

ACE for Systematic Orienteering

You might have used the PDPD system to approach your orienteering navigation. BUT not everyone gets on with PDPD, so is there anything else?



Raul Ferra puts forward an alternative – ACE. Study the diagram below – from the [rf-coach website](https://www.rf-coach.com) with permission from Raul, thank you.

ORIENTEERING INDIVIDUAL ROUTINE: THE ACE SYSTEM (by RF-Coach)			
A	 Analyse the leg	Control placement and safe attack direction	<i>Start checking the "goal" and the best way to reach it from the surroundings</i>
		Obstacles and poor runnability areas to avoid	<i>Reading from forward to backward, find the places you should/must avoid</i>
		Good runnability areas and "fast tracks"	<i>Find the desirable places where running easy and fast. The width of the check will depend in the type of terrain and previous considerations (race strategy)</i>
		Simplification opportunities	<i>Search for very distinct objects which help to simplify along the potential routes</i>
C	 Choose the plan	According to the analysis and race strategy	<i>Once you analyze and understand the leg, choose the plan under the main guidelines stated on the race strategy</i>
		First macroroute, then microroute	<i>First choose the generic route (macro), and during the leg make other decisions choosing the best micro-routechoices</i>
		Divide the leg into pieces (checkpoints)	<i>When the leg is long, establish some "mandatory" checkpoints which you are going to visit during the leg, so that the long leg is broken into smaller legs.</i>
		Once decided, other options do not exist anymore	<i>Once you make a decision, it is final, so avoid thinking about the other options. Make changes ONLY if you notice something so clear that you didn't notice before</i>
E	 Execute the plan	Trust yourself	<i>You have a good plan because you have analyzed it well. You know how to do it because you have done it thousands of times</i>
		Talk to yourself positively	<i>Talk to yourself about what you must do, not what you must NOT do</i>
		Focus on the task (avoid extra thoughts)	<i>Maximum focus and use "trigger words" to re-focus if you get distracted</i>
		Using continuous orienteering	<i>Remember from where you come, last checkpoint, where you go,...</i>
		Permanent direction control	<i>If your direction is good, you have high chance to succeed. Check it often!</i>
		Advanced visualization	<i>Read in advance and make a mental picture of what you want to see</i>
		Correction features	<i>Use distinct features along your route to make small direction corrections</i>
		Micro-stops & mistakes protocol	<i>If you feel you are getting behind in your mapreading or things begin to not match, stop for 5sec, readback, analyze what happened, look, replan and go.</i>
Push when everything is under control	<i>Make your speed as higher as possible, especially when you have the control</i>		

It is interesting that this diagram starts with 'Analyse the leg'. This is very important – if you neglect to do this, you will just be heading off on more of a 'gut feeling' and this usually leads to a navigation disaster.

Take time to do this, you will become faster as you do more of this. Internalise your dialogue, think that your coach is sitting on your shoulder and asking questions about the leg. How you actually analyse the leg will depend on each individual – but there are some common areas e.g. obstacles / runnability.

When simplifying, try to do just that; many orienteers want to look for too much detail here, is that because you want the 'comfort blanket' of knowing where you are all the time?

'**Choose** the PLAN', this is aligned to the PLAN part of PDPD. Take note of the advice to divide the leg into smaller sections if it is a long leg and make sure you can identify these points as you pass them on the ground. Think of this as using stepping stones to cross a pond.

Concentrate on your choice – forget about the other 'What if I took that route instead?' as this is just taking up bandwidth in your brain.

What is involved in '**Execute** the PLAN'? Here the focus is very much on doing positive things:

- ▣ what you must do,
- ▣ confidence in your plan,
- ▣ good Direction (as in PDPD as well),
- ▣ Picture (again in PDPD) what you should see map <-> ground,
- ▣ check what you are seeing on the ground matches with what you expect to see
- ▣ if things do not feel right, then STOP!

Everyone has an individual style of orienteering, however the basics need to be robust enough to stand up under race pressure.

The models of 'ACE Orienteering' and 'Systematic Orienteering' also allow you to check post-race for your strengths and areas you need to work on as it is easier to identify if you have utilised a systematic model

ACE: Analyse the leg – Choose the PLAN – Execute the PLAN

PDPD: PLAN – good Direction – accurate Picture – idea of Distance