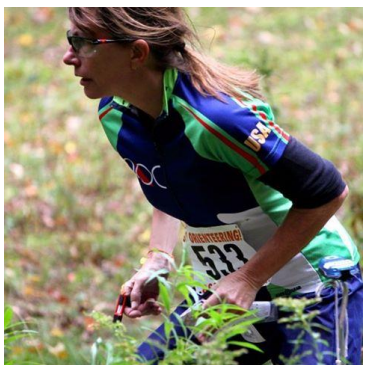
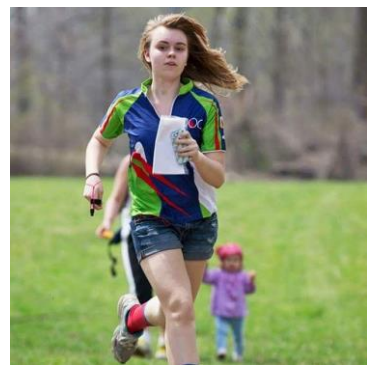
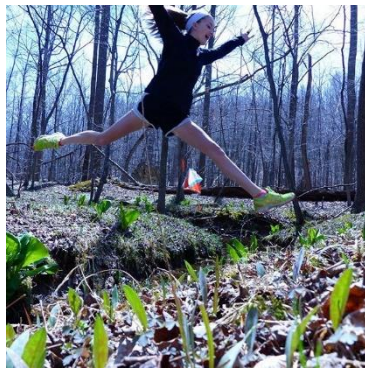


# Club Development Handbook



Proven tips and techniques for developing popular, growing clubs with newcomer-friendly navigation events.

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**Editor’s Note:** While this guide covers a range of development topics, it does not offer deep guidance on all club-related issues. Other step-by-step guides are planned in these areas in the *Great Clubs Series*:

- Starting a new club
- Running quality local events (meets and training)
- Building an effective youth league
- Planning and running a quality national event

Look for them in 2018 or help OUSA make them happen!

## Why have a club development handbook?

*Orienteering promotes enjoyment and appreciation of the outdoors through recreational sport. It gradually teaches navigational skills that are essential for a deeper connection with the outdoors, using an activity that is multi-generational and family friendly. Widespread appreciation for the environment is needed now, more than ever.*

And yet, orienteering as a sport faces plenty of challenges. The 50 years since orienteering appeared in the United States have included these rapid changes:

- **Alternative challenge sports:** The rise of alternative challenge sports (adventure runs, mud runs, obstacle runs, relay runs, multisport relays) with well-funded central business operations.
- **Map-replacement technology:** The rise of equipment-driven navigation (GPS units, geocaching, scout compass courses, Google Maps, augmented reality in Pokemon Go) and GPS routinely in our cell phones.
- **Rising land usage fees:** Reduction in park funding from government budgeted funds—everyone’s resource—to usage fees just from those who visit.
- **Time constraints:** Less free time spent outdoors in unstructured activities for youth, and less time for adults to volunteer in recreational pursuits.
- **Online communication:** Newsletters and newspapers—“pay to play”—replaced by free websites, social media, and e-newsletters.
- **Less appreciation of nature:** Fear of missing out (“FOMO”) if disconnected from technology, leading to less appreciation for natural settings.

Orienteering as a sport is often unknown, frequently misunderstood as a compass or GPS activity, and generally unprepared to adapt to these changes. The clubs that have thrived are those who have adapted their approaches and procedures to become more open, newcomer-friendly, and accessible in a social-media world.

This guide collects that information from leading orienteering clubs in the US, providing high-level guidance on what approaches get results. There are also step-by-step resources from various clubs as additional resources to help you improve and grow your own club.

### Why grow?

If you view orienteering as an **activity** that you do only with your like-minded friends, then it isn’t an open club; it’s a friends group. There’s no harm in that, and such a tight-knit group can be a lot of fun, but without the renewal, enthusiasm, and new ideas of new participants, this friends group will eventually fold due to lack of able-bodied volunteers.

