



How to be a Planner - a Quantock Orienteers one page guide

There are three officials involved in any orienteering event: Planner, Controller and Organiser. The Planner designs the courses, which the Controller checks.

The Planners job is to:

- **Design courses**

Successful Planning is a time consuming exercise, so start early!

At a QO Forest League event there are six courses: White, Yellow, Orange, Light Green, Green and Blue. At a Galoppen there are eight courses, six as above, plus Short Green and Brown.

Before starting, get the latest British Orienteering rules and guidance. All can be found [here](#): although the relevant parts are [Appendix B](#) especially the last two pages, and [Guideline B](#). For a successful event the primary requirement is to get the appropriate technical difficulty and length for each course as defined by the rules and guidance.

Generally QO's areas are quite technical and demanding, so the course lengths should be at the short end of the range given in Guideline B. A good way to judge the right course length is to look at the results from the last event in that area, noting the course length. The time taken by most competitors on blue should be between 55 and 90 minutes. Use this to judge the optimum blue course length and then calculate the ideal lengths of other courses using the length ratios in Guideline B.

Get the latest copy of the map. It may also be worth getting copies of the courses from the last event in the area, this will give ideas, and avoid unintentionally repeating the last planner's courses. Also check with the permissions secretary what parts of the area can be used and whether the landowners have set any conditions on the land use.

Designing courses can be done in many ways. Most planners will start with an "armchair" planning exercise. The traditional method is to put pins in the map at potential controls and use string to judge the course length. A more contemporary method is to use orienteering software such as [Purple Pen](#) which can be used with any map in .jpg format.

It is often best to start by designing the white and yellow courses. This will probably decide the start, finish and car park locations. Get these agreed with the controller at an early stage. Try to keep these as close together as possible and still comply with the course guidelines.

Having prepared draft courses go out into the forest to visit all the control sites. If the site is suitable then "tag" the site with a matchbox size piece of coloured insulating tape. You may find tags in places from previous events - remove these and it may be wise to write some code on the tape e.g. your initials.

You will probably need at least three visits to the wood to tag sites, as your courses evolve and adapt to any changes you find when you are out there. Keep an eye out for any features where the map may not be correct or up to date. Either get the map updated, or avoid these areas.

When all sites are tagged, send your plans to the Controller.

Expect the Controller to require some changes. Don't be defensive! Remember the Controller is trying to help troubleshoot the event.

When the courses are agreed with the Controller send them to the mapper for map preparation and printing.

- **Set out controls**

Arrange to collect the controls in advance of the day. You can place around six controls per hour, so to have the courses ready on time you may need to set some out the day before. However, to avoid theft and vandalism, only set out the more obscure controls - leave those in public areas and on paths to be set out on the event day.

- **Collect controls**

Get about five people to help on the day by collecting controls. Wait until the Organiser says that everyone is finished, or until courses close before collecting.

Ask collectors to remove the tag as well as bringing back the controls.