

Scouter Bob's Guide to the LITTLE BENNETT ORIENTEERING COURSES

Little Bennett Regional Park is one of the largest public parks in the area. It is located at 23701 Frederick Road, Clarksburg, MD 20871, and is operated by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. It has a 91-site developed campground, a golf course, and a Nature Center, and is open sunrise to sunset year-round (but check listings for the facilities.) The Park Manager can be reached at 301-972-6581 (but camp reservations must be made through a separate state reservation system: 301-972-9222.) The park has controlled access at its main gate.

Website:

http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/Parks/facilities/regional_parks/little_bennett/index.shtm

Park and Trail Map:

http://www.mcparkandplanning.org/Parks/PPSD/ParkTrails/trails_MAPS/trailmap_pdfs/LittleBennett_trails.pdf.

Driving Directions:

Although the park has several entrances, the orienteering course can be most easily reached by taking Clarksburg Exit 18 east from Rt. 270 near the Frederick/Montgomery County line, then turning left at Rt.355 (Frederick Road) and proceeding north for about a mile to the park entrance on the right. The start of the orienteering courses is located by driving through the main gate and then about a mile down the main road, past Loops A, B, C, and D to the Hawk's Reach Nature Center parking lot.

Walking the Courses:

The three current orienteering courses at Little Bennett were constructed as an Eagle project in late 2007, replacing an earlier course. Late fall and winter are the easiest times to complete the courses, due to the lack of covering foliage. It is worth calling the Manager first to see if there is any event at the park that would prevent you from entering the park or using the course. The start of the course is a telephone pole on the edge of the parking lot near the Nature Center (there used to be a painted red dot on the pavement in front of the pole, but it is very faded.) All courses use magnetic bearings, so the theory and practice of calculating declination is not required. The three courses are of different difficulties but of roughly the same two-mile length, so they will take at least an hour to complete. Leaders should plan on a three-hour stay to allow for slower scouts, staggered starts, and initial activities.

An orienteering course is not a place to learn how to use a compass- only scouts who have demonstrated a proficiency with the compass should be permitted to attempt the courses. They can demonstrate this skill by first passing the Second Class compass requirement and then successfully navigating a "triangle course" like those found in some compass games (requiring them to take three bearings, march off three short distances, and find their way back to the correct endpoint.) Scouts will often not know or remember their stride length, however, so the adult leaders should come prepared with a 100' rope and stake it out so that all participants can measure their steps and practice the arithmetic of converting their stride lengths into distances. It is only long division, but it is amazing how often this is a stumbling block for young scouts. Scouts should walk the rope length at least five times to measure their stride. All three courses all have some very long legs (up to 3400'!), so getting their stride measured correctly is very

important. And while they should be encouraged to adopt a stride that feels easy and natural, if they can find one that is 30, 33, or 40 steps to 100', the math will be easier.

Scouts should be sent onto the courses in two-man teams, and I would recommend separating them by at least 15-minute intervals on the same course. All scouts should at least have weather-appropriate clothing, rain protection, water, and a whistle, and each team should have a park map (so that if they get lost they can at least try and walk toward a camp road.) If you have walkie-talkies with a decent range, this is a good time to use them, as waiting for an overdue team can be unpleasant. The adults in charge (never less than two) should have a good first aid kit, and maybe a treat for the scouts when they complete the trail (e.g., hot cocoa in the cold or cookies anytime.) The markers are short posts with numbers painted on them. The scouts should record the marker numbers as they are found, as a check for reviewers. Some markers are used by more than one course, and not every marker they come across is meant for them.

Other Activities:

In addition to the stride measurement, it is often useful to combine the orienteering outing with instruction in and/or the completion of other requirements, particularly if you are managing a large group all trying to do the same course (staggered starts means that some scouts will have to wait to start.) My favorites are the requirements to measure height (two methods) and width (three methods), which can be done with nearby trees and markings on the parking lot, respectively. Another possibility (if the sun is out) is the requirement to find directions without a compass (three methods), which can require the passage of time to measure results- they can build their methods before they enter the course and check afterwards to see if they can get results. A third, more ambitious, alternative would be to make it an all-inclusive map and compass outing, with compass theory and use, map-reading and symbol memorization, and a three-point compass game in the morning (either at the troop location or at the park) and the orienteering course in the afternoon for those that qualify.

