

What is orienteering?

A basic guide

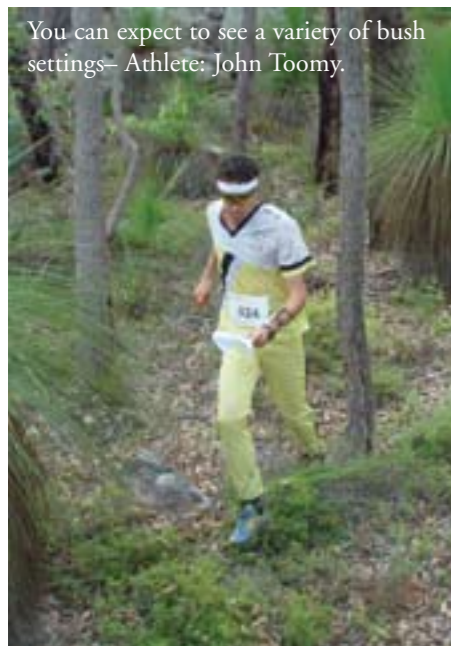
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If you take enjoy in running through beautiful wilderness surroundings, or you appreciate a mental challenge, then Orienteering is the sport for you.

What is orienteering?

Orienteering is a running race through bushland, where you have to find your own way around the course using a specially produced map. An Orienteering course is designed to test both the orienteer's physical strength and their navigation skills.

In an Orienteering race you are given a map with a series of "controls" (checkpoints) marked on it. The challenge of Orienteering is to find your way from the start to the finish, visiting all the controls along the way, in the fastest time.



You can expect to see a variety of bush settings— Athlete: John Toomy.

The Challenge

Top level orienteers have to be able to run as fast as possible through bushland, whilst making split second navigational decisions. Physically the top orienteers have to be agile for weaving their way through the bushland, and clearing all the obstacles the rough terrain throws at you as efficiently as possible. Courses are often in steep terrain so the best orienteers have to be able to run strongly up hill, down hill, and along steep hill sides.

The mental challenge is to make split second navigational decisions, whilst reading your map on the run. The aim is to be able to think clearly whilst pushing your body to the limit, and to not let your decisions be affected by the stress of the competition.

Getting Started

If that sounded a bit intimidating don't worry. At orienteering races there are always a range of courses provided, catering for all levels from the beginner to the top level competitor. Orienteering also caters for all agers, with age classes starting from the under 10's and going up to the over 80's.

At a race there may be up to 10 courses varying both in length (from around 1.5 up to 20 km), and in their navigational difficulty. Completing an orienteering course may take about 20-40 minutes for the easier courses, and 1-2 hours for experienced orienteers on the more difficult courses.

All major cities in Australia have active



At the top end, things can get pretty hard-core, just ask Hakan Eriksson!

orienteering communities. Each state association will hold between 1 and 3 orienteering races each week. To find out when and where races are you can go to www.orienteering.asn.au and follow the links to your state association. Here you will find detailed race calendars, and everything else you need to know about getting started.