But if you view orienteering as a **mission** to train the next generation of wilderness-ready navigators who value and invest in our parks, then your approach to growth is completely different. A certain portion of your event effort is aimed at making sure newcomers know about your event, have a good time, and want to come back.

That’s what this book is about.



## Two organized ways to view newcomer readiness

Before OUSA or your club invests money in attracting more newcomers to your club, it's useful to do a reality check from a newcomer perspective. Where does your club generally fit in this table?

| LEVEL                    | Volunteers                                                                                                      | Communication                                                                                                                                                         | Outreach                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>0: Friends Group</b>  | Just enough to hold the event                                                                                   | E-mail to people we know. No info about event time and location (we already know).                                                                                    | Static web page, stale Facebook page.                                                             |
| <b>1: Open Club</b>      | Registration person. Newcomer instruction at all events.                                                        | Jargon-free website with calendar, event directions, and timely results. Still lots of photos of buff athletes in matching Lycra outfits. Events start when promised. | Newsgroup, if you know about it, for discussions.                                                 |
| <b>2: Welcoming Club</b> | Welcome volunteers. Check to see if participants had a good time. A social media person posts photos sometimes. | Website photos mirror the public demographics (seniors, youth, hikers, runners, etc.).                                                                                | Reliably e-mailed newsletter. Food table at each event for start of social focus.                 |
| <b>3: Inviting Club</b>  | Active social media team takes photos and posts twice/week.                                                     | E-mailed Thank You and welcome (with links) to all newcomers who attended (adding to e-mail list)                                                                     | Invitation to meet & chat afterwards at a local café or restaurant. Social focus built into club. |

Also, think through the steps needed for a newcomer to embrace your events. As experienced orienteers, we tend to forget our original uncertainties, but to current newcomers, they are very real.

### A newcomer's progression, getting involved in orienteering:

1. Hear about orienteering
2. Understand what it is (and is not)
3. Develop the desire to try it sometime
4. Learn about a local opportunity to try it
5. Learn what I'll be doing and if I have the right equipment
6. Build the confidence to go out there and try it
7. Get to an event at the right time
8. Register for the right course (knowing what the right course is)
9. Do the right things on the course
10. Do the right things with my equipment when I get back
11. Connect with someone about how I did and whether that was good
12. Share my experiences and hear from others
13. Learn about the next event

When you have embraced this perspective, you are ready to use the following guidance to climb the ladder toward an active, inviting orienteering club.

## Becoming a Level 1 Open Club

Newcomers approach our sport from different directions and backgrounds. While it isn't essential that we use the unique language of each group, it is important that we understand the mindset of each audience and be ready for it in our communications, keeping jargon to a minimum.

- **Runners and joggers** approach orienteering with an understanding of distances and timing, but often needing encouragement and guidance about navigation. Without guidance, they may rely too much on distance familiarity—"I do 10Ks all the time!"—and select longer races than they are navigationally ready for. This audience tends to trend younger, and has excellent fitness—especially x-country runners!
- **Hikers** approach orienteering from a love of maps, relaxation, and the outdoors, and may initially resist the idea of a race with timing. They need to know that checking in with Finish is an essential safety function. They may also express concern that this activity goes off-trail, and may need to know how this is ecologically sustainable. This audience has a wide age range, from students to retirees.
- **Groups** approach orienteering to do a low-cost activity together. They need to know how to sign up effectively and go out together, even if they are arriving from different places. And they need to know how this activity fits into their group goals, from scouts getting their orienteering badge to families trying to experiment with new skills in a safe environment.

### Volunteers needed at this level

Personable volunteers are essential to reaching these demographics. At a minimum, your event needs:

- **Registration person.** Even if your sign-ups are all done online, you will need someone to welcome newcomers to the event and help them understand what's going on in the event, how much to pay, and where to go next.
- **Newcomer instructor.** The same attention is needed to prep for a newcomer's first course. Explain how the map works, how a course works, how safety works, and how to finish.
- **Finish person.** Did everyone get back safely? Does everyone know how they did as quickly as possible?
- **Course designer/meet director.** It's not optimal to combine these, but if the other three roles are focused on meet flow and newcomer handling, then it allows one person to move about as much as necessary to do both for a small to medium-sized event.

