for participants to use (ABC)

Step Five: Printing your maps, score sheets and checkpoint tags

- Once you are happy with your course from the step above, you will need to print your maps. If you can, you may want to print your Score Sheet onto the back of the map.
 - Printing these on A4 or A3 paper will be fine.
- You will also need to print your tags, and if you haven't already added them, add the Checkpoint numbers and Codes.
 - Once printed you may wish to holepunch these, so you can tie your items out on the course

Step Six: Setting up on the day

- Before your activity begins, you will need to go around your course using the map to set out your checkpoint tags. As you will have planned to attach these to items or trees across campus, hopefully putting these out shouldn't be too difficult.

What to tell students on the day

- Remind participants that there is a set time limit for the course- this is how long they have to visit the checkpoints. If they haven't reached them all in the time limit, they should return to the start/finish. You can set a longer time limit to ensure a good opportunity for all students to reach all checkpoints.
- It would be advised to provide a safety briefing to cover risks such as tripping, and colliding with objects or another person when looking at the map. Runners should always cede to other pedestrians and all traffic. Participants should use designated crossing points on roads.
- Depending on the type of map you have used, it may be useful to include a printout of key map descriptions, so students can understand what each colour means.

How it works for students taking part

- Students turn up at anytime during the period of which the course is open. Students do not all need to start at the same time.
- At the start, participants receive their map and score sheet and prepare to begin the course - you may like to allow students to have a look at the map before they start to get their bearings.
- Ask participants to write their start time at the top of their Score Sheet.
- As they make their way around the course, at each checkpoint participants record the code on their score sheet.
- Once participants have completed the course or are ready to return within the time limit, participants head to the finish, where their return time is recorded on their sheet.

Scoring

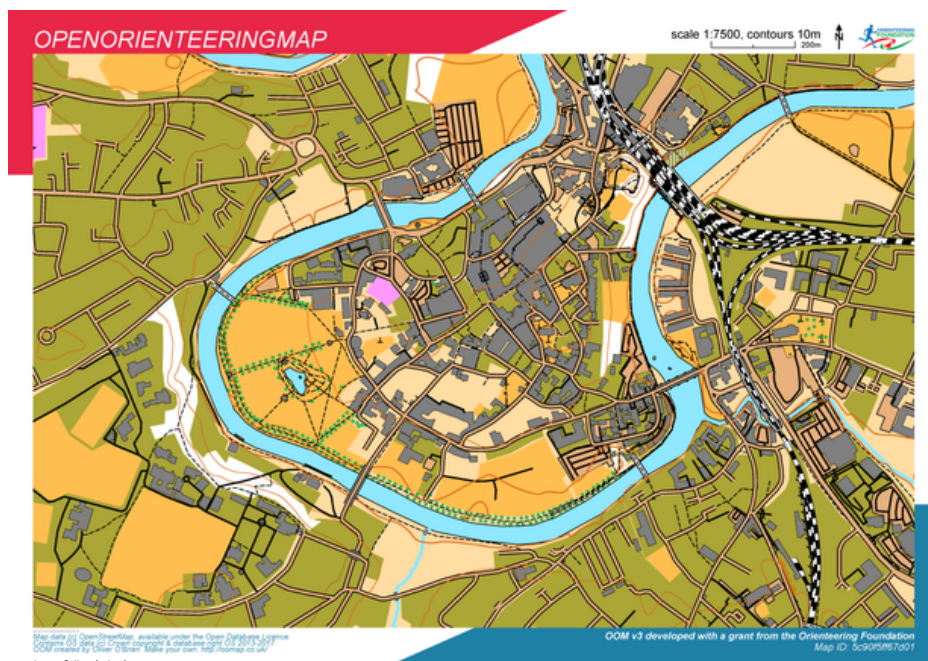
- Points are awarded per control visited. You can also apply score penalties for any late returns if you would like to. This could be minus 10 points for every minute late back.
- If running the event competitively, students are scored based on the number of points they picked up from checkpoints visited. The more checkpoints visited, the higher their score will be.
- If you have a tie, you could go by the shortest time taken, if they completed the course in full.

Things to consider

- Choose a safe, contained area
- Avoid roads or risky locations
- Make checkpoints easy to find for beginners
- Brief participants clearly before starting

What participants will experience

- Navigating using a map
- Making decisions about routes
- Exploring the area
- A mix of physical and mental challenge



This is what an OpenOrienteeringMap extract may look like

A Street-Orienteeing (otherwise referred to as 'Street-O') Score course is a low-equipment orienteeing activity where participants navigate around campus or an urban area, locating features listed on a clue sheet. Instead of fixed controls, participants identify and record street items to track where they have been. For example, noting down the number on the lamppost or telegraph pole where the checkpoint is, or the date on a particular plaque.

As the organiser, your role would be to:

- Choose a safe area such as your college campus, or local area
- Create a simple map showing checkpoint locations, along with a clue sheet
- Set the task (visit as many checkpoints as possible in the given time limit)

What are the aims of this activity?

