

It was pleasing to see many of our Newcastle juniors representing in the NSW Schools team at the upcoming Australian Schools Championships. Many more of our club members will be competing in the NSW and Australian Championships in both foot orienteering and mountain bike orienteering. If the recent Hunter Valley Championships is any guide, then the racing will be very close, with any small mistakes costing places on the leaderboard. When training, we must not only train for running fitness, but also for our orienteering technique. I wish all of our members good luck in the upcoming events.

So it is timely to provide some suggestions for improving the consistency of your navigation.

In Orienteering, we repeatedly have to find control flags. We must get into a routine, then even when we get tired we should continue to follow the same process, and not make mistakes because of bad technique.

1, Preparation, everything you do before you start:

Ready yourself. Have a drink, warm up and stretch, attach your control card and compass. Visit the finish shute and look for the last control which may be visible. Note the forest type and conditions.

On the way to the start, think of running through the forest, compassing, concentrating, pacing and control procedure and trying to ignore any distractions.

2. The Start

When the beep sounds on the start clock you turn your map over and you are away. Always be careful at first. Some of us tend to rush off away from the other assembled starters. Most errors are made here. The key to a good run is to navigate successfully to the first control. That gets you off to a good start, with a confident attitude.

3. Consistent Technique.

The nature of orienteering as a sport is a combination of physical fitness and mental alertness. Your mental alertness is helped by having everything in the right place at the right time and following a procedure learned beforehand. (Attack Point, Route Choice, Distance, Detail-- What was that routine again?)

One area that needs to be treated carefully is **Reading the control description**. We should read this before we get to the circle. On harder courses, we will not see the control stand as we approach, so we must think of it as navigating to the feature and then see the control stand. Check the code number, punch and begin the next leg. Sounds simple but many of us (myself included) get lazy and simply check the code number, not placing enough importance on the description, and waste valuable time in the circle.

Use of Control Descriptions.

This year we have had many competitors new to our sport so I feel that it is time to revise the use of symbols. The best way to be able to read the control description is to use symbols. When running on the course a quick look at the control card is needed rather than having to stop and strain the eyes to discover what you squashed into that little square at the assembly area. I would recommend that all competitors on the at Orange level should be using symbols, and those on the Green should be beginning to practice by gradually starting to use the common ones that crop up most weeks.

In the next couple of newsletters, I'll try to make sense of the system.

At the assembly area, you will have seen the control description sheet for each course. From a coaching point of view, I think it is better for each competitor to copy these onto the control card, to gradually learn them, but also to be more aware of what you are navigating towards.

The symbols are set up in columns, but for each control, all columns don't need to be filled. Only the necessary information is reported. Here is a master showing what is included in each column.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	A	Control number
B	Control code								
C	Which of any similar feature								
D	Control feature								
E	Appearance								
F	Dimensions / Combinations								
G	Location of the control flag								
H	Other information								

For this newsletter, let's look at the symbols used in column C and D. **Column C is used if a number of similar features will be in the control circle on the map.**

Symbol	Name	Description
↑	Northern	The more northern of two similar features, or the northern-most of several similar features.
↘	South Eastern	The more south eastern of two similar features, or the south-eastern-most of several similar features.
—●—	Upper	Where the control feature is directly above a similar feature.
—●—	Lower	Where the control feature is directly below a similar feature.
↑●↓	Middle	Where the control feature is the middle one of a number of similar features.

Column D is used to describe the main feature you are navigating towards.

Land forms (ISOM section 4.1)

Symbol	Name	Description
┌	Terrace	A level area on a slope.
└	Spur	A contour projection or "nose" rising from the surrounding ground.
∪	Re-entrant	A contour indentation; a valley; the opposite of a spur.
⌒	Earth bank	An abrupt change in ground level which can clearly be distinguished from its surroundings.
⊖	Quarry	Gravel, sand or stone working in flat or inclined ground.
⊕	Earth wall	A narrow wall of earth projecting above the surrounding terrain; may be partially stone faced, usually man-made. Used with symbol 8.11 to indicate a ruined earth wall.
∩	Erosion gully	An erosion gully or trench, normally dry.
⊗	Small erosion gully	A small erosion gully or trench, normally dry.
○	Hill	A high point. Shown on the map with contour lines.
●	Knoll	A small obvious mound. Used with symbol 8.6 to indicate a rocky knoll.

Symbol	Name	Description
∩	Saddle	The low point between two higher points.
⊖	Depression	A depression or hollow from which the ground rises on all sides. Shown on the map with contour lines.
∪	Small depression	A small, shallow, natural depression or hollow from which the ground rises on all sides.
∇	Pit	A pit or hole with distinct steep-sides. Usually man made. Used with symbol 8.6 to indicate a rocky pit.
⊕	Broken ground	Clearly disturbed ground with features too small or too numerous to be mapped individually, including animal earths.
⊕	Ant hill (termite mound)	The mound made by ants or termites.

