

Running a Maze Orienteering Challenge

What is a Maze Orienteering Challenge?

A Maze Challenge is a simple yet effective way to get people running around and having fun, developing basic map skills and getting a taste of orienteering. It can be organized in a small space with a minimum of resources and people of all ages and abilities can have a go. Participants are given a map of a maze that you have constructed with some kind of barrier and have to navigate around a specified course as quickly as possible.



What do I need to run a Maze Orienteering Challenge?

- Area: anything from 10mx10m to 30mx30m for a real challenge! A rectangle of flat tarmac or grass is ideal but other shapes, obstacles and slopes can be incorporated into your maze design if necessary.
- Barriers: The maze can be built from crowd barriers, stakes and tape/rope or more creative solutions depending on items that you have to hand.
- Electronics: Using electronic timing is a big hit with participants if you can arrange to borrow a set from a local club or Participation Manager.
- Administration: A shelter eg tent is useful to cater for registration and results.
- Courses: you will need a map of your maze to make up your course. Ideally you will plan 3-4 different courses to cope with different abilities but also to give the opportunity to have another go. Use a red triangle to show the start, a double circle to show the end and red circles to mark the controls, linked by straight red lines. See the examples below for ideas.



- Competitive element: this could be run as a competition with prizes for a fastest time, a leader board or possibly a challenge time – aim to beat a set time or local celebrity's attempt.
- Manpower: for a large event, allow approx. 5 man hours' setup plus around 4 volunteers to run the event

Where can I find more information?

- Refer to the examples below
- Get in touch with your local orienteering club for advice. They can be found through our web site, www.britishorienteering.org.uk

Microgrid only course

	A1	0.1 km
1	109	
2	108	
3	101	
4	109	
5	102	
6	107	
7	109	
8	104	
9	103	
10	109	

Maprunner
Micro Maze-O

Grid plus map course

	C1	0.3 km
1	100	
2	100	
3	100	
4	100	
5	100	
6	100	
7	100	
8	100	
9	100	
10	100	
11	100	
12	100	
13	100	
14	100	
15	100	
16	100	
17	100	
18	100	
19	100	
20	100	
21	100	
22	100	
23	100	

Maprunner
Maze-O

MAZE ORIENTEERING FOR BEGINNERS

As part of her work as an RDO, Helen Errington has been looking at alternative ideas for park and city events that would appeal to both orienteers and non-orienteers and could also be used to enhance otherwise dull areas such as school playing fields. One suggestion was to look at what has been done with mazes and to see how easy they were to create and what people thought of them. Below, Helen explains what she has developed so far.



The first chance to try things was at a Happy Herts (HH) evening event in St Albans. After a bit of boking around at what other people had done I settled on a 12 by 10 grid with ten controls and two metre spacing. Other people have used metal or plastic crowd barriers but these were in short supply and very non-portable so we settled for electric fence posts and barrier tape.



Putting out the maze took around an hour for one person, with a bit of help from a few others for the last 10 minutes to fill in the bwer layer of tape. This was probably unnecessary, since the top layer is easily sufficient. I planned three separate activities. The first consisted of three simple courses with six or seven controls. We started three people at a time, one on each course. The next activity was a head-to-head race over a common course including a butterfly of three loops run in a different order by each runner. To finish off we had some longer courses that included "real" orienteering as well as the maze. There were three loops outside of the maze and three loops inside, so by the end everybody had run all six parts and a total of around one kilometre.



We got 15 HH members on the night, plus three teenagers who were passing by and asked to have a go. The main problem was that we hadn't printed enough maps so people had to wait to have another go! The maze will easily take six people at the same time: the odd near-collision adds to the fun as people try to save precious seconds. One key rule is that people must visit the control properly and not lean over the barriers to punch. Fair play was enforced by someone standing in or by the maze. Tactics ranged from slow steady map-reading to run-and-hope, but overall it proved very popular. The beginners picked up the idea very quickly and were keen to rerun courses to try to beat their previous times.

