

Route Choice: what is this?

The course planner will give the competitor a choice of route between controls on a course.

The competitor has to decide how they will execute each leg on the course – this is their PLAN.

Remember, each competitor will choose their route depending on a set of factors which is unique to them; however there are common steps to think about when considering this.



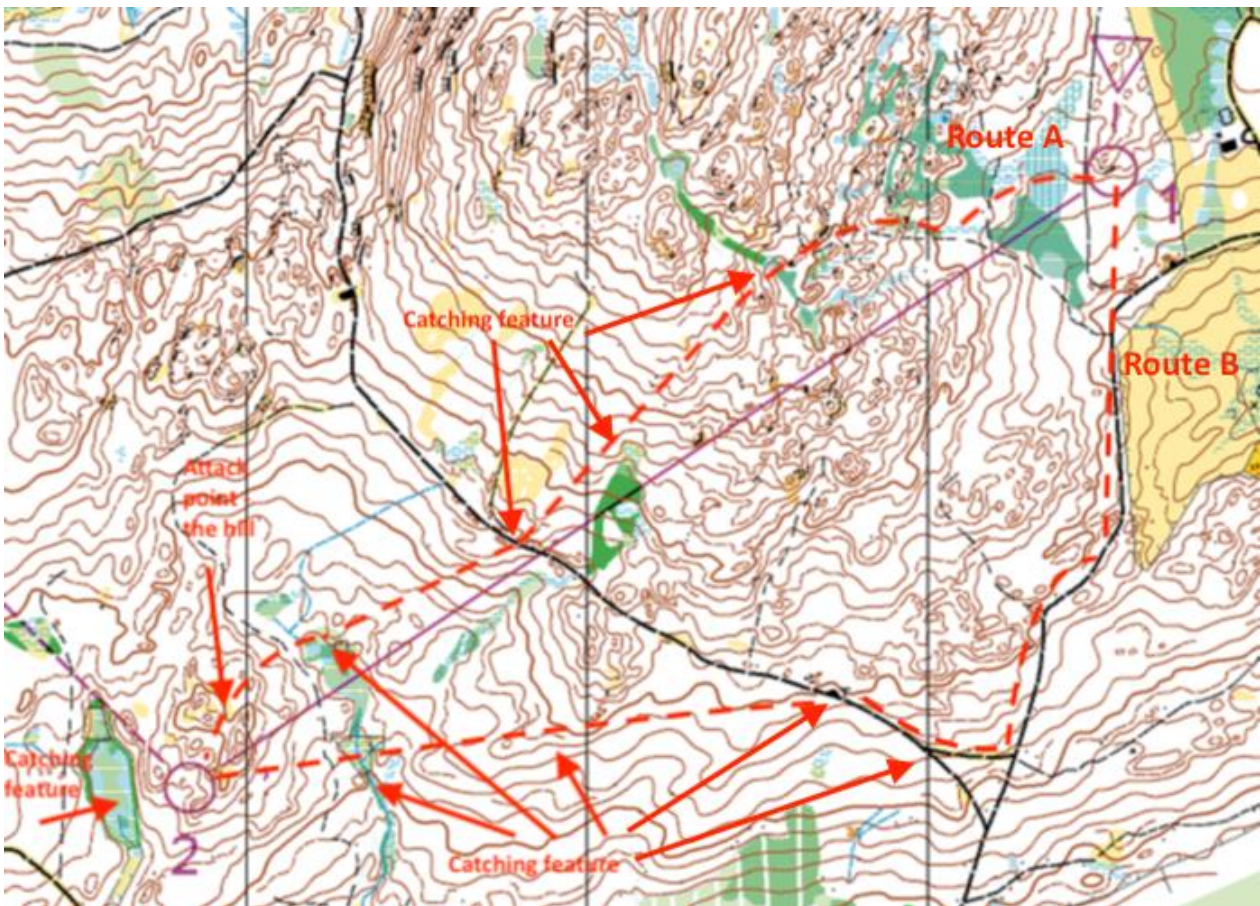
Many orienteers use CAR:

