

Simple maps and courses for street events

Preparing the map

Open Street Map (OSM) (www.openstreetmap.org) is a collaborative project to create a detailed map of the world. Since it is edited by local volunteers, even local towns can have significantly different levels of detail included. Open Orienteering Map is an application developed by Ollie O'Brien of SLOW to derive orienteering maps from OSM data. You can use it to create a simple map of your local area:

- Go to <http://oomap.co.uk>, and select the UK edition.
- Select paper size, orientation and scale. For a modern housing estate, A4 at 1:5000 is usually about right for a 45 minute score event. For a longer event, or a less dense or awkward shaped area, 1:7500 or 1:10000 might be better.
- Select an area either by entering a postcode, or clicking on the map and zooming in. Fine tune the area by selecting the centre dot and moving it around.
- Select the type of map: either StreetO or PseudO. Both have the same detail; the latter looks more like a traditional ISSOM sprint map, but as a result uses more ink which might be important if using a home printer. Which version looks better may depend on how much detail is included on OSM for the area.
- Enter a map title (click on the Edit pencil).
- Click Save, and when the pdf file has downloaded save it with an appropriate name.

There is an option to automatically add postbox locations (or blue plaques in London) as control points, but to get sufficient this tends to need a smaller scale map, such as 1:10000 or 1:15000. There is also an option to plan a course by adding control sites and descriptions, but Purple Pen is probably better for this as it permits adding out-of-bounds and other features.

Planning the course

Select a suitable start/finish – perhaps a car park or (with their agreement) a local pub. This is where planning on a local area that you know is a big advantage.

Go for a run with the map and note useful control features, perhaps street furniture like numbered lamp-posts or question/answers. For winter events, do this at night to ensure everything is visible when dark! Also note if OSM has included any inappropriate areas, such as private drives or offices, which need to be marked as out-of-bounds.

Preparing the map

Purple Pen is the free course-planning software developed by US orienteer Peter Golde that we use for most of our events. Download it from <http://purplepen.golde.org>.

- Open the software and select the map file generated above, entering the correct scale and orientation.
- Select “Add Course”, choose “Normal” or “Score” course, and give it a name.
- Use “Add Start”, “Add Finish” and “Add Control”’s as appropriate. A typical Wednesday evening urban Score course might have around 30 controls. Score courses can either be kept simple, by

giving each control the same value, or more sophisticated by making some controls more or less attractive by giving them an individual score. If needed, other courses can be added using some or all of the same controls.

- Unless all controls use the same feature, control descriptions may be needed. In the “All controls” display, select each control and make entries in columns C-F as appropriate. Add these to the map using “Add Descriptions” and drawing an appropriate sized box. (A question and answer approach will need more space, so will probably need to be printed on the back of the map instead).
- Check out “Add Special item” to mark things like out-of-bounds areas, or forbidden routes along dangerous roads. (If you are more interested, check out the other options: all of the purple ‘overprinting’ on the SN Trophy maps is generated using this software).
- Use <Course>, <Properties> to change how the controls are displayed on the map, e.g. to include the control score.
- Refine the print area (under the <File> menu), and print a test map. If you create a pdf file for later printing, ensure at that stage it is printed at “Actual Size” rather than scaled to fit!
- For map printing, there are various options. If printing on ordinary paper remind people to bring a plastic bag if wet. Local club member Colin Dickson can sometimes print enough maps for Wednesday activities on waterproof paper – see the address list. For larger events we would send the Purple Pen (.ppen) and map files to BML, who we use for printing our event maps.

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