

## **FYWTO guidance part 1 – the basics in 4-6 sessions**

There is a lot of evidence that it takes 6 attempts at something to make progress that is likely to keep you interested, but there are many reasons why people might not be able to commit to 6 weekly sessions; 4 is much more achievable. You need them to attend all the sessions to get the progression of skills acquisition and to be sure that they are properly hooked by the sport.

The sample series planners give a few suggestions (for adults and juniors) but are not intended to be prescriptive. As well as the obvious “keep it safe”, the key points are:

- know how many sessions you’ll run and what you’re trying to achieve across the series
- make sure that’s a reasonable objective for the participants (even if they don’t know it at the start!)
- review participants’ progress at the end of each session
- get participants’ opinions at the end of each session
- recap at the beginning of next session
- make it fun
- make sure they all have a sense of achievement
- review the series as a whole and expect to make adjustments

You might use just 2 venues for these sessions – the first one a park or small wood, somewhere that’s familiar for 1 or 2 sessions. You’re asking them to learn a new skill, so don’t add to that by taking them to a scary place straight away.

We make scant mention of a **compass** in these sessions – long experience with beginners has told us that early introduction of the compass can lead to confusion and/or over-reliance on it. Delaying its introduction means that your beginners have learnt to relate map to ground and to see the detail better. At the most, beginners should use a compass just to set the map.

A “map walk” is useful at any standard – use the walk to your start point! It’s a great opportunity to get them used to folding, setting and thumbing the map, and to learn to relate map to ground. Keep their attention with lots of questions, at appropriate levels for the participants, sometimes starting with the map (eg. I can see a green blob on the map can you point to the thing it’s showing?) and sometimes with the terrain (eg. what’s this we’re standing beside, what colour is the symbol for it on the map? and what shape?).

Remember that most people who like orienteering are the sort who like learning by **DOING**, so keep the talk to a minimum and get them to **DO** stuff – even if it’s just drawing the map symbol! Also, these people have almost certainly come because they want to be active – don’t keep them standing around! Aim to introduce only 2-3 new topics each session, and get them well bedded in. It’s better to leave them wanting more than have them going away confused.

Depending on ages of children, parents might want to accompany them; use good sense to suggest best arrangement for children to get best learning and enjoyment. Adults will normally progress through the early skills much more quickly than children do, but might cover the ground more slowly. Well-meaning parents often think they’re helping when in fact they’re impeding their child’s learning and progress towards becoming independent.