

# WEE Guidance for Planning & Organising

## V3.0 19th September 2024 by David Williams

**We want folks to come back again (and alive, and in time for last orders).**

*This is a working document - suggestions for improvement welcomed*

V3.00: Added that RA should be sent to WEE coordinator and note to use the forum to prearrange volunteers. Added hail and heavy rain and thunderstorms to weather section (we have had thunder at WEEs)

### **Safety**

WEE is different - it will, most likely, be dark, cold, wet and if someone does get into trouble - there will be very few of us to go out hunting, we will all be tired, many may be short of battery power. By the time a police or lowland rescue service search can be organised - it may be too late.

That said we have never had a competitor needing assistance in 18 years but...

In addition to the standard organiser safety tasks the planner will need to make allowances for darkness and season:

**Control Sites and Terrain** - it will be dark. Hazards that are obvious and easily avoidable during daylight will be less visible and more of a challenge at night. We can't cover all eventualities and folks know what they are doing - but allowances for conditions may need to be made.

**Course Length, Physicality, Road Access** - think about where it goes and how long it is. Anticipate poor weather - and the possibility that the event may start in benign conditions which then deteriorate. We are all happy to run in rain, wind and sub-zero temperatures but, if things go wrong we'd rather be able to self-recover or be found without too much delay.

**Organiser Phone** - check coverage at registration location. If coverage is poor for your service provider - then arrange to borrow a phone or SIM (WEE coordinator has spares) Ensure the correct contact number is printed on the map.

On the evening of the event - make doubly sure that your phone:

- a) is ON
- b) is not on silent/do not disturb
- c) Has the call volume turned up so you can hear the ringer
- d) Has notification volume turned up and SMS notifications enabled (in case voice contact

not possible due to weak signals)

c) is not directing calls to answer phone

d) is on your person

e) **Has plenty of battery power** (keep it in a warm pocket - standard lithium cells don't like sub-zero temperatures). Consider carrying an extra powerpack.

When making planning and control placing visits, think of your own safety when out on site by letting a family member, and preferably also a club mate (who will have a better idea of the area), know where you are and an expected time back. The author arranges a "latest check in time" and phones the club mate on safe return to his car.

It is possible you may have newcomers at your event. Please make sure they are aware of the hard time limit (75 minutes), safety bearings and what to do if they become lost.

## The Risk Assessment

An existing RA, for a daytime event can serve as a good basis for a WEE RA but there are some extra things that should be taken into account.

RA should be sent to the WEE league coordinator for checking and counter-signature.

**Hazards** that may be trivially avoidable in the day may not be so at night by torchlight - ruined fences, deep pits, building voids, low trip hazards (bollards and road barriers), head height wires/branches/etc., crags in deep ground vegetation, ground clutter, rabbit and pot-holes.

**Ground Conditions** - rain, ice, snow may result may make surfaces and slopes more slippery than usual. Snow may hide hazards. Water features will be wetter/fuller than usual. Streams may be in spate.

**Weather Conditions** - Winter season - the likelihood of poor weather and the consequences arising from injury, hypothermia or disorientation are greatly increased.

**Low competitor numbers** - if someone is injured, chilled becomes lost it may be a long time before another competitor or a search team finds them.

RA's are not meant to be generic - they are a thinking aid - however here are some standard texts that may be included in RA for WEE. Previous WEE RA will be found at

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vzfpJtYkmd6n-DpONDvEDgpbeq9mWU\\_E?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vzfpJtYkmd6n-DpONDvEDgpbeq9mWU_E?usp=sharing)

