

Keeping safe on Virtual and Permanent Orienteering Courses

When you take part in a VOC or POC event, you are responsible for your own safety and that of other people that you may encounter on your course. British Orienteering has produced a charter for orienteers during the current pandemic, please read and follow this advice while pandemic regulations remain in force. You must decide what is sensible and safe, but BOK makes the following recommendations to ensure your safety and enjoyment:

Before you set off.

Location

Events may be arranged in woodland, parks or urban areas. The courses may be 'score' or 'linear'. Make sure that the length and height gain on the course match your physical fitness. Adult novices should usually start with an intermediate rather than full-length course. Juniors must be accompanied if they run courses that involve crossing roads. The website event information should provide guidance on which courses are suitable for unaccompanied juniors.

Phone

- Check that your phone is adequately charged.
- Ensure that you have the appropriate orienteering App on your phone (UsynligO or MapRun), that it opens, and that you can log-in to the App. If using for the first time you may need to set up an account. If the event is in a hilly area, you should download the course to your phone at home in case the mobile internet connection is poor in the event area.
- You are recommended to also download the *What 3 Words* App from Apple or Android stores. This App divides the entire globe into 3m x 3m squares – each square being designated by three words. Should you injure yourself on course and require assistance you can specify your precise location to the emergency services using this system.
- Ensure that your phone is adequately protected against falls and rain. The phone and your car keys should be secure: either in a zipped pocket, or in a suitable bumbag or rucksack.

Clothing & Footwear

Dress suitably for the prevailing weather conditions. Most VOC and POC courses, whether urban, park, or forest, include running on surfaces that are slippery when wet, so footwear should have decent sole patterns or studs. 'Trail shoes' are a good compromise between flat-soled trainers and more aggressive studded shoes. If travelling any distance, you may want to take a towel and change of clothing. Particularly in summer, you may encounter nettles or brambles; suitable leg protection such as long socks or lycra leggings is advisable.

Food and Drink

Bring suitable food and drink for when your run is over. In hot weather you may want to take fluid with you on the course.

Solo Runners

If running by yourself, it is sensible to tell someone where you are going and plan to park your vehicle.

Time of Day

If running in the evening, consider taking a head torch in case you take longer than expected and dusk falls

On Course

Please ensure that you do not cause concern to residents or other users of the area. Give way to pedestrians and, whilst Covid remains a problem, ensure appropriate social distancing at all times, even if this slows you down.

Parking

Make sure that you clearly identify where you are parked.

Weather Conditions

Consider whether you need to wear wind- or waterproofs. In summer you may require sun-screen. Running on roads and pavements in icy conditions is hazardous and not recommended.

Terrain

- Some courses will take you into areas with steep slopes or cliffs. Reduce speed especially when descending hillsides.
- Rough ground, kerbs and tree roots can cause sprained ankles or falls.
- You should also be very wary in areas where brambles are growing. Some species have anchor roots at both ends of a stem and these can act like trip wires, while taller species can dangle thorned branches over paths.
- Take care crossing fences and stiles.

Roads

Only cross roads at locations with good visibility, watching for both cars and cycles. On some urban maps recommended crossing points are marked.

Cycleways and shared pavements

Some cycleways, particularly the Bristol to Bath route, are very busy and lack a defined side on which to walk or ride. Cyclists and scooters may travel fast and silently. Always be aware of your surroundings and look behind you when crossing from one side to the other of the cycleway.

Paths

Slow down or stop at blind corners, junctions and gateways to avoid collisions. Be aware of other people emerging from alleyways or doorways.

If you become lost

The UsynligO App will be able to help you and can provide distance and directions to the next control checkpoint. Alternatively use an App such as Google Maps to identify where you are and find your way back to your car park.

After Finishing

- Whilst voluntary, uploading your time to the VOC website allows others to know that you have finished.
- In rural areas, check to make sure that you have not picked up a tick.