

Know your sport: TrailO

Orienteering is normally considered to provide both a physical and a mental challenge. For people with restricted mobility, the ability to take part in a physical sport is obviously limited. Does this mean that they then have to miss out on the mental challenge of map reading that the sport provides? Perhaps but 'Trail-O' uses orienteering maps and provides a partial solution - and, what is more exciting, anyone can participate.

The Basics

Trail Orienteering is one of four disciplines in orienteering and provides an orienteering competition on equal terms for people of all levels of physical ability including those confined to wheelchairs.

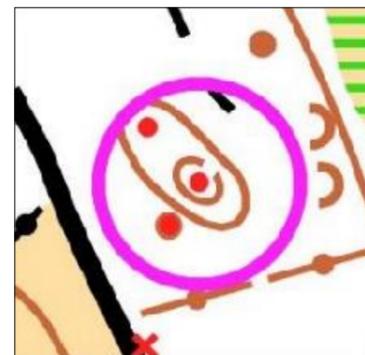
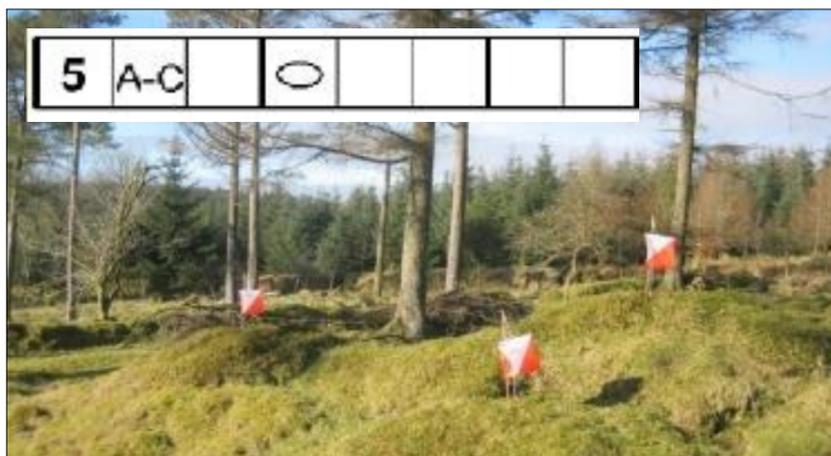
TrailO has two formats - **PreO**, the form of competition used for many years now, and **TempO**, the relatively recently introduced 'sprint' form of TrailO where all competition activity is timed.

In both forms, at each control site, the competitor has a map with a control circle marked on it along with the control description (using the international symbol format). At each site a competitor will be able to see a number of standard control flags which are possible options for the correct control location - it is also possible that none of the flags will be in the correct location! The competitor has to decide which flag (if any) correctly matches the control circle and the description.

PreO

PreO eliminates the element of speed over the ground, but makes the map interpretation element much harder. Depending on the level of difficulty, several control markers are hung at each site and only one will correspond exactly with the control description and control circle position. Another possible answer is 'None of the controls corresponds'. Sites are chosen so that they can be seen from a wheelchair-navigable path or area, but they may be quite a distance away. The only special equipment needed is a compass. An escort can give the competitor physical help - pushing a chair, holding and orienting map and compass for example. However, it is an important rule that escorts must not help in the decision-making process; they can give as much physical help as may be necessary, but must not offer advice or opinions to the competitor.

