

# Know your sport: Orienteering - Long, Middle or Sprint?

*There are four annual national championships for individuals - Long, Middle, Sprint and Night. It is quite easy to appreciate what a night event is but can you define the others? Here we take a look at the official explanation as to what is expected from events classified as 'Long', 'Middle' and 'Sprint'.*

It is not easy to find precise definitions for these three types of events. However buried within the Rules of the International Orienteering Federation's World Championships (WOC) is the table given on the right. As this provides the structure for the WOC, British Orienteering have based their Championships on the same concepts.

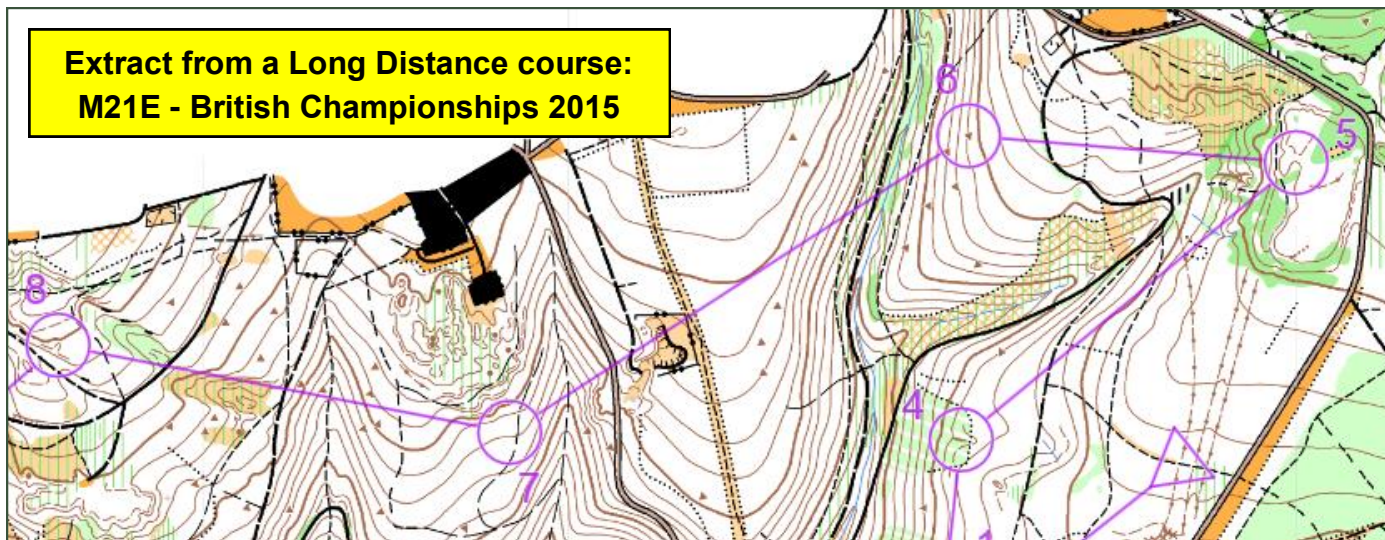
Looking into the various Rules of Orienteering given on the main British Orienteering website provides similar explanations. The following are extracts taken from different parts of the rules which give an indication of the differences.

- **Long distance (Classic) Orienteering** usually takes place in forest terrain. The emphasis is on route choice to test a competitor's ability to use a variety of navigational techniques in physically challenging terrain over an extended period of time.
- **Middle distance Orienteering** usually takes place in forest terrain. The emphasis is on continuous map reading in the terrain, Technical Difficulty, a relatively high density of controls, changes in direction and micro rather than macro route choices. Runnable terrain of Technical Difficulty 4-5 is most suitable, the more technical the better.
- **Sprint Orienteering** usually takes place in urban or semi urban areas and parkland, the technical standard is enhanced by the need interpret the map and make decisions at high speed. The emphasis is on continuous decision making, map reading and interpretation, and route choice rather than finding controls. A clear and very accurate map and clear control descriptions and placements are essential. Safety is a key consideration where traffic may be encountered. A more detailed mapping standard is used in comparison to Long or Middle formats.

Of course one key element is the expected winning time. The rules for the Championships give expected winning times for different classes and a selection of these are given in the table on the right. It can be seen that these vary for the Long distance but are the same for the other two types.

