



Orienteering

What is it?

Orienteering is an international sport and recreational activity in which the object is to locate marked features (controls) in the woods using only a detailed map and a compass. In competition, the goal is to find the controls, in sequence, as fast as possible using any route between controls. As recreation, the goal is still to find the controls although time is not an issue and the routes used often involve using trails or fields.

Orienteering provides both a mental challenge (determining a route and reading a map) and a physical challenge (actually getting to the controls); it is known as "The Thinking Sport." Almost anyone can participate in orienteering so long as he or she can read a map and walk through the woods. It may be done individually, in teams or groups, by young (down to about age 9) and old (no upper limit), and of either gender.

How does it work?

You are given a detailed map, a list of control descriptions, and a control card. The map is color coded: black for man-made objects and rock features, yellow for open or partly open land, blue for water features, white for ordinary forest, green for denser forest and other vegetation features, and brown for elevation features. The map has a legend describing each map element. The control descriptions list the features that you are to go to, marked with numbered circles on the map. Each control has a number and is marked in the woods with a red and white (or orange and white) square on a post; the square shows the number and a code letter. The control card has a numbered box for each control; when you find a control, you are to write the code letter in the appropriate box on the control card. When you finish a course, you can check the code letters to verify that you successfully found each one.

An orienteering course consists of a sequence of controls that you are to visit in order, beginning at the start (marked on the map with a triangle) and ending at the finish (marked with a double circle). All courses are not the same. Beginner courses are shorter and have controls on or near trails; intermediate courses are longer and have controls a little off trails; expert courses are longer still and have all controls off trail, sometimes far off. Beginner courses can often be done without a compass; but more difficult courses generally require a compass to locate the controls. At Prince Gallitzin, there are three permanent courses: Beginner (also called level 1), Intermediate (level 2) and Advanced (level 3).