### Messaging and signage needed

"Meet at the usual place." Few sentences will turn off newcomers faster than clubbish language that implies others are "in the know" and they aren't. In all your communications, provide guidance about where and when the event is.

NOTE: When promise an event start time, as you always should, people will rely on it—often busy people with time-dependent activities. Missing that time hurts your reputation and future attendance.

For your signage, standardize on signs that are visible and inviting for newcomers. To guide newcomers—and your regulars!—to and through the event smoothly, you'll need directional signs, parking signs, and in-event signs for registration/check-in, start, and finish. If they are branded with a club identity, people will start to look for and rely on that identity when driving to the event.

## Budgeting, money management, and event selection

We just mentioned things that cost money if done well. There will be other items that hit the budget, including mapping, the cost of printing maps and waivers, and risk management essentials like land permission and OUSA insurance. Every purchase is a tradeoff about where to invest; successful clubs are good at prioritizing essentials, minimizing risks, and recognizing and growing their assets.

What events or types of events keep your club afloat? Keep a spreadsheet of actual cost vs. revenue for your activities. Would more volunteering help? Better printing discounts? More local (and beginner-friendly) events or more rural (and easier to permit) events? These are critical board discussions.

## Your club website

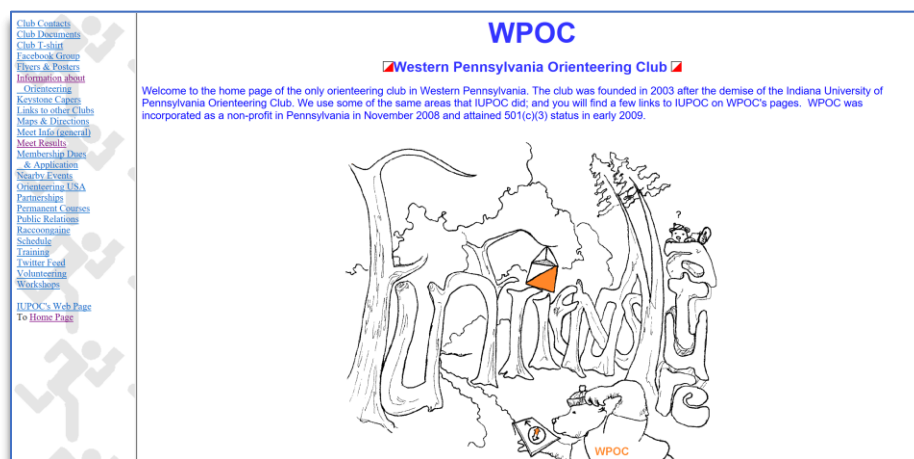
Today, a central place for updated online information is expected. A website with stale information isn't much different from a website with no information, so it's critical that you have a site that you can and do update on a regular basis.

The good news is that it's easier than ever to build your club website. Companies like Wix ([www.wix.com](http://www.wix.com)) and Weebly ([www.weebly.com](http://www.weebly.com)) offer the ability to build a website with drag-and-drop and no technical coding skills, while some clubs have built a fully communicating website just around a Group Page on Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)).

A *content management platform* like Wordpress ([www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)) may be more complex to set up, but allows multiple people with their own accounts to update the site. OUSA is also working on a template for use by clubs that addresses the primary needs for an orienteering club, such as appeal to newcomers, a place to promote upcoming events, and a place for timely results.

### Example 1:

The website below has some Level 1 features, such as contacts, maps and directions, a schedule of upcoming events, training, and results. Good stuff. Critically, these are updated, so once you dig in, there is evidence of an active club doing exciting things.



But is it an open club? The home page starts out with an acronym that has meaning only to the orienteering community, describes itself in context of another dying club, and references events that happened in 2009 and before. Any upcoming exciting activities are buried 13-20 links down in the menu—because it is alphabetical.

Newcomers looking for current outdoor adventure are likely to coast right by and miss the action because there is nothing that speaks to them.