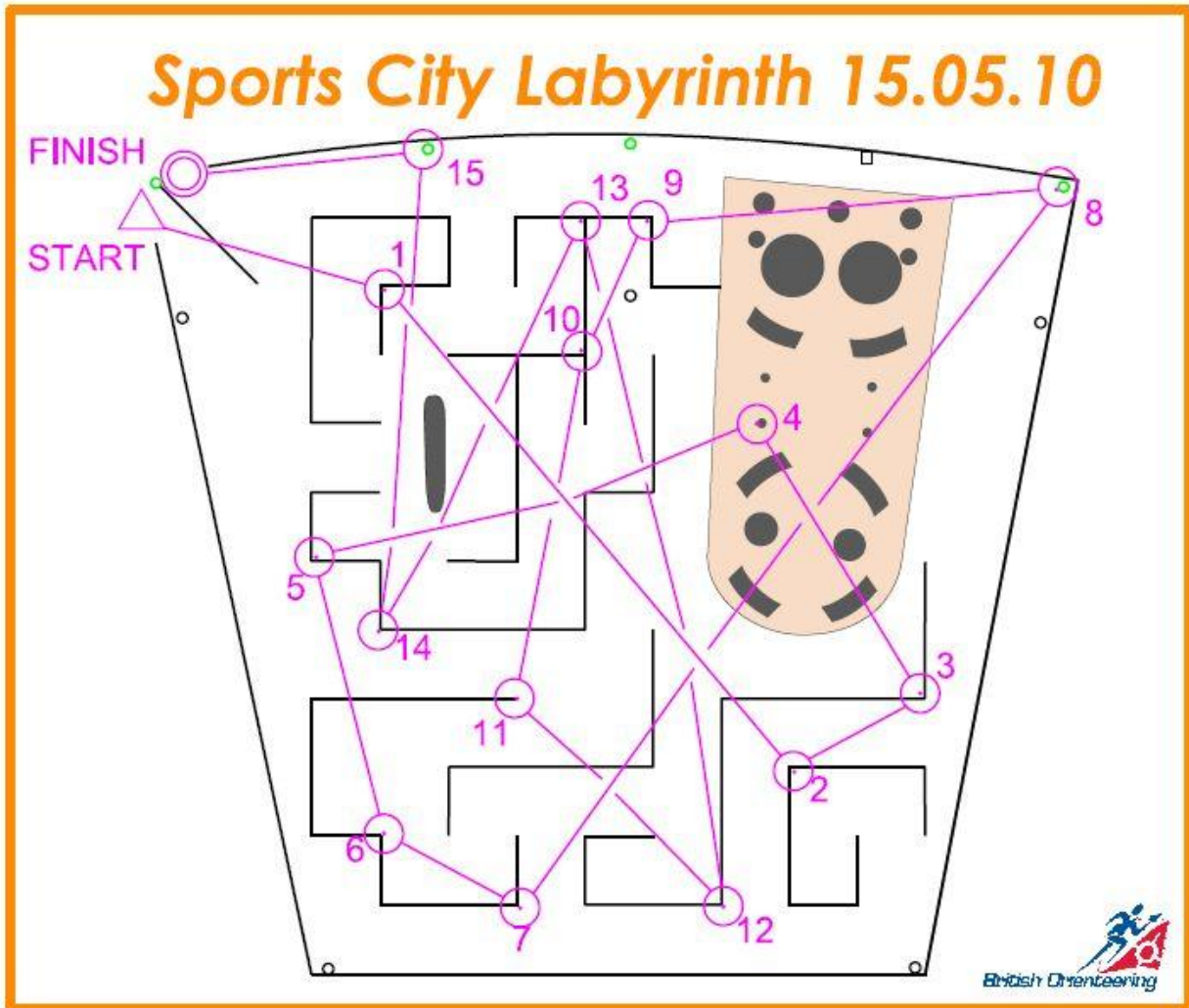
The final trial was part of the Special Schools Sports Festival. We used the micro maze, but without the map. Competitors, including some in wheelchairs, were simply told to visit all the controls in the maze.

All three trials proved very popular with competitors. It was clear that the competitive nature of orienteers came out once they got used to the idea, and there is scope for some proper races: you can build the same maze all over the country and people could compare times with the elite. It is certainly something that could be done as a club night, but it seems to have potential as well for schools events and other introductory events. It is also something which would work extremely well instead of (or as well as) a string course. We are currently looking at putting together a maze kit (stakes, rope, and maps) and the Hertford and Ware School Sports Partnership have already said they want one.

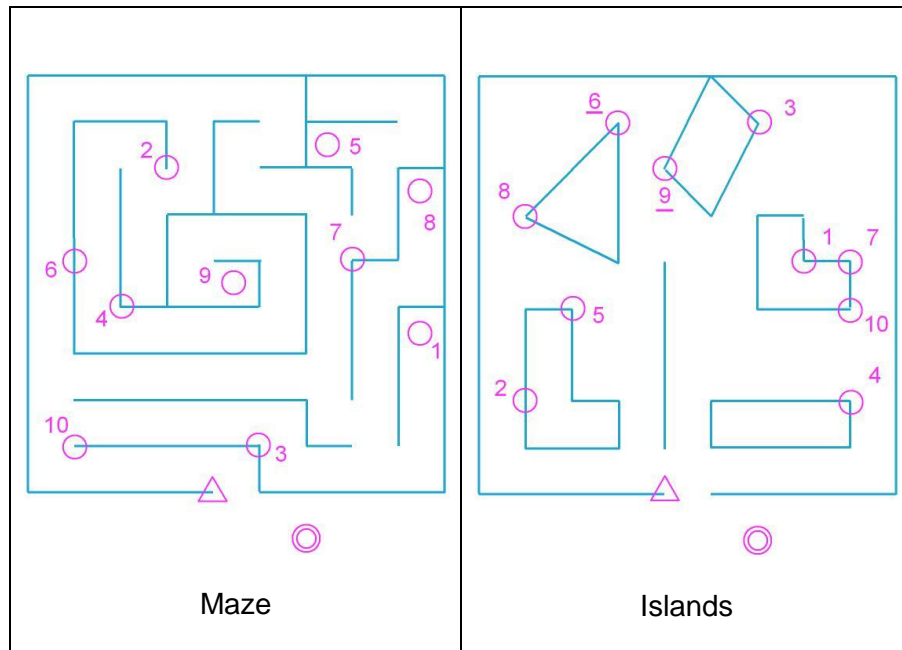
We made some minor adjustments for the second trial. The main ones were to use rope instead of tape, and to reduce the size to a 10 by 7 "mini maze". We pre-cut the rope to the required lengths for each section and tied bops on each end to hang on the stakes. This was used to put on two evenings for a local cub pack. Even with the reduced size this still proved quite complicated, and so for the second cub event we reduced the maze again to a 6 by 6 "micro maze". We also discovered that pre-cut lengths of rope of over 4m can get extremely tangled up, so we standardised on 2m and 4m sections. Longer lengths are then simply made up from the shorter sections.

For further information please email
helenerrington@britishorienteering.org.uk

With thanks to Steve McLean - a maze used at Sport City in Manchester:



With thanks to North Wiltshire Orienteers: examples from their aMAZEing Orienteering project, supported by Sport England:



N.W.O. used plastic stakes and flexible mesh to construct their maze which attracted a large number of participants of all ages in their local park.

