

Know your sport: Event Officials

Events come in different sizes and vary in importance. However there are nearly always 3 main officials involved. Here we explore their various roles and responsibilities. Without these officials, there would be no events. If you have yet to take on one of these roles, perhaps this guidance might give you the confidence to offer...

Before the main officials start on their key tasks, there are two other vital things which have to be completed:

- (1) Permission has to be obtained from the land owner or owners. In many clubs, including Berkshire Orienteers, the responsibility for obtaining land permission is normally separated from the subsequent tasks. This is a key role for the club's **Event Secretary**. By keeping this with one person, the land owner(s) will have a single club contact. This has many benefits - the club will get to know what are the important concerns of the owners and owners gain confidence in the ability of the club to meet their needs. In situations where an organiser (*see below*) is appointed at an early stage, it may be their responsibility to gain the required permission.
- (2) A map must be available. The creation of the map by the **mapper** is also often separate. Although the first time the map is produced there may be a specific event in mind, in many cases, the map will already exist and it just needs some updating - this can often be done by the planner (*see below*).

Once permission has been obtained and a map is available (or in preparation), it is then necessary to appoint the event officials - an **organiser**, a **planner** and a **controller**. The following summary is based on information contained on the 'Event Officials' part of the British Orienteering website and the 'Rules of Orienteering'. For the rules, see <https://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/page/rules> where the main Rules can be downloaded as well as the supplementary Appendix C ('Event Officials').

Organisers

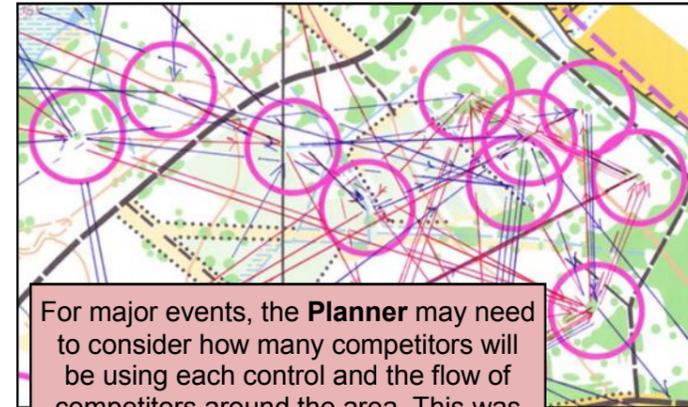
In simple terms, the organiser is responsible for those matters which are not directly related to the actual competition - to the courses - as these are the responsibility of the planner (*see also box on right*). However, it is not that simple. There has to be interaction between these two officials. As an example, the location of the start and finish need to take into account the available car parking. It is usually best to have the finish close to the registration/download so as to ensure competitors do not forget to download when they finish; it also means that first aid can be easily available to finishers and any reports of problems from early competitors can be acted on quickly. Another issue is the overall safety of the event. The Organiser, although having overall responsibility for the safety of the event, does not usually know the area and the potential hazards that competitors will face. This is for the planner to consider and to discuss with the organiser and to agree appropriate measures to minimise the risk to competitors.

The **Organiser** is responsible for:

- Establishing the event framework - this includes everything before the start and after the finish including the start & finish.
- The safety & welfare of the participants and other members of the public in the event area
- This will involve ensuring that the following are carried out: land permission, event registration, access, car parking, assembly area, publicity timescales and in conjunction with the planner the courses.
- Risk assessment, risk management and contingency plans
- The equipment to be used including electronic punching, clocks etc
- Volunteer helper requirements
- Checklists for managing the event on the day and after the event (car park, assembly, registration, start, finish, results)
- Creation of an event timetable
- Event safety and missing competitors procedures



Organisers arrange the provision of toilets and helpers for the car park. Both seen here at our 2015 Concorde Chase



For major events, the **Planner** may need to consider how many competitors will be using each control and the flow of competitors around the area. This was part of the planner's map for the 2014 Southern Championships at Star Posts.

Planners are able to plan orienteering courses designed to meet the needs of the orienteers who will participate in an event. The planner's responsibilities include:

- Planning courses in accordance with the guidelines
- Choosing control sites
- Determining the shape and length of the courses
- Ensuring the course will challenge the participants and differentiate between them
- Preparing draft control descriptions
- Placing controls

Planners

As indicated in the box above, the Planner is responsible for the actual setting of the course(s) and ensuring that they are appropriate for the expected competitors - for example by meeting the guidelines for colour coded courses. This will involve a number of visits to the area to identify potential control sites and to identify any necessary map updates (particularly around those sites and likely route choices). Selected control sites are usually marked with some coloured tape to identify the location. They then use computerised systems (such as OCAD or Purple Pen) to draw up the courses, allocate control codes and create the control descriptions - all subject to the approval of the Controller (*see below*). Once approved, these then have to be submitted for printing in time for the event. The Planner also has to ensure that the correct controls are put out on the day (or earlier) and to ensure the collection of the controls at the end of the competition. Any problems during the event relating to the controls and courses need to be resolved by the planner (with advice from the Controller)

There are 3 levels of Controllers (Grade A, Grade B, Grade C) that have slightly different responsibilities, however **Controllers** are responsible for:

- Ensuring the standards required for the event are delivered during the organising, planning, delivery and reviewing of the event
- The event and competition rules are adhered to
- Communicating with event officials using tact to influence the decisions the event officials take regarding the event
- Advice to event officials with regard to the potential pitfalls that should be guarded against
- Checking and advising on all aspects of the organisation of the event with the organiser and the planner
- Ensuring that the risk assessment has been carried out
- Ratifying the final paperwork for the event (final courses; course lengths and climbs; map corrections; control code allocations; course description sheets; overprinted maps)
- Providing feedback on all aspects of the event to organisers and planner

Controllers

Controllers provide an independent check on the work of the organiser and planner. They can be seen as providing a competitor's perspective. It is often considered that their main responsibility is to ensure that the planner sets appropriate courses - they normally check the proposed control sites (using the coloured tapes put out by the Planner) as well as checking the courses, maps and control descriptions before printing. However they also monitor the organisation and offer advice where necessary

At the lowest level of event (Level D) it is not necessary to have a specified 'Controller' but there is usually an experienced advisor (or mentor) to monitor preparations particularly if either event official is taking on the task for the first time. At the other Levels, an appropriate Controller has to be appointed.

As the level of the event rises (C to B to A), the complexity increases and the experience of the Controller has to rise. Controllers are subject to a system of grading (*see the box on the left*) with the regional associations granting Grade C and Grade B status and the national Events and Competition Committee granting Grade A status. The Grades correspond to the Level of event that the Controller can be responsible for. Continued activity as a controller (at the approved grade), planner and/or organiser is needed to maintain the grade.