

Know your sport: Night-O

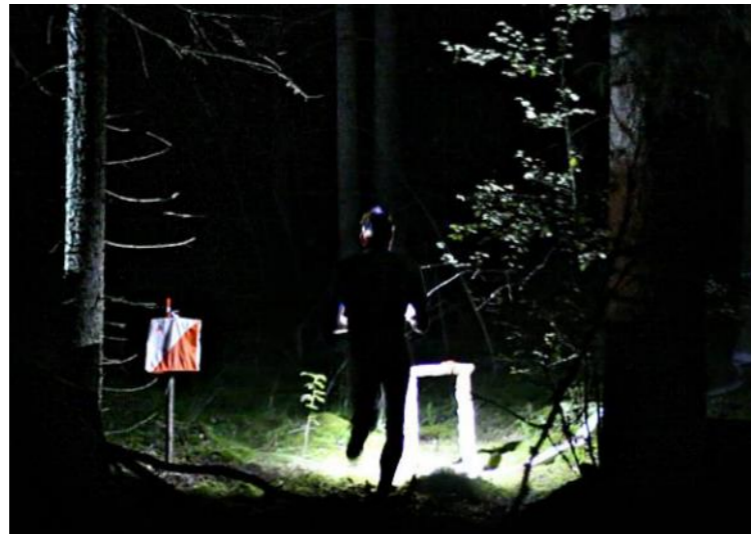
So you enjoy the technical challenge of navigating through the terrain at speed using a map? So you want to increase the challenge? Well why not try it in the dark?

That is the concept of night orienteering. As stated in the BOF Guidance for Night-O. "some orienteers

regard it as the ultimate challenge in the sport, requiring the highest standards of navigation."

However, it is not quite that simple. In order to see the map and to have any chance of finding the controls, competitors carry torches - most serious night orienteers have headlamps. There is though no rule concerning the power of the headlamp. Therefore brighter lamps will almost certainly give their owners an advantage. An important factor though is the weight of the battery. The more powerful the light, the more powerful the battery needs to be. There is a major advantage in having bright lights but if they fail when you are only half way round the course you may end up lost.

Is it possible to have a fair 'night' event in which the technical ability and fitness of the competitor are all that count. Probably not, but this does not prevent competitors enjoying the challenge!



What to consider when taking part in 'Night-O'

Here are some things to consider based on guidance by British Orienteering

- The course will be tougher at night so a course which would be technical difficulty 3 (TD3) in daylight can easily become TD4 at night.
- If you normally run your course, you will find you will be slower—perhaps 10% to 15%
- Relocation is much more difficult at night because your view is restricted to the width of the beam, even with a powerful light.
- Planners try to choose features which are clear and unambiguous. You should not be expected to find small features below ground level (e.g. pits) especially when vegetation is restricting visibility.
- It is probably best to choose more and longer path runs than would be usual. A route which takes you through "walk" areas and indistinct vegetation boundaries are to be avoided.

Here is some advice from **Ian Hudson**, a BKO member who regularly attends night events

- Dress appropriately, it can be very cold and/or wet at night in the winter.
- Modern LED headlamps are adequately bright enough for the job and not too expensive. But remember you can only see what is in the beam. At times you will need a wide short beam and at others a narrow long beam, so use a headlamp with a beam that can be easily adjusted on the move.
- Practice looking at the map indirectly so its at the edge of the beam, looking directly at it results in momentary blindness as the white paper or plastic bag reflects all the light back into your eyes.
- Always keep your concentration on the map and all that is shown on it, mentally ticking features off as you pass them. If you lose contact it can take a long time to relocate at night.
- Using a collecting feature behind the control is very useful, as distances are more difficult to judge at night. Don't panic! The hobgoblins will not get you if you keep moving.

Headlamps

As you need to hold your map and compass you don't really have a spare hand to carry a torch. So regular night orienteers use headlamps.

Two examples are shown here. The top one is the current version being sold by Ultrasport. They claim the following for this version:

Silva Trail Runner II Headlamp is an upgraded more powerful version of the best selling running headlamp. New Ultralight weight LED with extra wide headband giving 50 metres beam (140 Lumens) and 30hrs of light. Powered by 3xAAA Batteries included in headtorch pack. Approx weight of headtorch inc batteries: 118grms

A typical price for this model might be £45—£50.

Below is another example but in this case the battery pack is carried separately and there is a cable up to the head unit. But this one costs about £250!

Don't forget though that you need to consider a back-up option—perhaps a small hand held torch carried in a pocket—just in case the headlamp fails!



The Harvester Trophy

Although termed 'Night-O', most events are actually just 'Evening-O'. The one exception is the annual Harvester Relay which starts late in the evening and continues until after dawn the next day. The competition takes place each summer with clubs entering teams of 7 or 5 people.

A selection of forthcoming night events

Sat 16th Nov 2013	Wessex Night League	Hatchwarren	Basingstoke	BADO
Sat 23rd Nov 2013	Wessex Night League	Ringwood North (tbc)	Ringwood	WIM
Sat 30th Nov 2013	South East Night Champs	Esher Common	Esher	SLOW
Sat 7th Dec 2013	Southern Night Championships	Gore Heath, Wareham Forest	Wareham, Dorset	WIM
Sat 8th Feb 2014	Wessex Night League	Stonedown Woods (tbc)	Salisbury	SARUM
Sat 22nd Feb 2014	British Night Championships	Pippingford Park	Crowborough	MV