

# Glossary of Orienteering-related terms

**Aiming Off** - to deliberately aim to one side of a control or feature so that you know which way to turn upon hitting the feature before seeing the control.

**Attack Point** - an obvious feature near the control point from which the control can be located by navigating carefully with map and compass.

**Bearing** - the direction of travel as indicated by the compass.

**Catching Feature (also called a Collecting Feature or Backstop)** - an obvious feature on the map and ground located beyond a control or other sought after feature, which indicates that the target feature has been over-shot.

**Check Point** - an obvious feature on the map or ground, which can be used to check that you are keeping to your chosen route.

**Contour** - a line on a topographic map that connects points of equal elevation.

**Control/ Control Marker/ Marker**- a trapezoid-shaped marker (usually orange or red and white) used to mark features on an orienteering course, usually with clipper or control punch attached to mark a control card as proof of arrival.

**Control Card** - a card carried by each participant, which is punched at each control feature to verify the visit.

**Control Circle** - a circle drawn around a feature on the map to indicate the location of a control marker. The feature should be in the exact center of the circle.

**Control Code** - letters (or numbers) on a control marker, which enable participants to verify that it is the correct one.

**Control Description** - a list given to each participant that briefly describes each control feature in order. It also gives the [control code](#).

**Control Feature** - a natural or man-made feature on or next to which the control is hung.

**Control Marker** - see [control](#).

**Control Number** - a number drawn beside each control circle on a map. On a cross-country course, they indicate the order in which the controls must be visited. The top of the number should point to North.

**Control Punch** - a small plastic clipper with different designs of pins. Used to verify each control feature has been visited.

**Course** - a sequence of control points marked on the map that are to be visited by the orienteer.

**Cross Country Course** - the classic course used for all major competitions. Control features must be visited in the prescribed order.

**Dog-Leg** - positioning of a control which favors approaching and leaving a control by the same route, thereby leading other competitors to the control. Course design which results in a dog-leg should be avoided.

**Fine Orienteering** - precision navigation in detailed terrain usually demanding careful use of map, compass and [pace counting](#), and usually involving short course legs.

**Finish Symbol** - If it shares the same location as the start:  
If its location is separate from the start:

**Folding the Map** - orienteers fold their maps to aid concentration on the leg being run, and to facilitate thumbing their position.

**Handrail** - A linear feature which closely parallels your route and acts as a handrail to the next control.

**Knoll** - a small hill.

**Leg** - a section of a course between two control points.

**Legend or Key** - a list of the symbols represented on the map.

**Linear Feature** - a feature that extends in one direction for some distance e.g., paths, fences, stonewalls, and streams. Used as [handrails](#).

**Line Event** - event where maps are marked with a line indicating the exact route to be followed. Participants mark the precise location of each of the controls they find along the route.

**Orienting the Map** - matching the orientation of the map to the features on the ground. This is one of the fundamental skills in orienteering, and leads to successful navigation. The map can be oriented either by comparing the map directly with the terrain or by using a compass to orient to north.

**Master Map** - a map displayed near the start from which competitors copy their courses onto their blank map. More experience orienteers will copy the course onto their map while the clock is running. Novices should be allowed to do this before being given a start time. In bigger events, the courses are pre-printed on the maps.

**Pace Counting/ Pacing** - a system of counting double-paces (every time the left or right foot hits the ground) to measure distance covered. An orienteer would measure the distance between two points using the scale on the compass and then count his/her paces until the distance was covered. Pacing allows an orienteer to know when he or she has perhaps gone too far and missed the feature they were looking for.

**Point Feature** - a feature in the terrain that only occupies a small area. Frequently mapped examples are boulders, pits and mounds, stumps, and root mounds. They are not suitable as control sites for novice courses unless they are on a handrail.

**Precision Bearing** - some compasses can be used to take a precise bearing (direction clockwise from north) which can then be followed in the terrain

**Punching** - the act of marking the control card with the punch.

**Reentrant** - a small valley running down a hillside. A stream cut into a hillside would create a reentrant-type feature. On a map, the contour lines which describe a reentrant point uphill.

**Safety Bearing** - a compass bearing which, if followed, will bring a lost orienteer to a road or other major, recognizable feature. It may be added to the control description list as a safety measure.

**Safety Whistle** - a whistle which can be used if a participant is injured or lost. The International Distress Signal is six (6) short blasts repeated at one (1) minute intervals.

**Score Event** - participants visit as many controls as possible within a fixed time, e.g., 30 minutes. More distant or difficult controls are often allotted a higher point value. Points are deducted for each amount of time the orienteer arrives after the allotted time is up, say 5 points for every minute. The person with the most points wins.

**Spur** - a small ridge.

**Star Event** - an event in which participants must return to the start between each control. This can be used for relay events or for keeping close contact with novices.

**Start Symbol** - a triangle used to locate the start on the map. It should be centered exactly over the starting point, and one apex should point toward the first control.

**String Course** - a course marked with a continuous string line. These courses are often used with very young children to give them familiarity with the forest.

**Thumbing** - a technique for holding the map, using your thumb to indicate your present location. To do this properly, it is often necessary to fold the map.