

## Coaching Tip - Leg Segments

In orienteer-speak, the piece of the course between control circles is called a leg. Sometimes folks make the mistake of not really seeing the legs as part of the course, because they are focusing on the control circles. But when you move from circle to circle, what you are navigating is the leg, the circles are just the beginning and end of each leg. So today I'm going to focus on a way to make a long, complicated leg a bit easier to navigate.

Going from one control point to another all in one big gulp of navigation is okay if it's a simple or short leg. But when the legs get long and complicated, they become much easier to navigate if you break them down into segments and concentrate on navigating each leg segment separately. Each leg segment should have a distinct beginning and end, such as a feature you would check off as you pass it.

Let's do an example. You need to get from control 3 to control 4 and it looks like the best way to go will involve a few changes of direction. So, you decide to navigate each change of direction separately as a leg segment, using distance estimations as a backup to be sure that each feature you use to change direction is approximately where you expected it to be.

Okay, let's do it. Go from control 3 to the stream on a rough compass bearing, turn north and follow the stream to where it crosses a path, turn right and, with a rough compass check to be sure you are on the right path, go uphill on the path, crossing one spur, contouring on the path down and around a reentrant and up to the top of the 2nd spur. Then, with another rough compass check, you follow the spur downhill to where it forks and go into the reentrant between the spur forks and follow it down to the boulder in the middle of the reentrant - which is control 4. Success! Each leg segment is fairly easy to navigate, no mistakes, quick and worry-free. And taken one segment at a time, you also are keeping track of where you are because you are always looking for the feature that is the end of each leg segment, checking off features, and moving confidently from segment to segment.

Another advantage of using leg segments is that you can go different speeds for each segment, deciding which speed is best for each segment based on how easy or difficult the map reading or physical effort is for that segment. So, it becomes an efficient way to make decisions on how fast you should be running too.

Next time you look at a long-ish leg and think, "This one might be complicated," look again and see if you can break the leg into segments that are each a smaller, easier navigational challenge. And make all the leg segments add up to a faster, more confident run of your course.

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