Newcastle Orienteering Street Series Guide for Course Setting

Start Location

The first thing to do after receiving your map is to choose a good start location and get the Street Series Coordinator to check it so the details can be added to the Street Series flyer and the website.

Necessary: Sufficient parking space and a safe public area for many people to gather without interfering in other sporting or public events (eg. check if sporting fields are in use on the day of the event).

Desirable: Shelter in case of bad weather. Facilities such as Toilets, Drinking water, Playground, etc.
A different start location than the last event on that map, but not if there are no other good start locations.

Setting the course

Safety

If there are major roads with heavy traffic then consider avoiding/not crossing them or use one or two designated safe crossing points (traffic lights preferably or zebra crossings). To encourage competitors to use only those safe crossing points, mark the rest of the road as forbidden to cross and place control points near the crossings so there is no advantage to any competitor crossing elsewhere.
Also avoid large shopping centres with heavy traffic or construction zones for the same reason.

Placement of Controls

Don't feel the need to put controls on every part of the map if using a large map area.
Space controls out fairly so that slower competitors still have the chance to get high points and there are route choices for all levels of competitors (eg. don't put the high points in a line on the edge of the map). The optimum number of controls is about 30 to 35 (please use the clue sheet template provided). Too few makes it a running race and too many makes the clue sheet too hard to read clearly.

Try to avoid areas of the map where detail is lacking or hard to interpret (eg. Bush areas - they can also change a lot over a short time so it is hard to keep the map accurate).

You may wish to select possible control placements just from looking at the map and then look for a good clue near your selected point when you walk around the map area (remember it is more important to have a good, clear clue further away if you can't find a good clue near the spot you want).

Look for any map changes that may have occurred and check all route choices between points in case some are blocked. Update the map with any changes found (or tell the Street Series Coordinator so they can update the map for you).

When placing control circles on the map, ensure you place the centre of the dot as accurately as you can. Double-check it is on the correct side of the street. If it's not correct then it can confuse competitors.

Setting Clues

Remember that the sole purpose of clues is to verify that the competitor has visited the control site. They should not require special knowledge, problem solving or hide and seek.

Simple- Clues should be concise and unambiguous. Don't use a clue requiring a long explanation. Make it easy to select the right answer (eg. #3. How many steps to front door? use 4, 7, 10. not 6, 7, 8. eg. #10. House name? use Corrigan, McDonald, Greentree - not Corrigan, Cardigan, Cooridan).

Quick- Make it quick to find and read. Don't make competiors read through a long sign or plaque. If using a sign then say where to look (eg. First word on sign, at the top, on the bottom left, etc) and say where the sign is (eg. in front window, above the door, middle sign on path, etc).

Structured- Where possible, the question should state in order: which feature/what on the feature/where on the feature? (eg. Northern sign, colour of graffiti on back?)

Obvious- Try to make it obvious to the competitor that they are at the correct control site. Include the house number if possible and locating words like "Next to door, West side of house, etc" Never have a zero answer or option (eg. #48. Front yard. How many palm trees? 0, 1, 2)

Permanent- Beware of objects that may move between setting the course and the day of the event. Objects can disappear, be parked in front of or over, be moved or opened and out of sight. (eg. Caravans and other vehicles, doors, garage doors, gates, garden furniture, flags, play equipment, post boxes, etc). Things can even be painted a different colour, so always try to check your course the day before or the morning of your event just in case.

Unique- Features used in clues should be unique to that site and not exist in other places on the map. This helps to avoid confusion and stops people answering the question without visiting the control site. (eg. Don't use a poster or sign that appears in many places on the map). If using power pole numbers use the unique part for the answer because all the power poles in the area will likely start with the same code. (eg. Power pole # JU234..? 23, 41, 57) When selecting alternative answers, don't use one appearing next door to trick competitors.

Visible- Don't use a clue that is hard to read or unable to be approached closely to read (eg. a small faded sign behind a wire fence). Don't use a clue that may encourage or require trespassing or invade privacy (eg. Don't use a clue like "Colour of play equipment over back fence"). Try not to use a clue that is very obvious from a long distance away (eg. #46. Colour of roof? is a bad question if it can be seen from the end of the street) as competitors may be able to answer the question without visiting the control site.

Easy- Participants shouldn't need specific knowledge to answer questions (eg. Architectural or botanical knowledge like: #32. Large tree in front yard? Scribbly Gum, Ash, Camphor Laurel)

Colour- Some competitors may be colour blind and see shades differently to you. Colours can also change in different light conditions. Choose very different answers (eg. #2. Letterbox colour? use "Red, Blue, Yellow" or "Green, Black, White"). Never use both blue and green together for an answer as people have most difficulty distinguishing those apart.

Interesting- Use an interesting clue only if it meets all the other criteria. There's no point having an interesting clue if competitors can't find or understand the clue.

Other tips to make the clue sheet questions and answers easier to read and harder to mix up:
- Use the template which has alternating colour stripes so it's easier not to mix up the questions.
- Capitalise the answers for every second question
- Don't use the same questions or answers in close proximity (or at all)
- Don't have questions with similar number answers next to each other (eg. 1, 2, 3 and 1, 3, 5)
- Don't use more than 35 questions or the clue sheet gets too cramped
- Don't use long questions that need 2 lines of type or it will be too small for everyone to read.

Printing the map and clue sheets

A template clue sheet (Word document) will be provided with the OCAD map file.
A copy of the OCAD software can by provided and instructions will accompany the map file.

Once the map and clue sheet are ready (with all map corrections done, location and codes (eg. 1A, 3C) of controls checked and all questions on the clue sheet are checked) please email to Geoff Todkill - gctodkill@bigpond.com for printing about 2 weeks before your event (to allow Geoff to print them and deliver to you at the event on the week prior to your event). This gives you time to check your clues again before your event as there is often at least one correction or clue that goes missing.