

JARGON BUSTER

These are the main terms that you might see mentioned in printed items. Words that have a similar meaning in general usage are not included. There are also many geographical features and terms that refer to techniques used in the sport. These are best explained by experienced orienteers – so join a club and/or enrol on a course!

This document is also available online – go to the SOA website then follow the links to Resource Pack and find the Jargon Buster heading.

Age group	<p>Age groups exist so that everyone can compete against others of similar age.</p> <p>For adults, from age 35, age groups go in 5 year bands, and there is one each for men (M) and women (W). Thus a man aged 50 would normally run as M50, and a woman aged 39 would normally run as W35. The open age categories for adults are known as M21 and W21.</p> <p>Age groups for juniors are in 2-year bands from 10 to 20.</p>
Area	<p>Term used specifically to cover the (usually fairly small) area covered by the map for a particular event.</p> <p>Also used to indicate a group of clubs in a geographical region, eg. West Area.</p>
Badge	<p>Badges are awarded for achievement of particular standards. "Badge events" are those where a competitor's course is determined by age group. These are now usually known as Regional or National events.</p> <p>Badges can be obtained from <i>BOF</i> or via your club. You can also get SOA badges when you achieve a particular standard in <i>colour coded</i> courses.</p>
Bearing	<p>Most experienced orienteers use a compass to take a bearing so they know which direction to go. But you can start orienteering without being an expert with a compass.</p>
BOF	<p>The old name for British Orienteering, or to give it its full name, the British Orienteering Federation – the British governing body. www.britishorienteering.org.uk</p>
Brikke	<p>(pronounced "brick") – the electronic gizmo carried by participants in an event using <i>Emit</i>. The funny spelling is because the word originated in Scandinavia.</p>
Championships	<p>Top level competition, often for a particular set of people, eg. School Championships, North Area Championships, Scottish Championships. You don't have to be a top-notch orienteer to take part though!</p>
Checkpoint	<p>Also known as a <i>Control</i>.</p>
Check station	<p>A special box of electronics at the start, in which you check that your <i>SI dibber</i> is OK. Applies only to events using <i>SI</i>.</p>

Circle	Each control site is marked on the map with a circle, usually 6mm across. When you are close to the control, you might say you are "in the circle". But you still might not see the control immediately!
Classic	The standard, long-ish distance event, held in countryside of some sort.
Clear station	A special box of electronics which clears previous data stored on your SI <i>dibber</i> . The clear station is usually placed prominently on the route to the start. Hold your dibber in it until it beeps 2 or 3 times. Applies only to events using <i>SI</i> .
Clipper	Another word for the old-fashioned pin <i>punch</i> .
Closed event	An event or competition which may be entered only by particular people; eg. an event just for schools.
Closing date	The last date for acceptance of entries. This applies only to those events that you have to enter in advance.
Code number	See <i>control code</i> .
Colour-coded	<p>Colour coded courses use a particular colour to indicate length and difficulty, and these should be consistent from one event to another.</p> <p>The usual courses are:</p> <p><u>White</u> easy and short; all on paths or tracks</p> <p><u>Yellow</u> slightly less easy, and a little longer</p> <p><u>Orange</u> not all on paths, and longer again</p> <p><u>Long Orange</u> same technical level as orange, but longer</p> <p><u>Light Green</u> navigation skills needed; longer than orange</p> <p><u>Green</u> the shortest technically difficult course</p> <p><u>Blue</u> technically difficult, medium length</p> <p><u>Brown</u> technically difficult and long</p> <p><u>Black</u> even more so (only found infrequently)</p> <p>Orange and Long Orange are ideal for adult beginners.</p> <p>Some events also offer "short" versions of Blue, Green and Brown.</p> <p>Events at Level 2 and 3 offer a range of courses featuring some or all of the above.</p>
Competition	A rather loosely used term, sometimes just another word for " <i>event</i> ", sometimes a competition comprises a series of events, sometimes it's within an event.
Contour interval	The distance between heights shown by contour lines – usually 5m., but check on your map.
Contour-only	Some events offer a special map which shows only the contours of the land (not the vegetation, paths, streams etc.). This makes navigating more difficult, but is excellent practice.
Control	Each point marked with a circle on the map, which a competitor is required to visit. Controls are usually marked by a <i>flag</i> and have a <i>punch</i> .
Control card	Before the days of electronic <i>punching</i> , participants would mark a card with the pin-punch at each <i>control</i> . Now rarely used.