<b>Hazard – note under these headings (see suggested examples to consider)</b>	<b>Possible outcome / injury including note on severity and likelihood of</b>	<b>Mitigation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What control measure?</li><li>• Who is responsible?</li></ul>
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	occurrence	
<b>Terrain</b>		
<p>Typical West Midland mixed woodland - rough ground, muddy/slippery surfaces, trip hazards, steep slopes, vegetation (stinging and scratching), steep-banked and muddy streams, fences (standing and ruined), fallen branches and trees, rabbit holes and similar, small passable rock faces.</p> <p>Additional hazards and mitigation will be venue, season and darkness specific - see examples in previous RA</p>	<p>Minor scratches from vegetation and bruises from trips on uneven ground and impact with trees and branches. Twisted ankles and sprains. The severity of this sort of injury is likely to be low</p>	<p>Normal orienteering hazards for which the experienced competitors at this event are prepared - no control measure necessary</p>
<b>Participants:</b>		
Age and experience	Getting lost in the dark - unlikely for experienced participants.	<p>Juniors below 16 years of age on the day of the event must be accompanied by a responsible adult</p> <p>Event details will advise potential participants to satisfy themselves that they have sufficient ability to safely take part in night orienteering, that they must carry suitable torchlight (<b>and a spare</b>) and a whistle, and that they must wear suitable clothing for the conditions.</p> <p>Carrying of a mobile phone will be encouraged. Planner's number will be printed on the map.</p>
Disorientation/tiredness	Getting lost/cold - unlikely for experience and regular participants.	Where any doubt arises experience/equipment will be double checked by organiser and additional guidance given where required.

		Fixed time limit mitigates against fatigue.
Possible medical problems/injury	<p>Hypothermia - moderate risk if ill equipped or injured and immobile.</p> <p>Very low risk of exhaustion, dehydration, hyperthermia due to season and time limit.</p> <p>Minor injury – cuts, bruises, sprains but unlikely to be of any consequence.</p> <p>Serious injury or medical condition – very unlikely.</p>	<p>Competitors to wear/carry clothing appropriate to the conditions.</p> <p>Organiser will keep a record of starters and finishers and will reconcile this during the event and as the course closes.</p> <p>A search team will be available towards the end of the event.</p> <p>Organiser will ensure there is a supply of blankets/clothing etc. that can be carried by the search team members.</p> <p>Appropriate first aid will be available close to the finish/at the car park.</p> <p>Emergency services to be called by the event organiser.</p>
Control Collection	All the above.	<p>Only experienced orienteers will collect controls.</p> <p>All will carry a mobile phone and a spare headlamp or torch.</p> <p>Organiser will ensure two people remain in the car park until all control collectors have safely returned.</p>
<b>Weather:</b>		
Heavy rain, snow, hail, ice, strong winds, fog, thunderstorms	<p>Getting lost in white out or foggy conditions</p> <p>Hypothermia</p> <p>Slips and trips due to slippery conditions.</p> <p>Impact from falling branches and timber.</p>	<p>Organiser will cancel the event if conditions are, or are likely to become, unsuitable for competition or travel.</p> <p>Organiser will make the decision and notify competitors online and by email, where provided, by 12</p>

Event takes place in darkness	Risk level depends on actual conditions - from high to zero.  Risks are increased	noon on the day or later in the event of a sudden unexpected change in the weather.  If inclement conditions are expected competitors may be required to carry (or wear) waterproof jackets (with an attached hood. (organiser)  Primary and backup lighting to be carried. (participant)
<b>Equipment</b>		
Standard orienteering "SportIdent" equipment (SI unit, Kite, Stake)	Potential minor injury if someone trips near stake but unlikely.	The SI unit on top of the stake prevents serious injury.

## Control Collecting

Think about this when planning the course. The linear-score format means that you can bend the course around and keep everything compact. There is no need to plan a classic long style course - go for a middle with a couple of longer legs for the young and fast. Your collecting team will be tired and possibly wet and/or cold even before they go out again, their headlamps may be short of battery power. No one should spend more than 30 minutes collecting controls.

Have a collecting plan prepared beforehand and have **a map, or maps, marked up**.

Make sure you **collar folks via the HOC forum or at registration** especially so they have time to make arrangements in the case they have someone preparing supper or expecting them home at a specific time.

Your collecting team will most likely be your **search team**. Plan a search strategy.

Make sure some folks (not necessarily collectors) **remain around until all the control collectors return**.

Require control collectors to carry their **phones** and take a spare torch.

**Tapes** - Remind collectors to bring in the tapes. Please make these easy to remove with cold/wet fingers (without needing to carry scissors or break the branch to which they are attached). Even a standard overhand knot can lock tight. I use a Half Bow which comes undone with a single tug.

## The Course and Controls

**It is meant to be fun** - folks should enjoy themselves and want to come back. We don't want experienced orienteers giving up after three controls and etc.

