

# A Beginner's Guide to Urban Orienteering

Urban Orienteering is a race (but you can stroll) without a fixed route. To complete the course, you will spend about an hour rushing around in Tunbridge Wells. Orienteering involves using a map to find checkpoints.



## What's it all about?

The checkpoints are not hidden, but they may be down small alleyways or behind trees. The object is to visit all the checkpoints in the correct order in as fast a time as possible. To do that, you need to pick the shortest route.

Tunbridge Wells Urban Orienteering has a time trial format, so you race against the course and the clock, rather than face to face against your competitors. Several competitors will start at the same time and there will be hundreds of people out and around town at the same time, all at different stages on their course. But there are different courses, so following someone else might take you to the wrong spot: you have to find your own route.

The route will be mainly on tarmac roads and paths. There may be some sections of grass.

The photo shows Ali McLeod, organiser of the Edinburgh race, whilst competing in Perth. Urban Orienteering takes place all over the country and now in fact in many cities around the world.

## How far?

Choose your course. There is a course for complete beginners, but you may want to choose a more difficult course. The distances vary from 3k to 8k, but remember, this is measured in a straight line, the shortest possible distance is typically 50% further.

## It looks a bit hard?

The map is designed to be intuitive, so it's not technically difficult at all. The one thing that's missing is street names. Really all you have to be able to do is keep your map the right way up and turn left or right. Some people use a compass to help, but it isn't essential. It helps to be able to judge the distance. Map scales are large: e.g. 1:4000 so 1cm on the map is 40 metres on the ground.

## What kit do I need?

Trainers, t-shirt and shorts are fine. We provide the map, and an electronic timing stick, which you use to register at each checkpoint. Compass or GPS are allowed, but few people use them.

## Take me through an example?

This map shows the start (triangle) and the first 5 controls in an Urban Orienteering race. Red lines connect the checkpoints numbered 1-5. Yellow is grass, green is trees, beige is roads/pavement. The main rules are common sense – for example, you can't choose a route through houses (grey) or private gardens (olive green) or high walls (thick black lines). [The full set of symbols is online here](#)



Look at map extract. The start is at the triangle, so head west along the path and across the grass until you see a car park on your right. In the far left hand corner is a small alleyway between two houses: your first checkpoint is just down there on a bush. To get to number 2, go back to the car park and out the exit road. Right at the T-junction, round a left hand bend, then turn left then turn right at the next T junction: the checkpoint is on another bush on the left hand side of the road. Can you see a shorter route?