

Supporting TrailO

1. How to stage a simple PreO event



Introduction

TrailO is a superb discipline for training map-reading skills as well as being a fine competitive discipline in its own right. A few PreO controls, or a couple of TempO stations / timed controls, can be used at club training or as an extra attraction at a FootO event, with minimal manpower requirements.

TrailO has three formats: PreO, PreO Sprint and the fully-timed form TempO. This article deals only with the organisation of a simple PreO event for your club. It does not describe the nature of TrailO or in any great detail the planning of courses; information on these can be found on the British Orienteering TrailO website.

Basic requirements

- One person to plan and prepare the event.
- One additional person can be useful on the day, to help with registration, start and finish.
- A small competition area with a track or good path network, not too hilly, in which varied terrain features, urban, park or forest, can be seen from the paths. The chosen route should be suitable for wheelchairs (wheelchair users can have a 'pusher').
- A reasonably accurate and detailed map of the area, 1:5,000 or 1:4,000 with 2.5m contours.
- Kites on stakes, plus special control cards and 'decision point' markers (see later).

Getting started – planning the course

The first thing to do is to get a copy of the map and go out into the area to look at a possible track/path route through the most detailed areas of the area available. It can be circular or out-and-back, or for instance between assembly area and FootO start at a FootO event.

When you've chosen a route, look for possible control sites for the course. 3-6 controls is suitable for club training or at a FootO event. The circle at each chosen site needs to be on a definite feature on the map. It can be close to the track/path or quite some distance away, as long as the terrain and all kites are clearly visible from a wheelchair user height on the track. Kites will be placed here and in up to four more places nearby, but you can also have a Zero (Z) answer – no kite at the position shown by the circle on the map. You want to make the participant read the map carefully, using all the available detail, in order to make the correct choice. If you do choose the Z option, then the nearest kite must be far enough away from the control circle position that it is seen by the competitor as a clear Z – at least 4 metres. Finally you need to decide on the decision point, the place where the participants record their decision, since the order of kites seen from left to right can change, dependent on where on the path you are standing.

For each possible site, you circle the key feature on the map and decide on the number and general location of other kites, and whether you think it might be a Z control. You can dig in a twig where the decision point will be, and use tape or something else suitable to pinpoint the positions of all the kites.

Don't have 'trick controls', e.g. the control description



Above: Competitors tackling a PreO course at the 2019 JK at Mytchett
(Photo Steve Rush)



Above: A PreO decision point for two controls. Here the decision point is marked by a mini-kite and labels to indicate which controls should be viewed from that point.

Timed control site

In a full PreO event with perhaps 20 controls, a timed control is used at the beginning or end to separate competitors with the same number of correct answers. See the separate sheet about TempO stations and timed controls.

The day before the event

An encouragingly-worded reminder about the PreO on your club website and elsewhere, stating clearly the time and the meeting place, always helps.

The day of the event

Setting out the kites and decision point markers can take a bit longer than you expect – but with 3-6 controls and nearby parking it isn't a huge task. In order to help ensure that all kites are visible from the Decision Point, you can place a kite on a stake at the Decision Point whilst you set out the competition kites. This can save a lot of time, especially for sites where the kites are some distance from the path.

Especially newcomers need to know that they should not discuss the tasks while on the course (silence is the golden rule!), and they must keep strictly to the track/path and not go into the terrain.

Before the start, you or a helper lists competitor names, and gives out a folded TrailO control card with their name written on. Needle punches can be available for loan. Then you give the competitor a copy of the map for their course, and they go off and start the course. Anyone helping at the start is able to go out on the course once everyone else has arrived and been registered.

The correct solutions are posted up at the finish. Competitors come in and give you their control card – you cut this in half, keep the main section and hand the other half back to the competitor, who can then self-check his or her answers. Loaned needle punches are returned. If there is time available, you can check their answers against the correct solutions straight away, and record their total correct on the registration sheet. Usually this is also a good time to chat with competitors about aspects of the course, and listen to their grumbles if any!

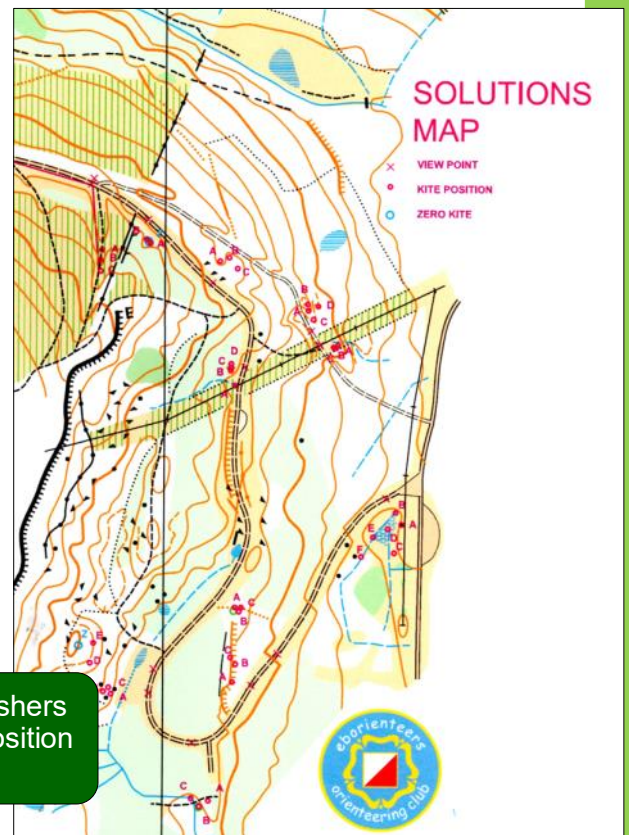
Once everyone has gone, it's of course time to collect in all the kites, stakes and Decision Point markers, perhaps with the assistance of the helper.

After the event

For this kind of event, where participants may not have tried PreO before, some organisers will not publish a results list with scores. You can calculate the number of competitors with the correct answer for each control, and then write a text giving this information for each control. The text would explain the best method used for getting the right answer in each case. A solution map that shows where each kite was placed can also be produced – see example right.



Above: Competitors at a PreO decision point. Notice that there is a chalk line across the path indicating that competitors are only allowed up to that point on the path - the line will also be indicated on the competitors' maps



Right: Once all the competitors have started, at larger events finishers are usually provided with a 'Solutions Map' which indicates the position of the decision points, the kites and, where necessary any 'zero'.

Need help or guidance? Contact the Chair of the British Orienteering Development Group at trailcommitteechair@britishorienteering.org.uk who will put you in touch with an experienced trail orienteer living in your part of the country.