The aim of this Orienteering activity is for students to find as many checkpoints as possible within the time limit. For this type of course, organisers set a time limit, of which participants can be out navigating between the checkpoints in any order.

Participants will have a map to find the checkpoints, and clue sheet to write their answers to prove they have visited a location. Time limits could be between 30 - 60 minutes, depending on your course distance/campus size. Students don't all need to start at once.

Each checkpoint site holds a score value, you can either label all checkpoints to be worth the same value (for example, 10 points), or of varying value (for example, the closer checkpoints could be worth 10 points, while the further checkpoints could be worth 20 points).

What Equipment will you need?

- Printed map of the area with the checkpoints
- Checkpoints clue sheet, to describe the items and the clue, and for checking participant answers
- Pens/pencils
- A time / clock (on a watch or phone)

Example session:

A college runs a campus activity with 15 street items on a clue sheet. Each item is located on the map, and participants navigate their way around the course, noting down the answers to the clues. You may like to give 30 minutes for this activity, depending on the distance participants may expect to cover.

Top Tips for Planning a Course:

- Use items for checkpoints on obvious features with a clear answer to a clue, such as a postbox, lamppost or building sign or plaque!
- Make checkpoints easy to find, rather than using hidden street furniture.
- Spread checkpoints around the area to encourage participants to explore and choose their route.
- Think about safety. Avoid using checkpoints near busy roads, construction areas, steep slopes, dense vegetation or anywhere participants may be tempted to take unnecessary risks.
- Remember that checkpoint numbers don't need to follow a logical route. Participants can visit the checkpoints in any order, so don't worry if Control 1 is next to Control 10.
- Test your course before the event. Walk around and visit each checkpoint location to ensure it is accessible, easy to identify the clue answer and accurately marked on the map.
- Keep it fun! The aim is to encourage people to explore and enjoy the challenge, especially if they are new to orienteeing.

View example 'street-o' courses

- [Score Course - Example 1](#)
- [Score Course - Example 2](#)

Step-by-Step: How to set up an Orienteering Score Activity Course

Step One: Identifying the area you would like to use

- We would suggest that for your first activity, you use your campus or an area close to your college buildings.
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Step Two: Find the map online of this chosen area

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- There are a couple of different platforms you could choose to plot your course with:
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 - Please see a short video [here](#), explaining how to plan your course in OpenOrienteeringMap
 - **PurplePen**
 - A free, downloadable to Windows, platform which allows you to plot orienteering courses.
 - Best used if you are using a google maps screengrab or an orienteering specific map.
 - Please see a short video [here](#), explaining how to plan your course using PurplePen. There are lots of written tutorials if you search 'planning an orienteering course on purplepen'.
- You could use Google Maps street view initially, to help locate street items in locations that you would like to place a checkpoint. You will likely need to do a walk of your course following this, to create your clues and collect your answers. (See ideas for street furniture to use below!)

Step Four: Preparing your clues

- To complete your course set-up you need to prepare your clue sheet for each checkpoint. We suggest you include items such as:
 - Postbox (record postbox number or collection time)
 - Lamp post (record number on post)
 - Fire hydrant (number)
 - Building sign
 - Bus stop code or name



Step-by-Step: How to set up an Orienteering Score Activity Course

Step Four: Preparing your clues

- Each clue must:
 - Be observable
 - Have a unique answer
 - Have an assigned number of points:
 - Either all points = same value (10 points for example)
 - Easy/central items = 10 points and Further/difficult items = 20–30 points (if checkpoints are worth differing amounts, the score for each should be noted on the map or clue sheet).
- The Clue Sheet only needs to be simple and could look like this- [Orienteering Course Clue Sheet](#)
 - Depending on how many Checkpoints your course includes you may need a double sided clue sheet.

Checkpoint
number

1	20
Postbox last collection time	

Score Value

Clue

Space for
answer

Step Five: Printing your maps and clue sheets

- Once you are happy with your course from the step above, you will need to print your maps. If you can, you may want to print your Clue Sheet onto the back of the map.
 - You can print these on A4 or A3 paper, depending on how big you would like it to be.

Step Six: Setting up on the day

- As this course uses street items, that are already in place, you don't need to worry about setting up your course on the day, just be ready at the start with all the information for students!

What to tell students on the day

- Remind participants that there is a set time limit for the course- this is how long they have to visit the checkpoints. If they haven't reached them all in the time limit, they should return to the start/finish. You can set a longer time limit to ensure a good opportunity for all students to reach all checkpoints.
- It would be advised to provide a safety briefing to cover risks such as tripping, and colliding with objects or another person when looking at the map. Runners should always cede to other pedestrians and all traffic. Participants should use designated crossing points on roads.

How it works for students taking part

- At the start, participants receive their map and clue sheet and prepare to begin the course - you may like to allow students to have a look at the map before they start to get their bearings. Ask participants to write their start time at the top of their Clue Sheet.
- As they make their way around the course in their chosen order, at each checkpoint participants record the answer to the clue.
- Once participants have completed the course or are ready to return within the time limit, participants head to the finish, where their return time is recorded.