Man-made features (ISOM section 4.5)

Symbol	Name	Description
—	Road	A metalled/asphalt surfaced or dirt road, suitable for vehicles in normal weather conditions.
—	Track / Path	A visible route made by people or animals. Tracks may be driven by rugged vehicles.
⋯	Ride	A clearly visible linear break in the forest which does not have a distinct path along it.
—	Bridge	A crossing point over a watercourse, or other linear feature.
—	Power line	A power or telephone line, cableway or ski lift.
—	Power line pylon	A support for power or telephone line, cableway or ski lift.
—	Tunnel	A way under roads, railways, etc.
—	Stone wall	A stone boundary wall or stone faced bank. Used with symbol 8.11 to indicate a ruined stone wall.
—	Fence	A wire or wooden boundary. Used with symbol 8.11 to indicate a ruined fence.
—	Crossing point	A way through or over a wall, fence, or pipeline, including a gate or stile.
■	Building	A standing brick, wood or stone structure.
▨	Paved area	An area of hard standing used for parking or other purposes.
□	Ruin	The remains of a building that has fallen down.
—	Pipeline	A pipeline (gas, water, oil, etc.) above ground level.
⊥	Tower	A tall metal, wooden or brick structure, usually built for forest observation.
┌	Shooting platform	A structure attached to a tree where a marksman or observer can sit.
⊙	Boundary stone, Cairn	A man made stone or pile of stones. A cairn, memorial stone, boundary stone or trigonometric point.
↑	Fodder rack	A construction for holding feed for animals.
⊖	Charcoal burning ground	The clear remains of an area where charcoal was burned. A small level man made area on a slope. (A platform).
△	Monument or Statue	A monument, memorial or statue.
⊥	Building pass through	An arcade, indoor passage or route through a building.
⊥	Stairway	A stairway of at least two steps.

Special features

Symbol	Name	Description
×	Special item	If used, an explanation of its meaning must be supplied to competitors in the pre-race information.
○	Special item	If used, an explanation of its meaning must be supplied to competitors in the pre-race information.

Rock and boulders (ISOM section 4.2)

Symbol	Name	Description
⊥	Cliff, Rock face	A cliff or rock face. May be passable or impassable.
▲	Rock Pillar	A high, natural rock projection.
⋈	Cave	A hole in a rock face or hill side, often leading to underground workings.
▲	Boulder	A prominent free-standing block of rock or stone.
▲▲	Boulder field	An area covered by so many boulders that they cannot be individually mapped.
▲	Boulder cluster	A small distinct group of boulders so closely clustered together that they cannot be individually mapped.
⊕	Stony ground	An area covered with many small stones or rocks.
⊕	Bare rock	A runnable area of rock with no earth or vegetation cover.
⊥	Narrow passage	A gap between two cliffs or rock faces that face each other.

Vegetation (ISOM section 4.4)

Symbol	Name	Description
◇	Open land	An area with no trees. Grassland, a meadow or a field. Also heath or moorland.
⊕	Semi-open land	An area of open land with scattered trees or bushes.
◁	Forest corner	The corner or tip of a forested area projecting into open land.
⊕	Clearing	A small area of land free from trees within the forest.
⊕	Thicket	A small area of forest where the tree cover or undergrowth is so dense that it is difficult to pass.
—	Linear thicket	A man-made line of trees or bushes that is difficult to cross.
⋯	Vegetation boundary	A distinct boundary between different types of trees or vegetation.
⊕	Copse	A small area of trees in open ground.
▲	Distinctive tree	An unusual or distinctive tree in either open land or forest; frequently information is also given as to its type.
⊗	Tree stump, Root stock	The stump of a tree. The upturned root of a fallen tree, with or without the trunk.

Water and marsh (ISOM section 4.3)

Symbol	Name	Description
⊖	Lake	A large area of water, normally uncrossable.
⊖	Pond	A small area of water.
∇	Waterhole	A water-filled pit or depression.
—	River, Stream, Watercourse	A natural or artificial watercourse with either moving or standing water.
—	Minor water channel, Ditch	A natural or man made minor water channel which may contain water only intermittently.
⋯	Narrow marsh	A narrow marsh or trickle of water, too narrow to be shown on the map with the marsh symbol.
⊥	Marsh	A permanently wet area with marsh vegetation.
⊥	Firm ground in marsh	A non-marshy area within a marsh, or between two marshes.
⊖	Well	A shaft containing water or a captive spring, clearly visible on the ground. Often with some form of man-made surround.
⊖	Spring	The source of a watercourse with a distinct outflow.
⊖	Water tank, Water trough	A man made water container.

-Geoff Todkill