All that is needed to move this website to the next level and open itself to newcomers is to reorganize the existing information around three topics: Why is orienteering exciting, what's happening right now, and how do I get involved? **Check your website for these points.**

Fortunately, an OUSA club template is in the works, and a few simple pages can make a huge difference in ability to welcome newcomers. Here is another club that was recently in a similar position but put the OUSA club website template to use, becoming far more welcoming in one action.

**Example 2:**

**Western Connecticut Orienteering Club (WCOC)**

WCOC Home | Events | Results | Photos | **About Orienteering** | Membership | Links | Contact Us

**Welcome to Orienteering!**  
A sport for Families, Hikers, and Endurance Athletes of all ages!

It's Recreation  
Walking an orienteering course can be a lot like going for a hike, but with a twist. With map and compass in hand, find your way to each of the checkpoints on the orienteering course. You can stay on trails or short-cut through the woods. We supply the map and course, but you decide how to get to each of the checkpoints. On your way, explore off the beaten path—find remnants of old cellar holes, new fishing spots, and areas of the parks you've never seen.

It's also a Sport  
Orienteering is also a competitive sport. Those who take a competitive approach go around the course as quickly as they can. Since you must decide on your route while running or walking fast, it's a challenging sport that requires using your head as well as your legs. Whether you walk or run, it's a way of keeping fit while having fun.

It's for People of All Ages  
Orienteering is an activity you can still do as you get older. And it's for youngsters too, with their families, in groups or on their own.

About Orienteering  
Upcoming Events  
Results

Copyright © 2017 Western Connecticut Orienteering Club  
WCOC is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization. Donations qualify as charitable contributions.

Essentially, this is just an 8-page website—easy to maintain, yet also very accessible and inviting to those who have never used the sport. There is even a page focused exclusively on newcomers.

**Western Connecticut Orienteering Club (WCOC)**

WCOC Home | Events | Results | Photos | **About Orienteering** | Membership | Links | Contact Us

**About Orienteering**

Orienteering is the skill of finding one's way through a series of checkpoints on an unfamiliar course using a map and a compass. Typically a course is set in a wilderness area and the participants are timed as they complete it.

Orienteering challenges both mind and body. The key to orienteering is the ability to make wise decisions, rather than the ability to run like a deer. Hence the name "The Thinking Sport." Out in the woods, you must make decisions and calculations: reading the map, recognizing the terrain, choosing routes, setting the compass, and sometimes counting paces. This combined mental and physical effort makes orienteering consistently challenging and rewarding.

**At an Orienteering Event**, a specialized, topographic map is used to choose the best route to a series of designated land features (the control points). Each control point has an orange and white control marker, and a distinctive punch which is used to punch a score card. With those controls supplying the reward every few hundred meters, orienteering provides the suspense and excitement of a treasure hunt. The abilities to make decisions and to understand the map and relate it to the surrounding terrain determine how easily the control points are found.

**How the Meets Work**  
The Western Connecticut Orienteering Club (WCOC) is a group of local orienteering enthusiasts that organizes "O-meets" in this area. There are

## Becoming a Level 2 Welcoming Club

When you make the step to a Level 2 Welcoming Club, you are committing to making events more social and increasing connections between club members. Make your events not just a thing to do, but a place to be, with a feeling of community—an inclusive sense of “us”.



### Volunteers needed at this level


- **Newsletter editor.** This is often a hard role to fill. But if you structure the newsletter right, this really is about editing, not writing. Combine upcoming events from your calendar, results from your website, volunteer requests from your planning meetings, and any other news/thanks from what people are saying in the club. Done!
- **Photographer.** Are folks enjoying your events? Nothing says that like a photo, and you’ll need photos for the newsletter and website. And have a known place where these are stored!
- **Food table person.** It doesn’t have to be an extravagant spread, just enough for folks to snack after running, slake their thirst, and hang around to share navigation stories with one another.
- **Control pickup.** People come to events to find controls, so this is an easy volunteer role to fill, as long as you split it up across multiple individuals. See the control already? You know exactly where to find it. Haven’t seen it? It’s like a mini-training course for free.
- **Trainer.** Someone who has enough knowledge of orienteering to do it well, yet enough patience with those who cannot that all attendees feel valued and see progress.
- **Separate Meet Director and Course Designer.** You’ve got more volunteers now, and more happening back at camp, with volunteers asking how to do more things. You might even have more participants, all expecting more courses to be perfectly set. Now is the time to separate these two roles to give each one its due focus. You’ll also discover people in the club who would much rather do one than the other, making them both easier to fill.

