



Newcastle Orienteering Club

Summer Street Series

Guide for Course Setters

Start Location

The first decision you will have to make is the start location. The series coordinator will need this for the Calendar of Events which comes out in early October (at the latest). Things to consider in making this decision:

- Is there plenty of room for parking?
- Is there some sort of shelter from inclement weather?
- Can people mill around without being a public nuisance?
- Is there access to facilities such as water, toilets, playground etc.?
- Is the location in the street directory so people can find it?

Public parks or sporting fields usually satisfy these criteria.

Setting The Course

Begin by making up a course just from the map. Things to consider:

- Try to avoid (where possible) high traffic areas such as major shopping centres and major roads. (This is for obvious safety reasons).
- Try to avoid (where possible) areas of the map where the detail is hard to interpret or lacking. For example with black and white maps bush areas can be “dodgy”. By avoiding these areas you take out one element of luck.
- **Don't have too few controls (because then the event becomes a running race). Don't have too many controls so that the clues can't be read on the control sheet (because a small font is needed to fit on so many questions). It seems that something in the range of 20 to 30 controls works nicely.**
- Try to set challenges and rewards for all levels of competitors. Slower competitors still like to get 3 pointers and faster competitors should still be made to make route choices and careful navigation.

Once you begin physically checking your control sights don't be afraid to make changes. If no suitable clue can be found at the exact location you wanted, or a good clue is nearby, change the control sight. A clear clue is far more important than its particular location on the course.

Also while you are out field checking look for map corrections. The suburban landscape can and does change or the original map might still contain some errors that haven't been fixed. A good map is the basis of a good orienteering event.

Printing the Map

Once you are satisfied with map corrections and the location of the controls in the OCAD version of the map you will need to get copies printed. The club has a colour laser printer, currently located at the Todkill's house. Geoff's instructions are as follows:

The preferred option is to email the OCAD map file to Geoff Todkill at todkill@hunterlink.net.au . Allow 2 or 3 days printing time. The maps will be adjusted for correct colours and printed by Cheryle. The maps can then be collected at the event on the week prior to your event. If required clue sheets may also be printed. It would be essential to contact either Geoff or Cheryle (49585920), in advance, to arrange details.

Note: i. If you have designated crossing points on your map you may have to highlight them, by hand, in blue.

ii. In locating the control circles on the map try to place the dot at the centre of the circle as accurately as you can. Good orienteers will use other information on the map to lead them directly to the control and so if the center of the circle is "out" this will potentially lead to confusion.

Setting and Writing Clues (Thanks to Peter Newton and Geoff Peel.)

Remember that the sole purpose of clues is to verify that the competitor has visited the control site. They are not supposed to be tests of general knowledge, problem solving or hide and seek. Over the years there has been much discussion on the setting and writing of clues. The following is a summary of that discussion. The clues and the answers to those clues should have the following characteristics:

- Simple
- Quick
- Structured
- Obvious
- Permanent
- Unique
- Only visible from close proximity
- Requiring no specific knowledge
- Allows for colour-blindness
- Interesting – only if other all other requirements are covered first.

Simple: - Clues should be concise and unambiguous. One short sentence should suffice. If it is difficult to describe the feature in a few words then perhaps a different one would be better.

- Make it easy to select the right answer, *Examples: if there are 7 steps have the options 4,7,10 rather than 6,7,8. or if the name of a house is Corrigan use Corrigan, McDonald, Greentree rather than Corrigan, Cooridan, Cardigan*

Quick: - Answers should be able to be gleaned quickly. Do not have people reading through long passages of text on plaques etc looking for answers or other similar tasks, as this is disadvantageous to competitors visiting this

control. Alternatively, if you must use a crowded sign say where on the sign to look. *Examples: at the bottom, at the top, etc*

- If using a sign it may be necessary to give people a hand in finding the sign, *Examples: in front window, above the door, on shop awning etc.*

- Try not to use the null option,

Example: On the street pole Safety House, Bus Stop, Nothing

Structured: - Questions should follow a structured pattern where possible. This should follow a similar logic to the bush clue descriptions of “Which feature/what on the feature/where on feature. For example

Original

"What's the graffiti on the back of the north sign"

Suggested

"Northern sign, Graffiti on back"

Obvious: - Try to make it obvious to the competitor that they are at the correct control site, *Example: include the house number*

- Features mentioned in the clue should be obvious to any participant that locates the centre of the control circle. Locating words or short phrases can be employed to assist,

Example: on top off, on back, next to door, knee height, underneath

Permanent: - Nothing is stable. Remember, this applies more to the object of a street clue than any other object in the universe. Beware of objects that may move between setting the course and the day of the event. Objects can disappear, move or be opened and therefore out of sight.