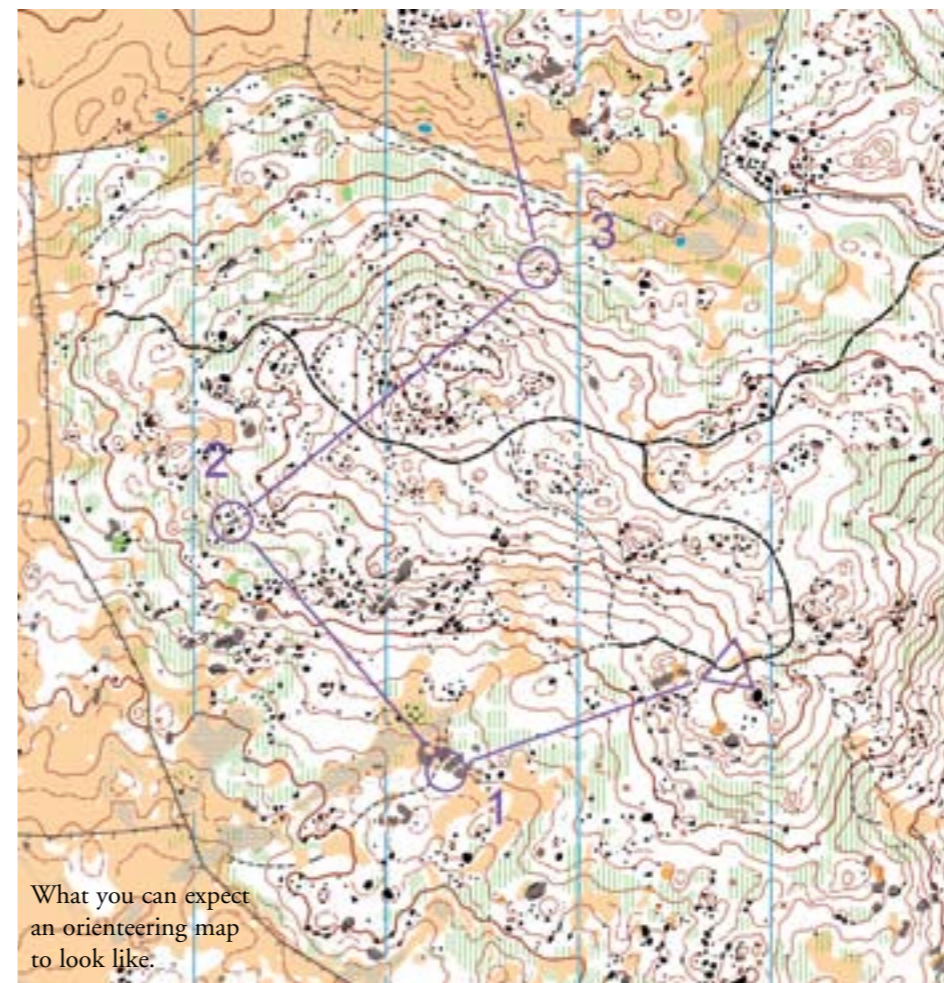
For beginners you just have to turn up to a race, and one of the race officials will help you out with instructions on how to register, how to interpret the map, and help with getting you out onto the course.

Equipment

As a beginner normal running cloths and shoes are fine as you will stay mainly on formed tracks. When you start doing more advanced courses you may want to invest in some specialised orienteering clothes that give you more protection in the bush. You can also buy orienteering shoes. These give you more traction in the rough bushland; are more stable so that you are less likely to role an ankle; and more resilient to the bush, so that they will last longer than a pair of running shoes.

The Map

Orienteering maps are specially produced for Orienteering. They give a very accurate picture of the terrain; using contours to show the land forms; different colour



What you can expect an orienteering map to look like.

symbols to depict the "runability" of the bushland, and the different details in the terrain. A general break down of the map symbols follows:
white sections are for average forest, green patches are for thicker bush which will impede your progress, and yellow are areas

of open land.
black is for tracks, fences, power lines and rocky features
blue is for water features such as creeks (although these are often dry in Australia)
brown is for earth features, including contour lines to show land shape.



Relay start at the world champs.

What does it cost?

Entry fees vary from state to state, and depending on the size of the race. As a non member of an Orienteering association the average entry fee would be under \$10 and around 30% cheaper if you are a member. Larger national level races could cost between \$20 and \$30 to enter.

Orienteering in Australia

Around 11,000 people compete in Orienteering races in Australia each year. Over 5,000 of those people are registered members of Orienteering clubs. The biggest competition held in Australia each year is the Easter 3-Days. It is held over 3 consecutive days at Easter time in different locations around Australia, it regularly attracts over 1,000 competitors.

Orienteering in the World

There are 65 member countries of the International Orienteering Federation, and around 40 countries that regularly compete in World Championships races.

The home of Orienteering is Scandinavia, where the sport has been around for over 100 years. There are numerous races in Scandinavia each year that attract over 10,000 competitors. The largest of all races is the Swedish 5-days, that has up to 25,000 competitors competing each day, for 5 consecutive days. Most of the world top orienteers either live in Scandinavia, or spend large proportions of the year there competing for Scandinavian clubs.



Holger Johansen clammers up a steep hill at the World Champs.

RELAY



Some typical Australian bush - Emma Prime in action.