Control code	The unique code that identifies a <i>control</i> ; usually 2 or 3 numbers, sometimes 2 letters. Sometimes referred to as the number on the control – but of course this is different from the <i>control number</i> . The control code will be clearly visible on the control, and you should always check the code of each control to make sure it really is the one you are looking for.
Control description	The description of the feature where the control is placed.
Control description sheet	The list of controls that comprise your course. See examples below.
Control marker	See <i>Flag</i> .
Control number	The sequence number of a control on a course – 1, 2, 3 etc.. Not to be confused with the <i>control code</i> . You must visit controls in the correct number order.
Controller	The person who has ultimate responsibility for the fairness and correctness of an event.
Course	When you take part in an orienteering <i>event</i> , you usually do one course. A course comprises several controls, plus a start and a finish. You must visit the controls in the correct order. Courses usually share the same start and finish point, and might share some of the controls.
Crossing point	To avoid damage to walls and fences, you sometimes have to cross these obstacles only at specific points. These will be shown on your map, and your control description sheet will say "use crossing point". Your control description sheet will say if the crossing point is compulsory. If it is, you can be disqualified for crossing the obstacle anywhere else.
Dibber	The electronic gizmo carried by participants in an event using <i>SI</i> .
District Event	An event which offers a wide range of <i>colour coded</i> courses.
DNF	"Did not finish" – if you don't complete your course, the results will show DNF by your name. The term has become a verb, so you might say that you DNF'd at your last event – but of course this is not to be recommended. If you decide to abandon your course (ie. to DNF), you MUST report to the <i>finish</i> or to <i>Download</i> , otherwise a lot of time and effort could be spent looking for you.
Download	After you finish an event with electronic punching, you must go to Download to register the fact that you are back safely and find out how long you've taken.
Electronic punching	An electronic means of gaining evidence that you have been at a <i>control</i> .
Electronic unit	<i>SI</i> and <i>Emit</i> have different electronic units at the control. There will be a sample on display so you can find out what you have to do to <i>punch</i> at each control.

Embargo	Anyone who intends taking part in a major competition is not allowed to go onto that specific mapped area for a period before the competition. We say the area is embargoed. The exact period of embargo depends on the level of the event, and is still under discussion.
Emit	One of the types of <i>electronic punching</i> .
EOD	Entry on Day – turn up at the <i>event</i> and enter there and then. Most events allow this, though there might be a surcharge for EOD at an event with pre-entry.
Event	A competition, at which there will be a number of courses, is usually referred to as an event. This stresses the fact that you can enjoy orienteering without actually competing.
Event officials	See <i>Planner, Organiser and Controller</i> .
Feature	A distinct topographical object marked on the map, e.g. a stream, boulder, or hill.
Finish	The point marked on your map with a double circle. Events using electronic punching often don't have officials at the finish, just the electronic unit at which you should punch. Remember then to go to Download!
Fixture	Another term for an <i>event</i> .
Fixture list	The list of all events or <i>fixtures</i> currently in the calendar. See http://www.scottish-orienteering.org/soa/category/fixtures-events/ and follow the link to the British Orienteering fixture list. If you're confused by the abbreviations in that, look at the Fixture List de-bunker which is available online and in printed form. Contact the NatCen if you haven't already received your copy.
Flag	A white-and-orange fabric marker that is hung at each control. Also referred to as kite.
Form line	A land shape might not be quite high enough to merit being shown with a contour line, but it is noticeable on the ground. It will probably be shown by a dashed contour line, known as a form line.
Green	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. On maps, various shades of green indicate different density of vegetation. 2. See also <i>colour-coded</i>.
Home International	Competitions (comprising individual and relay events) between teams from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. They are held annually at <i>Junior, Senior</i> and <i>Veterans</i> levels.
IOF	International Orienteering Federation – the worldwide governing body for the sport. www.orienteering.org
IOF descriptions	Standard <i>pictorial descriptions</i> approved by the <i>IOF</i> .
Junior	All participants under the age of 21.
JWOC	Junior World Orienteering Championships
Kite	See <i>Flag</i>

