

Course Planning Considerations for Older Age Groups

Some online material is available for planning orienteering courses, in particular from various course planning workshops - <https://www.sa.orienteering.asn.au/about-us/technical-information>

Also refer to Appendix 2 in the OA Foot Rules here - <https://orienteering.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2.1-OA-Foot-Competition-Rules-2018.pdf>

The intent of the course planner is to provide the appropriate orienteering challenge according to the navigational difficulty of each course. However the course planner also needs to consider the physical challenge of any course and its suitability for the expected age groups on a particular course, remembering that technical difficulty does not necessarily mean physical difficulty. So two important points to remember when course planning are

- Consider if the course is unnecessarily physical for age groups concerned - do not equate technical and physical difficulty
- Older age groups like a technical challenge but do not overdo the physical challenge

Physical challenge includes considering the

- Total climb on a course – this is recommended to be not more than 4 %, although in very fast running open terrain, higher climbs are possible as leg lifting over obstacles is much less
- For older age classes, consider if a lower climb is possible e.g. 3%, and avoid long steep uphill and downhill sections on a course. Going steep downhill is often more challenging than uphill
- Control sites that are physically difficult to get to e.g. at the bottom of a steep gully or creek
- Avoid a lot of green areas as these also can be physically more demanding
- Use your common sense!

For OY events, the expected ages of the competitors on a course are known, however for other events this is out of the control of the course planner and event organiser. In general though the older age participants do the shorter hard courses and the moderate courses so consider the above points in planning these courses.

Examples of variation between a course for younger fitter orienteers and older age classes are the two examples from the Australian Relays at Wiela – Bunyip Reach in 2018. The Course 1 example for elites covered all the types of terrain on the map, complex and at times deeper erosion gullies, and having to negotiate routes involving some cliffs. Course 6 which was the shortest hard course used shallower water courses for controls, with route options around steeper areas and gullies. This does however highlight the point that the course planner, when offering easier route choice options, cannot always be responsible when the orienteer chooses a physically more difficult route. For example on Course 6 – for controls 5 to 6, the physically easier route is available to go back past control 2 and down the gentler slope as opposed to the rocky steeper slopes on the straight line. This course still did have the unavoidable climb to the last control however.