



north west orienteering club

Orienteering FAQs

What is orienteering?

Orienteering is a navigation sport. You are given a map marked with checkpoints to visit in order, and it is up to you to choose the best route between them. The person who completes the course in the fastest time is the winner. Each event has a new course, so orienteering always presents a fresh challenge in unfamiliar terrain. It's a sport for everyone, no matter your age or level of fitness or experience.

What do I need?

To start we suggest you wear clothing suitable for hiking/trail running and a pair of running, walking or trail shoes. You need a tool, known as a SPORTident, to record that you have been to each checkpoint. These can be hired for a small fee (\$3) at each event. Please bring enough cash to pay the registration fee and SPORTident hire. As you learn to read the map, you will find a compass useful. These can be borrowed from registration at each event. (See comment about compasses under Where can I buy my own gear?) Food, water and warm clothes are important for after your course.

How much does it cost?

There is no cost for first timers! The cost for most events ranges from \$10-20. There are discounted fees for juniors (age 20 and under), seniors and families. Club members also get discounted entry fees.

I don't know what I'm doing!

The basic skills of orienteering can be easily learned. When you come to your first event, please make yourself known to the organisers. There are always experienced orienteers who are very happy to show you a map and get you started. If you would like to arrange a specific time to meet a North West club member at your first event, please contact us at northwestorienteering@gmail.com.

What do I do when I get there?

Follow the orange and white signs to the event centre and park as directed or at the end of the line of cars. You may have to walk a short distance from where you park to the event centre. Once there, find the registration tent. There will be a noticeboard displaying the courses available, including their difficulty and length. Please ask someone for advice if you are unsure what course to do. You will be able to pay your registration fee, hire a SPORTident, borrow a compass, get some advice and make your way to the start when you are ready. Note all payments are cash only please.

At the end of your course, please always punch the finish control and download your SPORTident times, even if you don't go to every checkpoint. We need to know you're not lost in the forest or we'll come and look for you!

How long does a course take?

The time depends on your fitness, skill level, the type of terrain and the course you choose to run. There are a range of courses of varied difficulty and distance available at each event. Depending what you choose and how much experience you have, you should expect to spend between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours on a course. When you first start you will be slowed down by your map reading, not your fitness!

How fit do I need to be?

You can be any level of fitness to enjoy orienteering. You can complete a course at any speed from a leisurely stroll through the forest to a fast run. There are a range of course lengths to keep everyone happy. When you first start you will need to do shorter courses for the easier navigation, and you will be slowed down by your map reading speed and skill level, not your fitness. Anyone from about 5 to 95 years of age can enjoy orienteering! On harder courses especially, some agility is needed to cross fences, climb over tree trunks and make your way through bush .

To reach the top in orienteering, you need to be very fit and a skillful map reader and navigator. However you can enjoy the combination of exercise, the challenge of the map and time in nature at any level.

What if I get lost?

It is very very uncommon for people to get seriously lost. Ask for help before you start and we recommend you're not overly-ambitious in choosing a course when you're just starting out. There is plenty of time to learn and progress. You are in a safe place with many other people around you and roads and tracks to find you way back if you want to finish early.

How do I know when there are events?

Check out the event calendar on the NWOC website <https://www.nwoc.org.nz/events/> as well as the nationwide Orienteering New Zealand event calendar <https://www.orienteering.org.nz/events/>.

How do I find the event?

We know that sometimes orienteering events feel very far away! Trust us, the journey is always worth it for the beautiful parts of New Zealand we are fortunate to enjoy. Follow the link to the specific event you want to go to from the calendar (<https://www.nwoc.org.nz/events/>) and you will find directions listed. There will always be signposts from a common point before the event, eg from Kumeu when travelling to Woodhill Forest. These are orange and white square signs with arrows pointing you in the direction to drive.

What do the course colours mean?

In orienteering, different colours are used to describe the difficulty level of each course. The New Zealand system is as follows:

White is the easiest level, where the course will follow tracks and fences and controls will be at decision points such as track junctions. We recommend white courses for young children and absolute beginners. Yellow is the next level, where you can use tracks and fences as a guide and the controls will be near them. This is a good place to start for beginner adults as you learn to read contours and the subtlety of the map. Orange is intermediate level, where controls are positioned near 'catching features' (something so you know if you've gone too far) but there are only a few or no tracks and fences to follow to controls. At standard club events there are usually two distances at orange level - short and long. Red is the hardest level course. This is where the controls are located in the most challenging locations. At standard club events there are usually five distance options. The shortest, red 5, is also physically easier for elderly competitors. However don't be fooled, it's still tricky navigation! Please don't attempt red or orange courses without guidance and experience.

Where can I buy my own gear?

