

## Coaching Tips

### Improve your orienteering

If you want to take one single step to improve your own orienteering, it should be to watch [this clip](#) on YouTube (if the link doesn't work, search for Eduardo Briceño and choose the clip about "When performing gets in the way of improving"). No, it's not specific to orienteering, but it is remarkably applicable to orienteering. Far too many orienteers spend far too much of their orienteering time competing, instead of practising. Watch the video, and apply it.

Beyond that, a good plan would be to get the help of a qualified, licensed coach. A coach can help you analyse your strengths and weaknesses, and construct exercises to help you improve your skills. You can get details of licensed coaches from your club, your Regional Development Officer, or from the SOA's Education Manager.

In addition, you can often make significant improvement with a bit of focussed practice. Here are a few other activities that can help:

#### **Map contact - know exactly where you are all the time**

Using maps from past events (assuming access to the area is OK), get a friend to draw a moderately squiggly red line on the map, a total of about 500m long. All you have to do now is walk along that line as closely as possible. Now try doing it without your compass.

Offer your services to collect controls at the end of the event - the planner will be pleased of the help. Draw your own squiggly red line between the controls, and follow it!

However, when you're competing you don't always need to be in total map contact - learn to relax with the idea of knowing only roughly where you are, confident that you're heading in the right direction.

#### **Compass & distance judgement - improve your accuracy with both**

Try to walk in a square, 50m each side. Place a CD on the ground at your start point. Do you end up back where you started? Easy enough on a flat field, but can you do it in a forest? on a hillside? at running pace? Do you tend to drift one way or another? overshoot or under-run?

#### **Route choice - decide quickly which way to go**

Always put your route on RouteGadget, compare your choices and your splits with other people. Also look at events you didn't go to, and think about what you would have done, then look at the routes that people did choose.

## Relocation - work out where you are when you realise you're not where you thought you were

Rather than lapsing into headless chicken mode, you need a process to go through when you realise you're not quite where you thought you were. There are many adequate versions of a process, the main thing is to apply it. Key points are:

- Stop, set your map (using your compass)
- Look around you for distinctive features
- Find one of those distinctive features on the map and check whether you've got the right one by going through a series of "if it's this, then just over there should be..." - but don't force the map to fit, keep cross-checking and allow for the possibility that you might be wrong

It's best to practise relocation in pairs. The easiest version is to use an old competition map (check access is OK), and take turns to navigate part-way to the next control, then just hand the map over. Partner works out roughly where you are, and navigates to the control and the first part of the next leg, then hands map back to you... and so on.

As with many coaching/training activities, you don't actually need controls in place. The important thing is to embed the process (whether that be using your compass accurately or relocating reliably); if you get the processes right, the rest is easy.