

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. Some badges are awarded by <i>BOF</i>, some 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. Now usually referred to as the "Long" race.
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 bleeps 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 <u>Yellow</u> slightly less easy, and a little longer <u>Orange</u> not all on paths, and longer again <u>Long Orange</u> same technical level as orange, but longer <u>Light Green</u> navigation skills needed; longer than orange <u>Green</u> the shortest technically difficult course <u>Blue</u> technically difficult, medium length <u>Brown</u> technically difficult and long <u>Black</u> even more so (only found infrequently)</p> <p>Orange and Long Orange are ideal for adult beginners. Some events also offer "short" versions of Blue, Green and Brown.</p> <p>Events might 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> .
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 event.
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 where pre-entry was possible.
Event	This is usually a competitive event, but the word might also include general club activities.
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-orienteing.org/soa/category/fixtures-events/ and follow the link to the British Orienteering fixture list.
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.orienteing.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	<p>Orienteering maps are very detailed and are produced by specialist map-makers. They usually cover a small (1-10 sq km) irregularly-shaped area.</p> <p>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.</p>
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. However, most events now use maps printed on waterproof paper, so you don't need a bag.
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.
Middle distance	As the name suggests, a shorter distance than most events, but not as short as a sprint.
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 http://orienteering.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/IOF-Control-Descriptions-20041.pdf .
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	Many events require you to enter in advance, or pre-enter. This is usually done via a website, which will be specified on the event details.
Printout	After you finish, go to <i>Download</i> , you will be given a printout showing your total time and <i>splits</i> .
Punch	The low-tech way of proving you've been at a control involves marking a card with a punch (or clipper) with pins in a particular pattern. Seldom used these days.
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).
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.
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.
Routegadget	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. The printout you receive at Download 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, often 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 easily seen lengths of tape.
Taped route	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.. 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.
Technical difficulty (TD)	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> .
Terrain	An area away from paths, tracks and roads.
Triangle	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.
Trail 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.
Unit	As in SI unit – the box of electronics at a control.
Veterans	All participants aged 35 and above.
WMOC	World Masters' Orienteering Championships – open to all aged 35 and above.
WOC	World Orienteering Championships