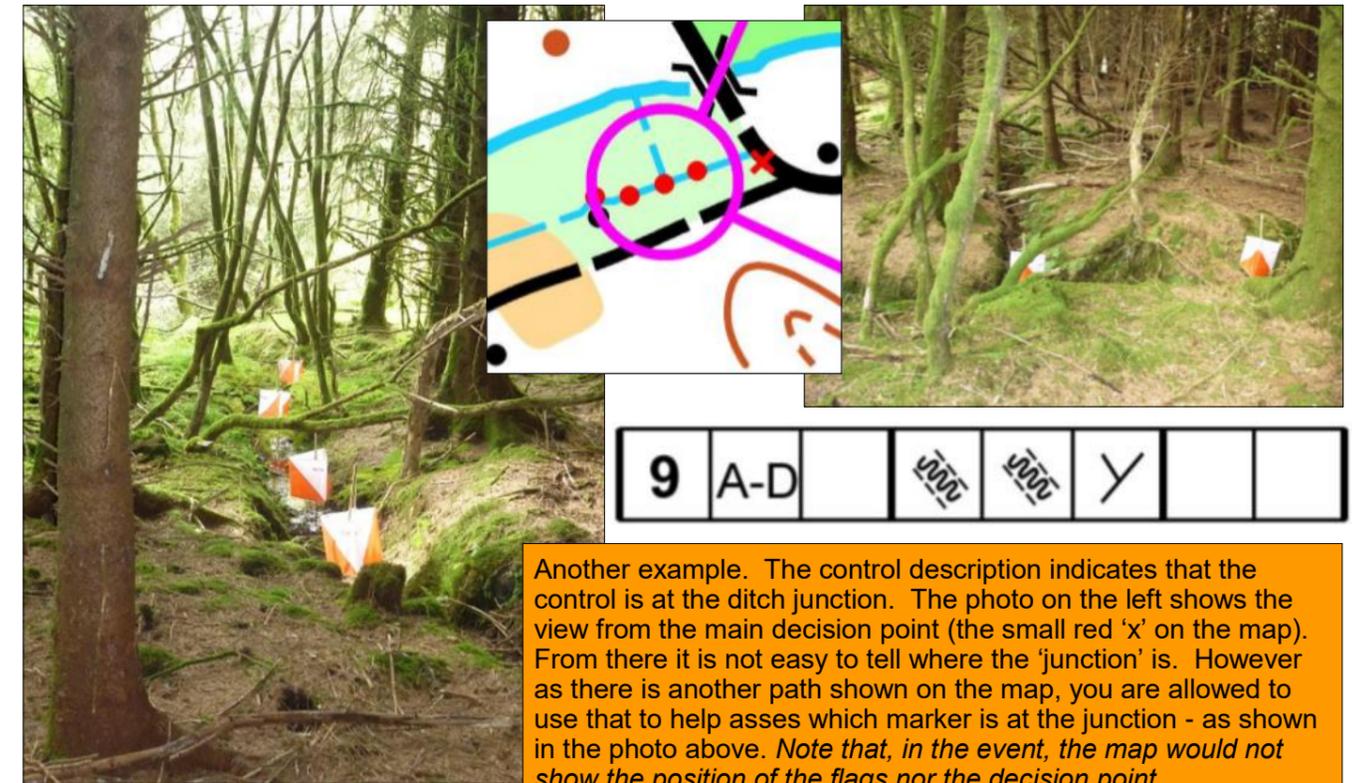
The primary results uses the total number of control sites correctly identified. That is likely to leave several competitors with the same score, so there is a second element, based on time, to identify one or two controls, which acts as a tie-breaker. At a 'timed control' the competitor is handed a 'clean' map with just one control circle and one description on it. The time to make the decision is recorded, not the time taken to get from A to B. The shorter the decision time, the higher the ranking against competitors with an equal number of correct scores.



An example of a TrailO control. The map sample is the solution. At a competition, the 3 red dots showing where the flags are placed would not be on the map. The letters in the second row of the control description tells how many flags have been placed at the location. A-C therefore tells you that you will see three flags: A, B and C (from left to right when viewed from the 'decision point').

Trail Orienteering (TrailO) involves map and terrain interpretation. Competitors are permitted to use mobility aids to travel through the terrain. Any recognised mobility aids, apart from a combustion engine, are permitted. Recognised physical assistance is also permitted. The winner is the person who scores the greatest number of points on the set course.

From 'The Rules of Orienteering'



Another example. The control description indicates that the control is at the ditch junction. The photo on the left shows the view from the main decision point (the small red 'x' on the map). From there it is not easy to tell where the 'junction' is. However as there is another path shown on the map, you are allowed to use that to help assess which marker is at the junction - as shown in the photo above. Note that, in the event, the map would not show the position of the flags nor the decision point.

TempO

TempO is the sprint version of TrailO, consisting of timed controls throughout. Each person is called individually to a control station and is seated - or if in a wheelchair, placed at the same spot - with a view out over terrain with usually 6 kites visible on different mapped features. The 6 kites are pointed out by an official, and then a stack of small map extracts is handed out, each aligned in the direction of view and showing one control circle. Initially a cover sheet hides the first map from view.

When told to start, the cover sheet can be removed and the first map studied. The centre of the control circle is a distinct feature in the terrain - the task is to decide if there is a kite there or not, and if there is, which one it is of the six in view. The answer is given verbally or by pointing to one of the letters printed in large type on a card (A-F or Zero if it is thought there is no kite at the site the circle shows).

Quickly on to the next map in the stack - same map, but circle in a different place; same task, and so on. The timing is stopped when your final answer is given. There is a maximum allowed time, usually 30 seconds per task, and for each wrong answer a penalty of 30 seconds is added to your elapsed time. You then move to the next control station, and go through the same procedures again. In TempO there are usually at least 5 control stations with up to 5 tasks at each. The winner is the person with the lowest time overall.

Give it a go!

You have a chance to try out this version of the sport at this year's JK within the SCOA region.



- On Good Friday, 19th April, there will be a **TempO** event using part of the Aldershot Garrison - next to the main JK Sprint event.
- On Saturday, 20th April, there will be a **PreO** event close to the JK Middle event at Windmill Hill.

The 2019 British Championship TrailO events are scheduled to be held in conjunction with the White Rose event in Yorkshire at the end of August.

Additional Information

Most of the material for this article has been taken from web pages on TrailO provided by either the British Orienteering Federation or the International Orienteering Federation. For more information, see:

- <https://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/site/trailo>
- <https://orienteering.org/trail-orienteering/>

In particular, highly recommended is the document 'Introduction to TrailO for experienced foot orienteers' available at: <http://orienteering.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Technical-Introduction-to-TrailO-for-Experienced-Foot-Orienteers1.pdf>