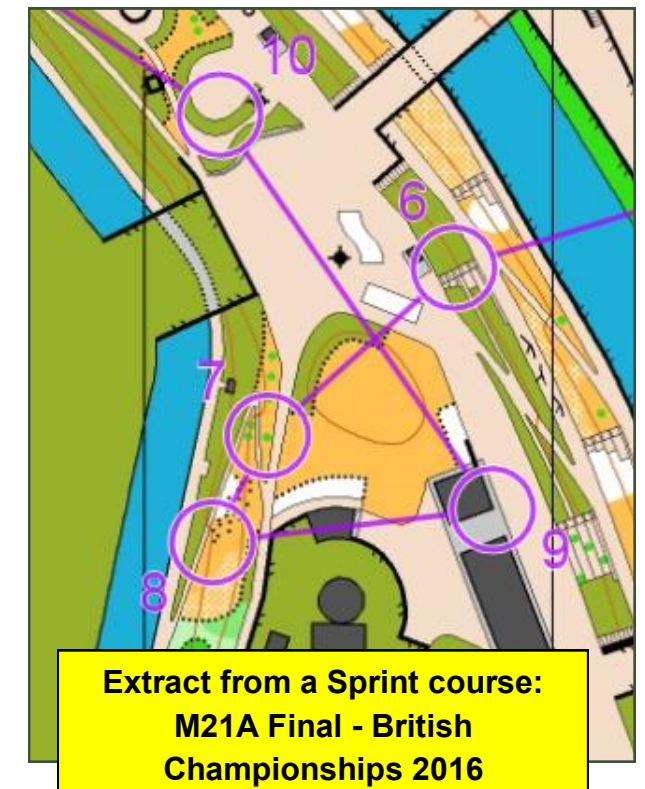
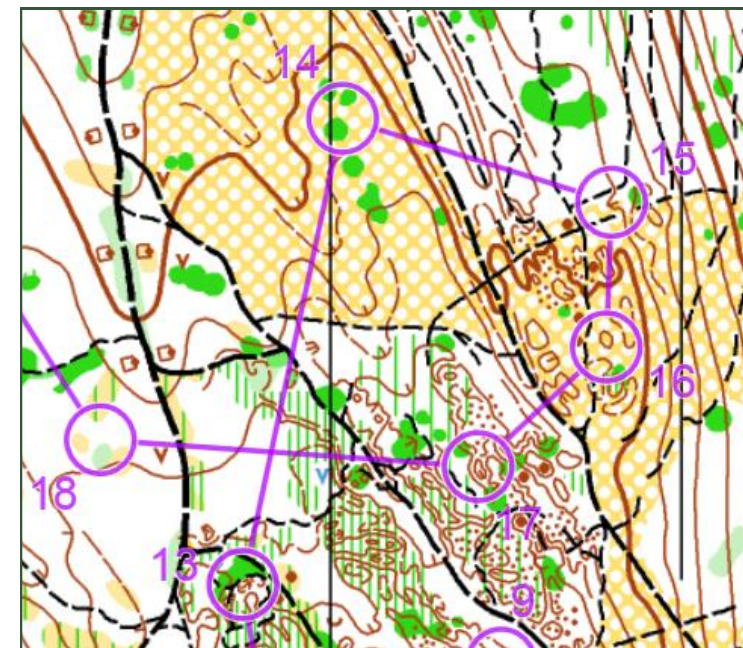
Expected winning time (minutes)			
	M21E	M55L	W45L
<b>Long</b>	90-100	60-70	55-65
<b>Middle</b>	30-35	30-35	30-35
<b>Sprint</b>	12-15	12-15	12-15

Extract from a Long Distance course:  
M21E - British Championships 2015



	<b>Sprint</b>	<b>Middle Distance</b>	<b>Long Distance</b>
<b>Summary</b>	Sprint orienteering is a fast, visible, easy-to-understand format, allowing orienteering to be staged within areas of significant population.	Middle distance orienteering requires fast, accurate orienteering for a moderately long period of time. Even small mistakes will be decisive.	Long distance orienteering tests all orienteering techniques as well as speed and physical endurance.
<b>Controls</b>	Technically easy.	Consistently technically	A mixture of technical
<b>Route Choice</b>	Difficult route choice, requiring high concentration.	Small and medium scale route choice.	Significant route choice including some large-scale route choices.
<b>Type of Running</b>	Very high speed.	High speed, but requiring runners to adjust their speed for the complexity of the terrain.	Physically demanding, requiring endurance and pace judgement.
<b>Terrain</b>	Predominantly in very runnable park or urban (streets/buildings) terrain. Some fast runnable forest may be included. Spectators are allowed along the course	Technically complex terrain.	Physically tough terrain allowing good route choice possibilities.
<b>Map</b>	1:4000 or 1:5000	1:10000 (or sometimes 1:15000)	1:15000
<b>Winning Time (for Senior Elite competition)</b>	12-15 minutes	30-35 minutes	Men 90-100 minutes / Women 70-80 minutes

Extract from a Middle Distance course:  
M21 - British Championships 2016



Extract from a Sprint course:  
M21A Final - British Championships 2016