



SOGO@Home Level 3 Activities

Week 7 Activity: Route choice

Technical difficulty ★★★★★☆

Overview:

Go on a run, and take a map with you (courses from past Junior World Orienteering Championships). While running, plan and visualize routes to all of the controls. Afterwards, compare your route choices with routes of athletes who ran the race.

Skill description:

This activity focuses on route choice and being able to read a map while running.

When you're trying to plan a route between two controls, the CAR acronym is often helpful:

1. Identify the **C**ontrol feature
2. Identify possible **A**ttackpoints - distinct, unique features such as trail junctions, recognizable hills or boulders, which you can use to 'attack' the control. They should be large and located just outside the control circle if possible.
3. Identify multiple **R**outes to one or more of the attackpoints (try looking left, right and straight. Not all legs have multiple route options)
4. Pick which of the different **R**oute choices is the best for you

While all courses have route choice, it is especially important for long and sprint courses.

- Long courses tend to have very long legs with many route choice options. They often force competitors to decide between a longer route but with more paths to run on or a more direct route through the forest. Climb and vegetation runnability (i.e. how dark the green is) are also very important to consider.
- Sprint courses will often have route choice legs where you have to choose the shortest way around a building, but also can have legs where you have to avoid 'traps' created by fences, walls or out of bounds areas. It's important to make sure your route works the whole way before running somewhere and realizing there is an impassable fence between you and the control.

Background:

The Junior World Orienteering Championships (JWOC) is the top level of competition for orienteers under 20 years old. It is normally held annually and involves five races: sprint, long, middle (qualifier and final) and relay. Last year, JWOC took place in Denmark. Canada sent a team of five junior women and four junior men.

Plan:

Set-up: Print the map of the JWOC long race from 2019 ([men](#), [women](#))*. You can also look at the recap video [here](#) to get a feel for what the terrain is like. If you're going for a longer run or are an experienced map reader, consider printing more than one map (see additional map options below). If you are newer to orienteering, interpreting the urban maps of sprint courses will be easier than forest maps, so you could choose the sprint map (below).

*Note that you only need to print the first two pages - there are two variations of the course due to a phi loop (type of forking used to separate competitors). The second page is the end of the course (separated on the back page to reduce overlap).

Main activity: Go for a run. Start with your regular warmup of running and dynamic stretches, and then while you're running, read the map looking at each leg in order and determining which route choice you'd take. If possible, try to also visualize each leg by thinking about what you would see along the way and what the most important features you would use to navigate would be (if you want to learn more about map reading theory, watch [this](#) talk put on by Orienteering Canada - it discusses some interesting strategies to improve your map reading skills). Consider doing part of the run in a natural area to better emulate map-reading in a forest. Finish with a cool down including static stretching.

IMPORTANT: Always be aware of your surroundings. You should only be taking brief glances at the map (as you would when orienteering). Make sure you watch out for cars, people and other hazards.

Afterwards: Since there was GPS tracking ([men](#), [women](#)) for all competitors, you can compare your route choices to those made by the athletes who ran the course. When I'm looking at routes, I like to:

1. Choose a smaller group of orienteers to look at by unchecking the list of names in the top left and searching for the competitors I want. For example, this could be the top three (in this case Kasper Fosser, Elias Jonsson and Aston Key or Ida Haapala Veronika Kalinina and Grace Molloy) or the Canadian juniors (search CAN)
2. Show the whole route instead of a disappearing tail by clicking on the wrench icon, then clicking Tail, and then selecting Route
3. Choose "SYNC" (top right) so it is like they are racing head to head - it is easier to see which route was faster
4. Increase the race speed to about 30x (bottom left) and then click play to watch

Further courses to do:

- The [sprint](#) from JWOC 2019. Men's and women's course maps, along with GPS tracks ("live GPS Tracking") are on the page if you scroll down. Try to spot a Canadian in the recap video!
- The JWOC [long](#) from 2018. It has very interesting terrain that is quite different from most of the maps we have in Canada. If you want to learn about the experiences of a Team Canada athlete at JWOC that year, [here's](#) a blog post from the HPP Blog. (it includes some handy tips about the terrain!)
- The JWOC [sprint](#) in 2018 had some particularly technical legs. [Here](#) is a link to an article discussing the race, including route choices analysis of the men's race.
- Most of the previous years' JWOC courses are also available online and have GPS tracking.

If you're keen for more map reading while running activities, Orienteering Canada is providing exercises for free during COVID-19. Lots of the exercises have you run while map-reading, and figuring out things like route choice, what direction you leave the control in, or what the control description should be. There are also some different ones like the 8 Control Square courses, which I think are super fun! Find them all [here](#).