The Courses:

“Easy”

Start- TPOLE	500 ft.	87° mag.
001	1300 ft.	41° mag.
002	1200 ft.	354° mag.
005	800 ft.	13° mag.
006	1900 ft.	281° mag.
008	3400 ft.	172° mag.
End- TPOLE		

“Medium”

Start-TPOLE	500 ft.	87° mag
001	1300 ft.	27° mag
003	2100 ft.	285° mag
012	1300 ft.	325° mag
011	2400 ft.	178° mag
013	1200 ft.	135° mag
014	900 ft.	75° mag
End TPOLE		

“Hard”

Start- TPOLE	1800 ft.	289° mag.
013	1300 ft.	30° mag.
012	1100 ft.	11° mag.
010	1100 ft.	41° mag.
009	1100 ft.	141° mag.
007	1500 ft.	176° mag.
004	500 ft.	116° mag.
003	1300 ft.	207° mag.
001	500 ft.	267° mag.
End- TPOLE		

SCOUT HANDOUT FOR LITTLE BENNETT ORIENTEERING COURSES

The three orienteering courses shown below are all roughly the same length, about two miles overall. You should proceed at your own speed- this is not a race. With some very long distances between markers, your success will be determined by (1) the accuracy of your compass bearings, (2) the accuracy of your pace measurement, and (3) your technique for walking in a straight line. All the bearings listed are for magnetic north, so no correction for declination is necessary.

Basic Procedure:

- Calculate the distance to be traveled to the next marker in your steps (divide the distance in feet by your step measurement.)
- After setting the correct compass bearing, hold the compass in front of your body (away from metal zippers!) and turn yourself until the red arrow on your compass pointing north aligns with the outline on the plate; now sight along the "line of travel" arrow to a landmark in the distance (tree, hill, bush, team member) that lies in that line and walk toward it, counting your steps.
- Repeat as necessary until you reach the distance desired. If there is not a marker in the immediate area, mark your spot and start to explore in circles around the spot until you locate the marker. Record the marker number and prepare for the next leg.

Some Tips:

- Instead of sighting a tree or bush as a walking target, it is sometimes better to send a teammate out 100-200' in the general direction and then guide him to the right exact line. When you reach him, take another bearing.
- If you and your teammate both calculate and count off steps, you will have two chances to get it right. If you find that one of you is more accurate, use that knowledge.
- Remember that there is a tendency to shorten steps going uphill and lengthen them going downhill. Resist that tendency.
- If there is an obstruction that prevents you from walking in a straight line (e.g., tree, swamp, quicksand), then stop your step count, take a few side steps at a right angle to your line of travel, and resume your original line of travel. At soon as you can, take the same number of side steps back to the main line. It never hurts to take the bearing again.
- Be careful where you step, and watch out for hanging obstacles- the woods are full of hidden roots, rocks, briars, and eye-level branches. Be alert for hazards.
- Try and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature! Little Bennett has a variety of plants and wildlife, and if you need those rank requirements, too, then keep track of what you see.

If You Get Disoriented ("Lost"):

- If you haven't gone far from the last marker, go back and try again. If the last marker is long gone, then get out your park map and by using landmarks and topography, try and get a general idea of where you are. Using your compass, walk toward a road or trail that will lead you back to the Nature Center.
- If you have walkie-talkie, contact your leader.
- If you do not have a clue where you are, then sit tight and blow your whistle in three bursts at regular intervals. Stay warm and remain calm. Let help find you.

“Easy”**#steps****Marker found**

Start- TPOLE	500 ft.		87° mag.
	1300 ft.		41° mag.
	1200 ft.		354° mag.
	800 ft.		13° mag.
	1900 ft.		281° mag.
	3400 ft.		172° mag.
End- TPOLE			

“Medium”**#steps****Marker found**

Start-TPOLE	500 ft.		87° mag
	1300 ft.		27° mag
	2100 ft.		285° mag
	1300 ft.		325° mag
	2400 ft.		178° mag
	1200 ft.		135° mag
	900 ft.		75° mag
End TPOLE			

“Hard”**#steps****Marker found**

Start- TPOLE	1800 ft.		289° mag.
	1300 ft.		30° mag.
	1100 ft.		11° mag.
	1100 ft.		41° mag.
	1100 ft.		141° mag.
	1500 ft.		176° mag.
	500 ft.		116° mag.
	1300 ft.		207° mag.
	500 ft.		267° mag.
End- TPOLE			