Leg	Apart from one of the limbs that propel you round the course, a leg is the section of a course from one <i>control</i> to the next.
Line feature	Something like a path, track or stream, which you can follow easily. When you are new to the sport you should use these rather than heading hopefully into the forest.
Map	Orienteering maps are very detailed and are produced by specialist map-makers. They usually cover a small (1-10 sq km) irregularly-shaped and fairly small area. Colours carry different meanings from Ordnance Survey maps – particularly it is worth remembering that white on an orienteering map indicates trees. Most maps have a legend showing the meanings of symbols and colours, but sometimes this is available separately.
Map bag	A tough, clear plastic bag to put your map in. You can usually buy, borrow or scrounge one at the events where you need one.
Map corrections	If things have changed in the area, for instance trees have grown or been felled, or new tracks created, since the maps were printed, there will be a map showing these changes or corrections. You should copy these onto your own map.
Mass start	At most events, competitors start at intervals of usually 2 or 4 minutes. Sometimes all or some of the competitors start at the same time. This is called a mass start, and it is only used at events that are in some other way out of the ordinary.
Masters	The term for <i>Veterans</i> on the international scene.
Master map	Not all events provide maps with the course already marked on it. At these events there will be master maps (usually 2 or 3 for each course) and you will be given a map without any course shown. You then have to copy the course from the master map to your map. DO THIS VERY CAREFULLY! Remember to mark any <i>map corrections</i> as well.
Middle distance	As the name suggests, a shorter distance than most events, but not as short as a sprint. Middle distance races in Scotland usually have just 2 courses, of different lengths. Participants have free choice of course. Courses are usually meant to be <i>Technical Difficulty 5</i> .
National Event	Although almost all events are open to anyone, there are different levels of event. National Events are major events, usually on areas that present the most difficulty with navigation. At National Events (and <i>Championships</i>) courses for adults are allocated to <i>age groups</i> , although there are usually some <i>colour-coded</i> courses as well.
National Orienteering Centre	Located at Glenmore Lodge, the National Orienteering Centre organises training and coaching sessions and courses and provides access to many excellent areas for individual or group practice. Check out the website: http://www.scottish-orienteering.org/natcen/
NatCen	Short name for the National Orienteering Centre – see above.

