

News

Helpful Tips for Course Setters

Details

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Created: 01 May 2014

If you are a course setter for one of our TOC events or are considering trying it some time, then I encourage you to read this. It has some helpful and possibly vital information on how to make your course setting go smoothly. You may also use it as kind of a checklist which covers many of the things to do.

Pre-Design Planning

Course Setter's Guide: Covers what you need to know for designing courses at local events. [Download it here](#).

Event Announcement (Draft): Write a rough draft of your event announcement early. Not only can this be done at any time it is a good way to help you with developing the concept for your planned event and alert you to some of the things that you will need to accomplish before the meet can happen. Examples of event announcements can be found on the TOC website at the [Archives page](#).

Course Design (Paper): Draw your preliminary courses on the map. Use the design standards in the Course Setter's Guide. Don't forget to check your courses for fit on the paper sheet size that you intend to use at the scale you want to use.

Ocad: This software makes it easy to design courses and print high quality course maps and clues. But it takes a little time to get familiar with it. Two helpful tutorials on how to set courses using Ocad 8 can be found on the TOC website at the [Documents, Guides, and Forms page](#). The demonstration version of this software is free and simple to install. Ask for it by contacting the [TOC Webmaster](#).

Permit: Contact the [TOC Permits Coordinator](#) and check on the status of your permit. Read the permit to make sure that your course design meets restrictions the land owner may have and that your event announcement spells out any requirements that must be met during the event.

Meet Director: Find out whether or not the meet director intends to host any clinics (include this in your event announcement). Let them know where the event headquarters will be set up and if necessary, coordinate any permit restrictions with them.

Flagging Plan: Prepare a map showing your preliminary control locations and your planned route so that you can check and revise your course design when you go into the field. Review beforehand how you will navigate to each control location using reasonable landmarks and attack points, as this will help you vet your control placement on the map.

Event Announcement (Publish): At least four weeks before the event send your event announcement to the [TOC Webmaster](#) for publishing.

Final Course Design

Equipment: For the latest on how to get into the equipment locker, [contact a board member](#). That's where you'll pickup your control markers, water cups, and flagging tape.

Course Design (Field): With your flagging plan in hand, visit the event site to verify the correctness and fairness of your preliminary design, to check the currency of the map, and to gather the data for making your control clues. Place flagging tape at the locations where the control markers are to be hung. The flagging tape will aid you in vetting your own work when you return later to hang the control markers. Recheck your course design for compliance with the Course Setter's Guide.

Checking Your Work: The following techniques can help you "self vet" your work: First, always try to approach control locations from different directions every time you go out to the site - this tends to catch major errors, if any. Next, utilize the strongest attack points possible when setting, even if you would not necessarily use those same attack points during competition because of the extra distance. Also, continue to navigate to the control location even after you think you know exactly where it is. Finally, after hanging the streamer or marker, instead of thinking about the next control in your course design try to navigate away from the control location to a "backwards" attack point to reassure yourself yet again that you indeed have your control location correct. Finally, if you have ANY doubts about a particular control location, appropriateness, or fairness, then remember that you can always simply change it to something else that you are entirely comfortable with.

Course Map: After you return from the field design, update the map, courses, and clues as necessary. Make adjustments to your drawn courses. After you are sure that your course design is complete, make sure all parts of the map are readable and not obstructed by clipping and offsetting your course symbols (control circles, lines, numbers, text) where necessary.

Clues: The orienteer should be able to find the control marker instantly once they arrive at the correct terrain feature as circled on the map and described by the clue. The clues must be clear and detailed enough to make this possible. At local events use text clues for beginning courses and symbol clues for intermediate and advanced courses. For information on how to make clue sheets, refer to the [International Specification for Control Descriptions](#) (pdf).

Control Markers: Select your control markers and check each to ensure it is in good shape and has the pin punch, the control code card, and the "Do Not Remove" card attached. Write down a list of the control codes from each marker in the same order that your markers are stored and ready to be hung.

Hanging Plan: Prepare a map showing your control locations and their codes on your planned route for hanging the markers and vetting their locations. The order that your plan shows you hanging control markers should coincide with your sorted list of codes that you made when organizing the markers. To enhance the self-vetting process, your route for hanging the markers and the attack points used should differ from those used to set the flagging tape. Bring a copy of your control clues to make sure the placement of the markers on each control feature is correct and that each code and description is correct on the clue sheet.

Making Changes: If you make any changes to your course design after this point, then there is a very high probability that something will go wrong - unless you vigilantly and diligently recheck all courses (especially if there are shared controls), the design standards, the final course maps, the control codes, the clues, and the flagging tape placements in the field. You must do this again for every change you make thereafter.

Printing and Hanging

Water: It can get pretty hot and dry here in Southern Arizona. Buy one-gallon jugs of drinking water to place at the water controls. For information on how much water to place and what interval, see the Course Setter's Guide.

Course Setter Notes: Write your course setter notes to warn orienteers about changed or unusual circumstances and restrictions or deviations from customary course design.

Printing: Make master copies of the course map, control retrieval map, and clue sheets. These can be printed on paper or as pdf files. Take these master copies to a printing business (such as The UPS Store) and make multiple copies for the event. Color copies should range from 29 cents to 59 cents per sheet depending on paper size and number (as of 2014). Make as many color copies of the map as you think will be needed for the event. You can estimate the number of participants by checking past results for your venue on the TOC website at the [Events Results page](#). Copy 20 or 30 black-and-white additional course maps for unexpected overflows in participants.

Hanging: Control markers that will be placed off the beaten path may be hung up to a couple of weeks in advance. The remainder may be hung the day prior, with the exception of those to be located on a heavily-traveled path or road - these should be hung on the morning just prior to the event to reduce the risk of theft. Same goes for setting out the water for the water controls. As you hang each control marker, be sure to remove the flagging tape that you hung earlier. If there is no flagging tape at the control location - stop. Do not just assume that someone or the wind must have removed it - this is a high-risk approach to handling this situation that has led to misplaced controls at many past events. Recheck the location very carefully and if you have any doubts about it, simply delete that control from your courses.

Cost Reimbursement: Course setters for TOC events are allowed to be reimbursed for direct costs of preparing for their event, including travel. For information on how to do this, contact the [TOC Treasurer](#).