

Planning Colour Coded Courses for the West Midlands League

Introduction: Colour Coded events provide competition for orienteers of all abilities. Courses are designated by colour, where each colour represents a course with a certain level of technical difficulty and approximate length (generally the darker the colour the longer and harder the course). This ensures a consistency of course standards between events so that someone entering an Orange course one weekend will be able to enter an Orange course the following weekend confident that the physical and technical standards will be similar.

A youngster would be expected to start on either the White or Yellow course, whilst an adult novice could sensibly begin with the Orange course.

(Competitors on the White and Yellow courses should have the opportunity to look at their courses, and even discuss them with their parents or teachers, before they start. This can be achieved by giving them their maps at registration or in the pre-start area.)

Courses: A West Midlands League Event should offer the courses shown in the table below.

Course	Technical Difficulty	Minimum-Maximum length (km)	Approximate course length ratio (Black = 1.00)	Expected time for most competitors (minutes)
White	1	1.5 - 2.0	0.14	15 - 35
Yellow	2	2.0 - 3.0	0.22	25 - 45
Orange	3	2.5 - 3.5	0.25	35 - 60
Light Green	4	3.0 - 4.0	0.30	35 - 60
Short Green	5	3.0 - 4.0	0.30	40 - 70
Green	5	3.8 - 5.0	0.39	45 - 75
Blue	5	5.5 - 7.5	0.56	55 - 90
Brown	5	8.5 - 12.0	0.85	65 - 105

Notes for Planners: For the Colour Coded scheme to be successful it is essential that a course designated as a particular colour must be of the appropriate length and difficulty. Adhering to the above table is essential in ensuring that standards are comparable across all West Midlands League Events, and between these and larger Regional and National events.

The definitions of the levels of Technical Difficulty are explained in "Appendix B: Course Planning" of the British Orienteering Rules. Some areas can only provide orienteering of technical difficulty 4 for the Short Green course and above. In this case courses up to and including Light Green must still be planned to the correct technical standards as outlined in Appendix B. They should not be made technically easier just to make Light Green easier than Short Green at that particular event. Unfortunately the limitations of such areas means that Short Green and above will by necessity be easier than the maximum technical difficulty allowed.

The time range shown is that which the majority of the competitors who usually run that course should take to complete it. Thus it would not be unusual for someone running below their normal colour to complete the course considerably faster. Similarly, someone may choose to run above

their normal colour (e.g. for a longer training run) and consequently take considerably longer than the time shown.

The lengths of the courses needed to achieve the expected finishing times will vary according to the physical and technical difficulty of the terrain. The length ranges shown are actual course lengths, ignoring height climb, and generally course lengths should not be outside them.

For easy areas the course lengths will be towards the top end of the range. For difficult or more physical areas the course lengths will be towards the bottom end of the range. The lengths for each course should normally be at a similar position within the range to provide a steady progression. e.g. if Short Green = 3.3 km ; Green = 4.3 km ; Blue = 6.2 km ; Brown = 9.5 km ; that is fine. However if : Short Green = 3.6 km ; Green = 4.2 km ; Blue = 7.0 km ; Brown = 8.6 km ; then something is probably wrong.

On smaller areas it may not be possible to plan a Brown course of the correct length without undue repetition. In such circumstances it is better not to try and do so. Brown course competitors run on the Blue course, with the correct calculations for league points being sorted out afterwards.

The process of working out what the course lengths should be is based on a notional Black course, a colour which is not used in the West Midlands League. If it did exist it would be planned such that an elite standard M21 competitor would finish the course in between 65 and 70 minutes. This is equivalent to them running the Brown course in around 55 to 60 minutes, so provided that you have an idea of a top M21's speed from previous events on the area (or somewhere similar) this gives you the required course length for the Brown. All other course lengths can then be scaled accordingly.

Course Length Ratios, which refer to course lengths which are "corrected" for height climb by adding 0.1 km for every 10m of climb, are a useful check that courses are right in relation to each other. These are taken from the BOF Guidelines where the Black course is allocated a course length ratio of 1.00. It will often be the case that the nature of the terrain forces the course lengths away from the precise course length ratios given above, but don't stray too far. However, for courses of Technical Difficulty 1, 2 and 3 it is more important that the course is of the correct technical difficulty than the correct length.

West Midlands Colour Coded Badges: These are an incentive scheme for newcomers, particularly children, as they move up from the easiest courses on to more difficult ones. The Colour Coded courses included in the scheme, in increasing order of difficulty, are White, Yellow, Orange, Light Green, Green, Blue and Brown, and badges can be obtained on each of these. Colour Coded Badges are particularly important for Juniors as they are used for selection into the West Midlands Junior Squad. (see <http://www.wmoa.org.uk/aboutjuniors.html>)

The easiest way to obtain Colour Coded Badges is by taking part in West Midlands League events. A competitor qualifies for a Colour Coded Badge by achieving the Colour Coded Standard for that course on three separate occasions at these events.

A White Colour Coded Standard is achieved by anyone who successfully completes the White course. For courses other than White the Colour Coded Standard is calculated using whichever of the following two methods gives the larger number of qualifiers:

- The time that is achieved by at least 50% of those who started the course, which includes those who retire or are disqualified.
- 150% of the winner's time.

The Colour Coded Standard time for each course is often included in the final results, but if not can be easily calculated using the above.

Juniors who have obtained the three required standards should automatically receive the appropriate Colour Coded Badge, but if this doesn't happen then they should contact Hilary Simpson of Octavian Droobers at her e-mail address: colourbadges@wmoa.org.