Night orienteering	Yes, this is simply orienteering in the dark. A good headtorch is essential. This form of orienteering is widely considered one of the most technically challenging.
Organiser	The person who sorts out all the administrative bits to make an event happen.
Pictorial descriptions	Descriptions of the controls, using symbols to describe the feature on which the control is placed. Standard international symbols are agreed by the IOF and can be found on www.orienteering.org/footo/pictsymb.htm . Pictorial descriptions are used only for the more difficult courses, <i>technical difficulty 3</i> and above.
Planner	The person who designs the courses and puts out the controls. He/she works closely with the <i>Organiser</i> and <i>Controller</i> .
Pre-entry	The bigger events require you to enter in advance, or pre-enter. The fixture list will show the name of the person to whom you should send your entry.
Pre-printed	At many events, the course is already printed onto the map.
Printout	After you finish, go to <i>Download</i> , you will be given a printout showing your total time and <i>splits</i> .
Punch	Once upon a time you proved you had been at a control by marking a card with a punch (or clipper) which had pins in a particular pattern.
Punching	This refers to the process by which you gain evidence that you have been to a control. Although the process is now usually electronic, the term has stuck.
Questions	Anything that remains unanswered by this document. Don't be afraid to ask organisers at an event – or indeed one of the seasoned competitors. They're all very friendly really.
Re-entrant	A land shape somewhat like a small valley. On the map it usually shows as an indented contour line (or several).
Regional event	Now referred to as a Level 2 event. A fairly large event, with courses designated by <i>age group</i> . Usually held on good quality terrain and with pre-printed maps. Pre-entry is normally encouraged. <i>SOLs</i> are Level 2 events. (See <i>Fixture List de-bunker</i>)
Relay	An event in which a team (usually 3 people, but sometimes up to 11) run separate courses, one handing over to the other. The team's total time is what counts.
Results	Interim results are usually displayed at the event, with final results being available on the internet soon after the event. Printed copies of results can usually be posted to you if you leave an envelope and cash to cover printing and postage costs. Ask event officials.
Route	How you went from control to control. On all but the simplest courses there is usually a choice of routes. A particular pleasure and learning experience comes from discussing your routes with others on your course after the event.

Route gadget	An amazing online application that allows you to show the actual route you took to each of your controls at an event. Compare your route and times with others, and learn so much!
Scale	The scale of most orienteering maps is 1:10,000 or 1:15,000. Always check this when you get your map. A scale of 1:10,000 means that 1cm (about the length of the nail on your little finger) on your map shows 100m on the ground, ie. the length of a football pitch.
Score event	A less common type of event, in which you have to find as many <i>controls</i> as possible in a fixed time. The number of points scored for each control varies according to its distance and technical difficulty, you can choose which controls to go to, and there will be a penalty if you take longer than the time allowed.
Senior	Adults aged 21-35
SI	One of the types of <i>electronic punching</i> .
SI card	Another name for <i>Dibber</i> .
Six Day	In alternate (odd-numbered) years, Scotland hosts a week-long event. There are 6 separate days of competition with a rest day mid-week. Have a look at www.scottish6days.com
SOA	Scottish Orienteering Association. Clubs are affiliated to the SOA, and SOA is affiliated to <i>British Orienteering</i> . See www.scottish-orienteering.org
Splits	The time you take to go from one <i>control</i> to the next. If you're serious about improving, you will soon want to compare splits with other participants on your course. At an event using electronic punching, your printout will show your splits. Results on the internet usually show them too.
SportIdent	The full name for <i>SI</i> .
Sprint	Short distance orienteering event, usually held in a town or park. Good spectator value.
Start control	Where the start triangle is shown on the map, a control flag is placed. In some events with <i>electronic punching</i> , you will <i>punch</i> the start control.
Start time	In some events, you are given a specific time at which you start. The time you take to complete the course will be calculated from this time, so make sure you aren't late!
Start unit	The electronics box at the start – if you are required to <i>punch</i> at the start.
String course	A short course for very young children, in which the route is marked by a continuous line of string, or a easily seen lengths of tape.
Stub	Tear-off part of control card that was/is kept by start officials while the participant does the course, and was/is later used for temporary display of results.

Taped route	<p>There is usually a taped route to the start for everyone. Also, some courses, particularly those for younger children, might have a section where it might be difficult for them to find the right way on the map, so they have to follow bits of plastic tape hung from trees etc..</p> <p>A taped route on adults' courses must be followed closely – it usually guides you through an area that is otherwise out of bounds or dangerous.</p>
Technical difficulty (TD)	<p>Courses are graded from TD 1 (easiest) to TD5 (hardest). Green, Blue and Brown should all be TD5. Orange and Red courses should be TD 3, and offer a good starting level for adult beginners. See <i>colour coded</i>.</p>
Terrain	<p>An area away from paths, tracks and roads.</p>
Triangle	<p>The start point of the orienteering course is marked on the map with a triangle. It is usually marked on the ground with a control flag.</p>
Trail O	<p>Also known as Precision-O, this form of orienteering does not rely on speed and mobility, but challenges your ability to read the map accurately. Usually suitable for everyone, including people in wheelchairs.</p>
Unit	<p>As in SI unit – the box of electronics at a control.</p>
Veterans	<p>All participants aged 35 and above.</p>
WMOC	<p>World Masters' Orienteering Championships – open to all aged 35 and above.</p>
WOC	<p>World Orienteering Championships</p>