You can buy orienteering gear such as O-pants, shirts and socks, shoes, compasses, control description holders and more. Some suggestions of where to start:

- Grassy Knoll Outdoor, NZ-based orienteering-specific supplier <http://www.grassyknoll.co.nz/>.
- Wiggle, very good for Inov-8s, a popular brand of shoe <http://www.wiggle.co.nz/>.
- SPORTident, UK-based, for SPORTidents <https://www.sportident.co.uk/equipment/shop/> or if you prefer to buy from NZ try MAPsport <http://www.mapsport.co.nz/>.
- Ask club members for recommendations where they buy their gear from.

A note about compasses – we recommend you borrow a compass from the Club when you start. When you are ready to buy your own compass we suggest you buy a thumb compass rather than a base plate as thumb compasses are more orienteering-specific. Ask one of us for more information about compasses.

How can I join NWOC?

Follow this link <https://www.nwoc.org.nz/registration/> or visit the “Membership” tab on the NWOC website. At the bottom of the page there is a link to “Register”, then follow the prompts. Joining NWOC has many benefits, including reduced event fees, Orienteering New Zealand affiliation, access to subsidised coaching, access to junior travel grants and opportunities to attend social events.

The 2018 fees are:

Family (2 seniors + juniors)	\$120
Partners or couples with no children	\$100
Senior	\$60
Junior or student	\$20
Over 65 years (generally not working)	\$20

Juniors = aged 20 or younger.

How can I support my child who is interested in orienteering?

As one of our life members, Mike Beveridge says, time on the map! Take your child to as many events as you can, as the more experience they get on varied maps, the more skilled and confident they will become. There are a range of events for school aged children, including an annual School Sprint Series held from February to March, Auckland Primary and Secondary School events and North Island and New Zealand Champs, as well as the standard club events open to everyone. Liase with your child’s school to facilitate entry to these events. Encourage healthy training and nourish your child’s enjoyment of orienteering – we all want to do it because we love it.

Again please ask us if you are having trouble finding information about orienteering in schools.

What’s a Rogaine?

Rogaines are a different form of orienteering. The usual format of an orienteering course is to visit a set number of controls, in the order specified on the map, in the shortest time possible. Rogaines are different in that you have a set amount of time (usually 90 minutes) to get to as many controls as you can in whatever order you like. The controls are worth different amounts of points depending on how difficult they are to find, and you lose points if you come back late. Rogaines are a fun way to start orienteering and can be done individually or in a team of 2-4 people. NWOC runs an annual Rogaine Series from April to June, more information can be found here <http://www.rogaineseries.co.nz/>.

How can I train?

Most orienteering training is self-directed. The AOS Sunday series that is run by the three Auckland clubs throughout the year offers formal courses, at a range of difficulties and lengths, and these form the basis of most orienteers’ training. Many people also enjoying running or walking in their own time to keep up their fitness.

Auckland Orienteering Training Collective (AOTC) is run by a group of young orienteers who organise regular informal trainings including forest orienteering, running drills and intervals in Auckland Domain and long runs around Auckland. Anyone is welcome to attend these trainings. Find AOTC on Facebook and keep a lookout for upcoming sessions:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/182605281778505/?hc_ref=ARRLiOpxTtqRnGYUdGGjB0OEHOH5Z5-GqHRidw8P3_mzyemQzbQ1Q2HYgrvNUdE2IJA.

North West and Auckland clubs run formal coaching days during the year. They are a great opportunity to benefit from the collective expertise of club members and improve your map reading skills. The dates are listed on the event calendar and NWOC members are usually subsidised to attend.

There are also some permanent orienteering courses to enjoy throughout New Zealand:

<https://www.orienteering.org.nz/about-orienteering/permanent-orienteering-courses/>.

Are there online resources to learn more about orienteering?

Yes there are many ways to learn more and practice orienteering online, which is affectionately known as 'armchair orienteering'. Here are some suggestions:

- The Orienteering NZ website including <https://www.orienteering.org.nz/resources/coaching/> and <https://www.orienteering.org.nz/about-orienteering/>.
- The 10 Elements of Orienteering video <https://vimeo.com/91937213>.
- WorldOfO <http://worldofo.com/> (there is a function to search for maps eg search Whites Line, a beloved map in Woodhill Forest, for lots of past courses people have run there).
- Learning map symbols and control descriptions <http://backwoodsok.org/control-descriptions-and-map-symbols-explained>.
- Analyse your results after events at <http://obasen.orienteering.se/winsplits/online/en/default.asp?start=true&ct=true>.

For more information about orienteering, please see www.nwoc.org.nz and come and talk to us at an event – we love welcoming new members. North West prides itself on being a friendly, supportive and inclusive Club.

Contact details

northwestorienteering@gmail.com

www.nwoc.org.nz

<https://www.facebook.com/northwestorienteering/>