Examples: Caravans (unless wheels missing), boats, trailers, doors, gates, light garden furniture

Unique: - Features used in clues should be specifically unique to that site i.e. the object should not exist anywhere else on that map. This is to avoid the answer being gleaned elsewhere or the chance of confusion.

Example: A band poster that appears on every second post would be a bad subject for a clue.

- When using power pole numbers pick that part that is unique. Every pole in the street may start with JU2 so use the 2345 part, e.g. 23—with choices 45, 91, 87 (i.e. very distinct alternatives).

- When selecting alternative answers don't give an option that is nearby, e.g. on the house next door (i.e. trying to “catch” out the competitor).

Only visible from close proximity:

- Clues should require the participant to go into the control circle to see the answer. This may seem to contradict the “obvious” characteristic, but we are talking about limiting visibility from outside of the control circle while still totally obvious from within it. Note: It is not always possible to have clues that cannot be read from some distance

Example: #23 Color of roof: Grey, Red, Green

This is not a good clue because it may be possible to see the roof from the end of the street

Requiring no specific knowledge:

- Participants should only need the rudimentary general knowledge to select answers. Try to avoid questions that depend upon specific knowledge especially of a botanical or architectural nature., such as:

Example: #15 Large tree in front yard: Scribbly Gum, Ash, Camphor Laurel

Allow for colour-blindness:

- It would be unusual for a clue set to be generated that does not have at least one clue relating to the colour of an object. This in itself is not a problem. It is the poor selection of colour possibilities that cause problems. Consider that some people are colour-blind and others see shades that are slightly different to you. In general use primary colours and keep the options dissimilar while still offering potentially correct options. Never use both blue and green together as possible answers as this is when colour-blind people have the most difficulty.

Interesting: - Many would argue that this should be the prime characteristic for control sites and associated clues. In reality it is a consideration only when all of the above characteristics are met. It is no use having an interesting control site to visit if you cannot understand the clue and answer it correctly. Sure, if all other requirements are satisfied then make it interesting. Those that are highly competitive will quickly mark the correct answer and move on while those that are not so serious may wish to take in the ambiance of the location/view etc.

In summary: strive for a clear clue and an obvious control site.

A template for the control sheet is attached (thanks to Rob Vincent). This template will be available on the club's website.

To Do List for the Day

- Put up the Orienteering banner in a highly visible location
- Synchronise the clocks
- Set up self -registration table, include control sheets, pens, start sheet, block tags and small clock. Have the box of blocks next to this table.
- Set up a start table with small clock and maps ready to hand out. Also have a container for competitor's keys etc.
- Set up the start clock.
- Put out the notice board including general instructions and instructions specific for your event (if applicable)
- Set up finish table with small clock and your answers ready to mark returned control sheets
- Put up a blank copy of the map
- Put up the rope to hold the results blocks
- Put out water and cups
- Make sure the first-aid kit is accessible

Course Setter's Check List

- **The Map**
 - Does the map conform to our Street O conventions?
Is the scale 1:10000 (or very nearly so) and have 10m contours?
Does it use the standard set of symbols?
 - Are the controls coloured: 3pts – Pink, 2pts – Orange, 1pt - Green ?
 - Does the map fit on an individual A4 sheet?
- **The Control Descriptions**
 - Do the control descriptions fit on an individual A4 sheet?
- **Checking Your Course**
 - Has some one run the course to check that:
 - Clue descriptions make sense and can be read
 - Controls are in the correct location and match the clue descriptions
 - The course is not too short
- **Printing of the Map**
 - Is there enough time for the Todkill's to print the map and have them ready for the week prior to the event?
- **Collecting the Gear**
 - Can you (or someone you know) be at the previous event to pick up the gear?
- **Setting up on the Day**
 - See the To Do on the Day list.(above)
- **Coordinating Your Event**
 - Has some one been organized to man the Start Table (to hand out the maps and make sure competitors start in their allocated time slot?)
 - Has some one been organized to man the Finish Table (to note finish times, calculate elapsed times, mark competitor's sheets and write on the results blocks?)
 - Has some one been organized to hang the results blocks?
- **Finishing Up**
 - Have all competitors returned?
 - Have the Results slips been collected and handed on to the Results Statistician?
 - Has all of the gear been passed on to the next event organizer? (See the Gear list in the Course Setter's folder.)