- ▶ **Control:** Look at the control you are going to. What are you looking for (visualise the feature)? What direction do you want to approach it from? If it is a point feature (e.g. a boulder) which side is the control on?
- ▶ **Attack point:** What is the closest large or unique feature that indicates you are approaching your control? There might be more than one attack point, you are looking for an attack point which is suitable for you.
- ▶ **Route:** Which way will get you to the attack point and control the fastest? Are there other routes to consider? What knowledge do you have regarding the terrain, mapping of vegetation etc.?

So, let's expand the things you should think about when working out your Route Choice:

1. First of all, there are two questions to ask yourself
 - i. How early on in the course is the Route Choice? If the leg is going from the Start to control #1, then you want to choose a very safe route. This will ensure that you find the control and also allows you to 'get into the map and into the terrain', especially if you have not been to the area before.
 - ii. How do you rate your navigational skills? Are you good at keeping Direction and making a Picture map ← → ground while running through the forest? Or do you hesitate, wobble a bit and generally lack confidence on those routes?
2. Next look at the leg on the map. What would make a good Attack point for the control? To find this on the map, expand the control circle (in your head), is there an obvious one OR is there more than one and if so which might suit you best?
3. So how will you get to that Attack point? Keep in mind that there might be more than one Attack point, so this could change the Route Choice. Decide on your Route. There are usually about four factors when considering the Route Choice:
 - i. path (handrail) route OR cross country (Direction & Picture important).
 - ii. up and over OR round the contours (this could also be through the vegetation OR round it).
 - iii. longer route to strong Attack point OR take a higher risk direct route.
 - iv. down then up OR up then down.
4. Now execute that route, bearing in mind that you might have to make minor adjustments as you go along. You have selected the route from the map – things can look a bit different on the ground!

Have a look at the map sample and Route Choice analysis on the next page.



This shows two possible routes (there are also variations on each of the routes).

C = look at the control. It is a re-entrant on the opposite side of the hill from your approach.

A = the hill to the NE of the control is my chosen attack point (yes, it is not a point, it is an obvious feature I know I will be able to identify).

R = Route to the Attack point.

- **Route A:** I look at the connecting red line between the controls and work out a route as close to that as possible. It is only the second leg on the course so I want to have several 'Catching features' to check off as I progress.
- Compass bearing out of #1, checking off the marsh & thicket.
- Find the path, check direction, follow to end past crag and 'flat' area.
- Compass bearing to head diagonally downhill to track, checking thicker forest to left hand side on way down.
- Cross track, compass bearing to hill (Attack point), checking off marsh / thicket just before hill.
- Over hill, through the col at the top and re-entrant funnels me into the control.
- Total distance = 1.65km

Route B: I am not confident enough to head as straight as possible so I use tracks.

Compass bearing out of #1 to track.

- Run fast downhill to track junction – should be easy to see as it is the same size of track as I am on and is a junction to the right.
- Check track direction, along track to junction, up track to layby (gives better height to start contouring from).
- Compass bearing across hillside, keeping more or less same height = contouring.
- Use catching feature of hill to North (right hand side) and spur from it to funnel towards marsh / thicket.
- Cross marsh, see hill ahead – Attack point.
- Carefully round the hill, into the re-entrant.
- Total distance = 2.20km (550m more than Route A).

To help you with Route Choice:

- ▶ The diagram – below - from [Better Orienteering](#) sums up Route Choice.
- ▶ There is also a free [Route Choice Game](#) you can play to improve your Route Choice skills. While this is designed for Sprint Orienteering it will increase your speed of decision-making.
- ▶ From the ‘[Think Fast, Run Hard, Go Orienteering](#)’ series, a Great Britain Squad athlete explains how to play to your strengths when making your Route Choice.
- ▶ Have a look at the video “[What you need to know on Route Choices](#)” (Swedish with English subtitles).