Fixture List de-bunker

The Fixture List contains all sorts of abbreviations. Some become clear when spelled out in full; others are explained more in the Jargon Buster.

BEOC	British Elite Orienteering Championships – a closed event purely for the seriously good guys (and girls!)
BI	Blue. See <i>Colour Coded</i> in Jargon Buster.
BOC	British Orienteering Championships.
BOF	British Orienteering Federation. See Jargon Buster.
Br	Brown. See <i>Colour Coded</i> in Jargon Buster.
C4, C5	A code for the type of event. The C indicates the normal kind of cross-country event; the number indicates the event's importance: a level 5 event is a fairly small local event, 4 is a larger district event, 3 is a regional event and the Scottish Championships are level 2. A level 1 would be an international event.
CATI	Come And Try It – event intended primarily for complete beginners. Easy courses and lots of help available. If you are a complete beginner, you might like to read the "What to do" notes, which you can get from the NOC if you haven't already got them.
CC	Colour Coded – see Jargon Buster.
CD	Closing Date. See Jargon Buster.
Chq	Cheque – details of who to make it payable to.
ELT	Expected Lead Time – the time that the winner is expected to take for the course.
Emit	See Jargon Buster
Entries	Details of the person who to whom entries should be sent.
EOD	Entry on Day – see Jargon Buster.
EPS	Electronic Punching System – see Jargon Buster.
FCC	Future Champions Cup – a series of events which focus on talented juniors
Fees	Entry fees for this event; usually one rate for adults (seniors) and one for juniors/students/unwaged. Some events also offer a special rate for families.
Full reg. pending	All events must be registered. If any aspect of the event hasn't yet been finalised, it might not yet be fully registered. Check again later (perhaps on website) for details that might have changed.
G	Green. See <i>colour coded</i> in Jargon Buster.
Grid ref.	OS map grid reference of the car park. This might be a public car park, a field, or forest tracks.
Harvester	An overnight relay event – not for the faint-hearted.
JHI	Junior Home International
JK	A 3-day international orienteering festival (open to all) held in the UK each Easter, named after Jan Kjellstrom.
LG	Light Green. See <i>Colour Coded</i> in Jargon Buster.
Ltd. EOD or Lim. EOD	Limited EOD – only a certain number of extra maps will be available, so only a limited number of people can enter on the day.
M21, M35 etc.	Men's age group. See Jargon Buster.
MM	Mountain Marathon – VERY long form of orienteering.

MTBO	Mountain Bike Orienteering.
O	Either: Orienteering. It's a long word, so we often just call it O. Or: Orange. See <i>Colour Coded</i> in Jargon Buster. Or: Other type of event (ie. not S, C or R)
OC	Orienteering Club – as in ESOC, MAROC etc.. See list.
OL	Orienteering League – a series of events
R4	Relay event at level 4. See C4, C5.
S5	Score event at level 5. See C4, C5.
SEF	Standard Entry Form – to be used for events requiring <i>pre-entry</i> . Can be downloaded from <i>BOF</i> website.
SHI	Senior <i>Home International</i>
SI	See Jargon Buster.
SOL	Scottish Orienteering League.
SOSOL	South of Scotland Orienteering League.
Tba	To be announced.
UKCup	A series of top quality national ranking events.
VHI	Veterans' Home International
W	White. See <i>Colour Coded</i> in Jargon Buster.
W21, W35 etc.	Women's age group. See Jargon Buster.
Y	Yellow. See <i>Colour Coded</i> in Jargon Buster.