



Houston Orienteering Club

General Event Instructions

What is Orienteering? Orienteering is the sport of cross-country navigation through unfamiliar terrain with a map and compass. It is conducted as a competitive timed event and as a non-competitive “map hike.” Orienteering is for all ages.

Equipment: The following are recommended: running shoes, long pants, protective eyewear, a watch as there is a 3-hour time limit, a whistle to call for help if you are injured, and a compass. The compass preferably should be a "protractor" compass that has a clear plastic base. A limited number of compasses are available for rent at the event for \$1 plus \$10 deposit.

Rules/Safety: All controls are to be punched in order. A missing or wrong punch results in disqualification (DQ). Orienteering is an individual sport. Giving or receiving assistance is cheating. Do not ask for assistance unless you are in fear for your safety and are willing to be disqualified. Map hikers may receive help from other map hikers. Do not move or tamper with the controls. Assist injured participants. Whistles are to be used in emergency only. Report to the finish within 3 hours of starting, **even if you are not finished.**

Courses: Orienteering meets will have several courses set for the competition. The courses will vary in length and amount of climb to allow competitors with different physical capabilities to compete. The courses will also vary in the level of orienteering skills needed to successfully navigate and find the control points to provide a challenge to competitors of all skill levels. The course levels are identified by color. Typical skill levels and lengths are shown in the following table (*):

- **White Course:** Easy novice course; less than 3 km (1.9 mi.). Routes are on trails or along "handrails" such as fences, power lines, and streams. Route choices are simple and are designed to teach how to orient the map and which way to turn at an intersection.
- **Yellow Course:** Beginner course; 3-5 km (1.6-3.1 mi.). Routes are on trails or handrails, but control points are placed slightly off the beaten path. Route choices are still simple, but require that the orienteer figure out where to look into the woods to find each control.
- **Orange Course:** Intermediate course, 4.5-7 km (2.8-4.3 mi.). At this level, the orienteer begins to have the choice between easy but long routes, and shorter cross-country routes. At this level compass use becomes necessary as routes become more complicated.
- **Brown Course:** Advanced course; 3-5 km (1.6-3.1 mi.). This course is as long as a yellow course and as difficult as a red course.
- **Green Course:** Advanced course; 4.5-7 km (2.8-4.3 mi.). This course is as long as an orange course and as difficult as a red course.
- **Red Course:** Advanced course; 6-10 km (3.7-6.2 mi.). This is the most difficult level as it involves routes that are almost entirely cross-country. Route choices are challenging mentally and physically, and control points may be more difficult to find.

* Some meets may have only **Beginner (White), Intermediate (Orange) and Advanced Course (Green)**

Competitors: Classes are divided by course, gender, and age on December 31 of the meet year. Please supply year of birth on the registration form. The score is determined for those not DQ'ing by summing their running times for each day.

Map Hikers (non-competitive) This is your opportunity to do orienteering as a group. The fee is \$6 per map per day with a limit of 5 people per map. We suggest that each adult have a map. Any course may be map-hiked. We suggest White or Yellow courses for first-time orienteers.