

Are you interested in orienteering, but don't know enough about the sport or do you just need a bit of inspiration?

We hope this set of Frequently Asked Questions which will help you find out more about orienteering and encourage you and your friends and family to take part in a local orienteering activity or event.

What is orienteering?

Orienteering is an exciting adventure sport suitable for all ages and fitness levels. Participants have to navigate their way between a series of checkpoints (called controls) shown on the map. There's no set route, you find your own way using the map.

What sort of areas are used for orienteering?

Anywhere from the streets of Central London to wilderness areas in the Scottish Highlands. Venues including forests, parks, moorland, town centres, and university campuses.

Will there be an orienteering course for me?

Almost certainly. Most events have several courses of different length and difficulty graded by colour. 'White', 'Yellow' and 'Orange' courses are designed for complete beginners. Some events use the equally beginner friendly 'score' format, where you choose the controls to visit in the time limit.

What do I do at an event?

Orienteering clubs pride themselves on their welcoming approach to newcomers, so will happily spend time helping you. Here is a rough idea of what you'll do:

- Find the event registration area and look for the large club banners and signs, choose a course and fill out a registration form.
- Hand in the form and event fee. You will be given a map, control description sheet. You may also need to hire an electronic timing stick (called a dibber).
- Start. Controls are marked with an orange-and-white flag.
- At the finish your time is recorded. For events with electronic timing, you get a 'splits' printout of your times between controls.
- The host club will be happy to debrief you: discussing your route choices, help you with mistakes you may have made on course, queries about the map, etc.

What equipment do I need?

If you intend to run you'll need running clothes and trainers, including long running trousers if the event is in the countryside. If you intend to walk, walking boots or trainers are OK. A compass is very useful particularly for the more difficult courses (you can use a smartphone compass).

Don't you get lost all the time?

No. Everyone gets lost sometimes, but you work out where you are sooner or later. Orienteering controls are closely spaced, so you can always retrace your steps to the previous control. After a few events you'll spend less time making mistakes and can progress to more challenging courses.

Do you have to be able to run for hours?

No. Courses come in a variety of lengths and navigational difficulty. Participants can walk, jog or run, can treat the event as a competition or as a leisure activity.

Can I run in a pair or in a group?

Yes.

Do I need to be a club member?

No. Newcomers normally join a club after about 3 events.

Can children do orienteering?

Yes. Younger children often start the sport in family groups or are shadowed by a parent/guardian.

Can I practice orienteering without going to an event?

Yes. There are many permanent orienteering courses around the country where you can practice. Alternatively many clubs run regular coaching sessions, often at mid-week 'club nights', or on weekends.

Is orienteering affordable?

Yes. Adult fees are typically £5 for a small event, to £10-£15 for a medium/large event. Low cost doesn't mean low quality though. Club orienteering events are typically very well organised with plenty of experienced volunteers.

Sounds great! Where can I find out more?

If you know what event you are going to, you can contact the event organiser. UK events are listed [here](#). Otherwise you can contact your local club. UK orienteering clubs are listed [here](#).

Permanent Orienteering Courses are a great way to get outside and go orienteering at a time and place that suits you. Permanent Orienteering courses are listed [here](#).

Xplorer is also suitable for young families looking to get into orienteering. Xplorer activities are listed [here](#).

If you have any additional questions which have not been covered please do not hesitate to contact British Orienteering and we will be happy to help.

Email: info@britishorienteering.org.uk or Tel: 01629 583037.