Scoring

- Points are awarded per control visited. You can also apply score penalties for any late returns if you would like to. This could be minus 10 points for every minute late back.
- If running the event competitively, students are scored based on the number of points they picked up from checkpoints visited. The more checkpoints visited, the higher their score will be.
- If you have a tie, you could go by the shortest time taken, if many completed the course in full.

British Orienteering have a range of virtual and permanent orienteering courses available on demand and at any time of day.

You can find virtual and permanent orienteering opportunities near to your college, [here](#). These courses tend to be really easy to find and have a go at. Maps are available to download either for free or for a one-time small charge (£1 or £2). You can then print maps off for students ahead of participating.

Permanent Orienteering Courses

A [Permanent Orienteering Course](#) is a set of plaques often on posts or other features in an area which represent a series of checkpoints to visit. These are pre-made orienteering courses varying in length and difficulty ready for you to try in these locations.

These courses are often maintained by British Orienteering's extensive Club network.

On the back of every map, or provided separately, you will find suggested courses, with lists of checkpoints to go to, in what order, how far and how difficult each course would be. Participants can either:

- See how long it takes to visit every control
- See how many controls they can visit in a chosen time.

If there is a course near your college, this could be great way to introduce a new sport to students, while not taking too much time to prepare for staff.

Virtual Orienteering Courses

A [Virtual \(GPS\) Orienteering Course \(VOC\)](#) is a set of checkpoints spread around an area created for you to complete and capture with your smartphone or GPS watch. Together with a map showing where they all are, and using a free app such as Maprun, your device will instantly become a map and a timer all in one.

MapRun a virtual orienteering tool, where there are a set of checkpoints spread around an area to navigate between. Users capture their movement with a smartphone or GPS watch using a map.

MapRun is free to download, and there are usually lots of courses already available to be completed. [Download](#) the app, and have a look for courses nearby.



Easy instruction video for participants on how MapRun works:

Orienteering Ireland have put together a great video, explaining how MapRun works, and to get set-up. View the video, [here!](#) This could be great to share with members new to MapRun before they start a course.

Please note:

MapRun is not a British Orienteering owned app, and any fees for full, published events are due to FNE Enterprises.

Virtual & Permanent Orienteering

CheckSites – creating Your Own Courses on MapRun

You are able to create your own virtual courses on MapRun for use by students at an activity, without needing to be an admin or seek assistance from a club.

Checksites can be used for private activities such as college tasters, but cannot be used for competitive or paid for events.

Once you upload your course to MapRun, you will receive a 6-digit code, which participants can then use to access the course for your activity on the MapRun app.

See further information and where to upload your course, [here](#).

Some useful steps to creating a CheckSites course, [here](#).



The Map

With MapRun, you can either use existing orienteering maps, or you can take the file from [OpenOrienteeringMap](#).

- OpenOrienteeringMap is a simple online tool, where you can search your postcode and find a simple version of your area - for Uni Campuses, use the PseudO map format for intricacy.

Planning Your Course

Take a look at the instructions and tips for planning an orienteering course in the two activities above. A scale of 1:4000 is usually used for college campuses. If using a larger area, increase the scale size, as this will allow participants to cover a greater distance. For smaller campuses, you may find a linear course increases the distance for participants to cover. Once you have your map area, save this as a KMZ file, this is then ready to upload to MapRun CheckSites.

Next, you need to plan your course (see instructions and advice from previous activities). Once this is complete, download this as a KML file. On OpenOrienteeringMap, this is very easy in the top right hand corner. Remember to print copies of your map for participants to use on the day!

You will then need to rename your KML file, depending on what type of course you would like:

- A **Score Course (where every checkpoint is worth 20 points)**- 'event name' PXAS ScoreVxx (where xx is time in minutes) - for every minute late back a participant is, they lose 10 points.
 - For example - London College Taster PXAS ScoreV60
- **Score Course (where checkpoints 1-10 = 10 points, 11-20 = 20 points & so on..)**- 'event name' PXAS ScoreNxx (where xx is time in minutes) - for every minute late back a participant is, they lose 10 points.
 - For example - London College Taster PXAS ScoreN60
- **Linear Course (controls are visited in a pre-defined order, with winner having the fastest time)**- 'event name' PXAC
 - For example - London College Taster PXAC

Uploading Your Course

You are then ready to [Upload your course to MapRun](#). Firstly, add all the details (such as Event name, your details, and upload the two files)

- Expiry date- set this for after your event, after this date, you can no longer access the course.
- We would suggest turning off Display location, otherwise participants could use their gps on the MapRun app to track where they are!

Once you 'Add the Event', wait for your 6-digit code to appear, and you are ready to go!

Share this code with participants, for them to load the course in the 'CheckSites' section of the Maprun app (menu button top right of the app → checksite).

Once they clock the start point, their course will begin!