



## Orienteering: Safety Activity Checkpoint

**Council Approval:** Not Required

**Activity Permitted For:** J C S A

**Not Allowed For:** Daisies and Brownies

### About Orienteering

Orienteering is an activity that involves using a map, compass, and navigational skills to find your way around or across an unfamiliar area. The activity may also incorporate camping, backpacking, boating, hiking, cross-country skiing, or horseback-riding skills.

Orienteering often takes place on wilderness trails, although events can take place in just about any terrain such as a beach, urban area, or park. Orienteering uses control markers to flag various land features found on the map, serving as checkpoints along a course.

Be certain to practice Leave No Trace while orienteering. Girls should always stay on trails.

Orienteering is not allowed for Daisies and Brownies, but they may be ready to learn pre-orienteering activities such as map reading, navigation, and map drawing. Brownies may also enjoy geocaching. See [Geocaching Safety Activity Checkpoint](#).

### Learn More:

- [Orienteering USA](#)
- [Orienteering Course Safety](#)
- Ethics and generally accepted rules of orienteering: [Orienteering Association of British Columbia](#)

### Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and their caregivers, and ask about needs and accommodations. Contact the location in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities.

### Safety Activity Checkpoint for Trail Orienteering

**Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Participants receive instruction from a person experienced in orienteering before navigating an orienteering course. First-timers participate on a beginner-level course. Girls with previous topographic map-reading experience may be eligible to attempt an advanced beginners' course.

**Select a safe orienteering site.** The site selected is a park, camp, or other area with a good trail network; proper landowner permission is secured to use the site.

**Always avoid orienteering during hunting season.**

**Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a waterproof first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in first aid, including adult and child CPR or CPR/AED. If any part of the activity is located 30 minutes or more from emergency medical services, ensure the presence of a first-aider with wilderness first-aid training.

**Follow basic orienteering safety standards.** Girls take part as a group or with buddies. Each participant is given a specific time period to complete the course and must check in at the finish area whether or not she completed the course. Beginning and finishing course times of each participant are carefully noted to ensure that all participants have returned.

**Take proper precautions in areas where poisonous plants, snakes, or ticks are prevalent.**

**Map your course.** [Get to know map symbols](#) and how things like elevation and relief are communicated on maps.

**Learn about orienteering techniques.** Before participating in orienteering, [learn about strategies such as pacing, thumbing, and handrails](#).

**Plan the right activity for the age group.** Juniors should do orienteering in small groups and be accompanied on a course by an adult with basic instruction in orienteering. Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors who have received training may orienteer in groups of at least two.

Competitive orienteering courses often require participants to operate independently; solo competition is not recommended for inexperienced girls or Juniors. However, Cadettes, Seniors, and Ambassadors whose skills match or exceed the demands of the course may participate in such competitions.

**Plan ahead.** When participating in a meet, there should be a clear area of safety (a safety lane), a specific finish time and location, and a search-and-rescue procedure designed by the competition's host and the Girl Scout adult volunteer.

Practice Leave No Trace skills before participating in orienteering. Pick up garbage you find along the way, be sure not to trample vegetation, and be aware of wildlife.



### Safety Gear

- Orienteering map
- Compass and watch
- Emergency signaling whistle
- Long pants, hiking boots, sneakers
- Daypack to carry personal belongings