The "linear score" format means you don't have to plan a standard Blue/Brown - you can wrap the course around itself. This makes your task easier, gives slower runners more of a choice, is safer and makes collecting controls easier. Slower folks should still stand a good chance of getting half the controls and we, preferably, should not have "isolated controls a long way from the car park/road access".

It is not necessary to place controls on or near linear features - you can plan a proper TD4/5 course as long as the terrain to be crossed and the location of the kite is appropriate for the conditions.

So we can cater to, and not put off newcomers and senior competitors, you may like to scatter a few simple TD2/3 controls at the start and end of the sequence. Or an inner loop with a mixture of TD and then a circling halo for T4/5 interspersed in the numerical sequence.

Total course length does not need to exceed 7km straight-line on a flat and fast area - with reductions in length for climb, steep-descent, toughness and increases for track running.

At night competitors can't see as far - this makes route execution and control spotting more difficult. What is a fair control for a day event **may not be for a WEE**. Putting the control in the correct spot (according to the map) is not enough.

Patches of thicker vegetation (which may be too small to be mapped) while not a problem to skirt round or see through by day can be tricky at night - spotting the control banner and "staying on route" can be a challenge.

**Folks should not have to hunt around to find the flag once they get within the control circle.** A small error or deviation should not result in minutes of hunting or a return to an attack point.

An increased risk of trips and falls will mean folks will cover the ground more slowly (in addition to being more careful with navigation) - allow for this when setting course length, climb and physicality.

If you have any doubt about the map around a control site or the site's relation to attack points or flag visibility - use another control site

- Controls sites that the planner can't confidently return to (without relying on the tape) in daylight should not be used.
- Controls should be on clear and visible features - be especially careful with vegetation boundaries which can be tricky at night, and less obvious in the winter.
- Inherently hazardous control sites that could involve running towards or over **difficult**

**to see at night** cliffs, water bodies, roads, fences, deep pits etc should never be used.

- Consider using MapRun Checksites as your Controller when first identifying control sites and then again when putting out controls (especially at dusk/ in the dark and in a rush). This is providing the map is properly georeferenced. Alternately use two tapes - one lower down (the official tape, in case the visible one goes missing) and a long fluorescent flagging tape hung high (collect this in as you place the kite, tape available from the club store). The flagging tape speeds things up and eliminates “errors made under time pressure”.

## Helpers

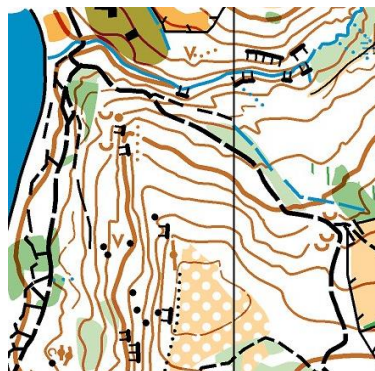
John Leeson writes:

*“There is an issue of encouraging others to help out at /put on WEE events. For the planner who has returned from putting out the controls to be greeted by a group of eager, kitted up orienteers who are ready to go, it is difficult to take time to speak to newcomers (which is really important to do) and to make sure that there are enough control collectors and that everyone has paid.*

*I think we should encourage helpers by offering them a run at the junior rate on a first come first served basis. Helper roles could include assistance with registration, preparing results and commentary and collecting controls- it's not really about the saving but it would help people feel involved (and maybe confident next year to have a go at planning an event themselves) and that they can contribute and the act of asking if someone is paying full or reduced fee would aid the thought process. When reserving maps members could indicate their willingness to help and we could aim to have a minimum of 4 helpers per event.”*

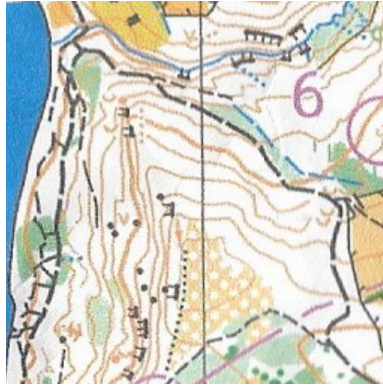
## Finally and Definitely!

If you are inkjet printing at home then consider printing at 1:7500 or 1:5000 and check that the printer settings/driver are putting enough ink on the paper to make things clear at night. Average age of WEE competitors is over 60.



Above - Screen grab from PDF before printing

Below - Home printing result



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