

## INFORMATION TO HELP TEACHERS & GROUP LEADERS PREPARE THEIR GROUPS FOR ORIENTEERING AT EXETER RIVERSIDE VALLEY PARK

- Clothes:** Trainers, tracksuits/jogging trousers.  
(Shorts are not allowed at competition events -a rule of the sport - for safety. Jeans may not be considered suitable for running.)  
Long sleeved T-shirts may be worn if it is a hot day.  
Cagoules or anoraks may be needed if rain is likely.
- Compass:** Not essential and should only be brought if the group has been taught how to use it to 'set' the map using the red end of the needle.
- Watches:** Older group members who own watches should be encouraged to wear them so that they return to their group leaders at their appointed time!
- Whistles:** It is also a good idea for each person/pair to carry a whistle and to be given instruction on when and how to use it.

**Pre visit work:** It is advisable that all group members who are visiting a new area for orienteering should have done some preliminary work in the classroom, school hall or grounds so that they understand the following:

- (a) a map is a pattern of shapes:
- (b) symbols are used to depict features on the ground;
- (c) when following a route on a map it is essential to keep the map 'set' so that one always faces the direction of travel.

**Permissions:** Although no specific permission is required to use the area, it is a good idea to contact Haven Banks Outdoor Education Centre if you intend to take a group orienteering, as other activities may be taking place on the day you intend to visit. The area may also be unusable due to flooding.

**Contact:** For further information about the orienteering courses, please contact Haven Banks Outdoor Education Centre, 61 Haven Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 8DP, Tel: 01392 434668 (during normal weekday working hours). email [info@haven-banks.co.uk](mailto:info@haven-banks.co.uk) website: [www.haven-banks.co.uk](http://www.haven-banks.co.uk)

**Safety:** You should be aware that there are a number of potential hazards around the park. The main hazard is water related. Both the Exeter Canal and the River Exe flow through the park. Occasionally the river floods the low lying areas of the park, and river banks can be both unstable and difficult to define. Group leaders should make their group members aware of such risks. In addition you should be aware that traffic uses some of the roads; cyclists move very quickly along the cycle tracks; cattle graze some of the fields; and dog walkers use the area. There are also a number of barbed wire fences. The longer Light Green and Red courses cross the Exeter Canal by the lock gates at Double Locks. Particular care is needed there. You should complete a risk assessment form for your own organisation. If you do not have one, you can download a copy of the Devon County Council Risk Assessment Form from the website.

**Maps etc:** Maps and control descriptions are obtainable from either the Haven Banks Outdoor Education Centre, or by visiting the website at [www.orienteeringindevon.org.uk](http://www.orienteeringindevon.org.uk). Haven Banks will make a charge for maps sold. Maps downloaded from the website are in pdf format and you will require pdf reader software to be able to read and print them off. See the website for further details. You may print off as many copies of the pdf as you wish, and there is no charge.

**Control posts:** Control sites are marked by a 100mm wooden square post approximately 750mm high. Each post has a red and white plaque 75mm square on one face, and is identified by a number on the plaque. The number will correspond to the number on the control description list for the course you are doing. Routed in the same face of the post is a letter. Competitors write this letter in the appropriate box on their control card to show they have visited the control. There is a separate list downloadable from the web site of control numbers and codes for you to use to check control cards.



**Start & Finish:** The Start/Finish for all courses is marked on the ground by the Start/Finish post similar to the control marker posts. It is located approximately 300m South of the bridge by the Harbour Master's Office. It is marked on the map by a purple triangle.

## Upon arrival:

- Sort out the group into pairs. (It is not advisable to send out larger groups together as we find from experience that more than two will argue or chat and lose concentration.)
- Give each group member a map.
- Check that everyone who sets off from the start knows which post(s) they are going to and that they have talked through with one of the helpers which way they are going.
- Extra helpers can be placed around the area to ensure safety.
- Do a map walk. See suggested exercises below.
- Continue with short courses. You may want to make up slightly longer courses for those who are more experienced or who 'catch on' quickly. However a navigational problem such as going from the start to a far away post is regarded as far too difficult and requiring too many 'decision' points for group members. (Group members can navigate a far more complicated course in their own school grounds than they can in an unfamiliar area, so only give longer or harder courses to those you are confident can tackle them and only after they have completed the easier tasks.)
- If you progress at a steady pace, all should succeed. It is better that everyone leaves with the idea that orienteering is fun and easy; not that it's about getting lost - in fact, don't even mention the possibility!

## Suggested Exercises:

**Map walk:** It is always advisable to do a short map walk when visiting a new area. During the walk the map should be orientated or 'set' at all times and you should stop and point out the different paths, features, trees etc. to familiarise the group members with the map.

Example. You could walk part or all of the Easy Access course pointing out the various features on the way. Show them a control so that they can see how it is marked, and where to mark their control card. It is best if the walk is done in manageable groups.

**Star exercises:** You might use the Easy Access Course to do a simple Star exercise. Set yourself up in the open area in the centre of the course. From there you send out group members to visit one of the controls and they then return to the teacher/group leader to be given another control to go to. Repeat this several times.

**Easy courses:** Start with the Yellow course and progress from there.

**Harder courses:** Do not attempt until your group members have a degree of competence. The Light Green and Red are longer and more challenging. They also involve crossing the Exeter Canal by the narrow footway over the lock gates at Double Locks. You should warn your group members to take particular care crossing there.