### Newsletters

Newsletters used to be the mainstay of any club; pay your dues, and you get mailed the only communication that tells you what’s happening. The advent of the internet broke this relationship by making information free. But the yearn for news from your “tribe” still exists, just in a different form.

*Cascade Orienteering Club has been sending the Bearing 315 newsletter since the early 1980’s—first as a mailed booklet to members only, then a desktop published set of pages, and now a MailChimp e-newsletter to all attendees.*

**Recent volunteers**




Thanks, Dave Dummeyer & Jared Hopkins and family for volunteering as course designers and course setters for the 37th Annual Bog Slog!


Trevina Wang  
Daniels Real Estate

P.S. Link for folks who cannot attend the meeting, but would like to send their comments to the State Parks Board of Commission by December 30 at 5pm:  
<http://parks.state.wa.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/8214>

**Recent Board Activity**



Cascade Board: This month, the Cascade board agreed on the [preliminary 2017 event calendar](#). It now includes three full weekends of wide-open orienteering in central or eastern Washington venues, some venues new to the summer series (Carkeek, SPU campus), some brand new maps for the Seattle Adventure Running Tournament, possible return to Chinook Lands on Whidbey, and a planned return to UW for next year's MPOL. Exciting stuff!




**Going to the GA Navigator Cup in Jan?**

[http://www.gaorienteering.org/Special\\_Events/GNC/GNCindex.htm](http://www.gaorienteering.org/Special_Events/GNC/GNCindex.htm)

There is often a COC contingent going, and Rick Breseman is looking on the [COC newsgroup](#) to coordinate among fellow orienteers. Also, there will be a Saturday afternoon meeting of the newly energized OUSA board at the event, and COC's rep on the board (Bob Forgrave) will not be in Georgia. Looking to deputize a meet attendee for a couple of hours. [Contact Bob](#).

**Upcoming COC events in Dec:**





Mailchimp ([www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com)) offers—for free if under 2,000 subscribers—the ability to send a well-formatted e-newsletter to an audience that can unsubscribe at will if their interest no longer applies or their e-mail address gets abused. So put it to use, and don't spam with too-frequent mailings.

A monthly newsletter is frequent enough to share upcoming events and recruit/recognize volunteers, yet infrequent enough that you can commit to regular delivery for the long term. Choose a template from the many offerings that work for mobile phones too, and make this an integral, consistent part of your club communications. There should be a sign-up link from your website, and info at your events.

## Event selection

By the time you've grown to become a welcoming club, you have the opportunity to plan different types of events that meet the needs of different audiences. Here are a few possibilities:

- **ROTC and JROTC** units look for land-navigation activities that they can fit into their training schedules as a snap-in activity. Participation is often limited to the commander-led events—e.g., little carryover into other club events—but the contribution during the events committed to can be significant. If you have a relevant event, reach out!
- **Scout troops**, particularly Boy Scouts, look for pre-planned outdoor activities. This need starts with the orienteering badge (and its compass-centric focus), but often carries over into participation in other events. Outreach makes sense here, too.
- **Skiing and mountain biking** can be navigation events too! If you have a lot of snow, or venues that are open to multi-directional cycling courses, you can bring in new audiences (and more volunteers) with Ski-O or mountain bike orienteering events.

## Making orienteering events more social

A food table makes any event more social. But there are other activities you can also include to boost the social appeal of your club.

**Mass-start Score O** events have no required order of control completion. Everyone starts and finishes at the same time, completing the controls they want and jettisoning the ones they can't get in time to get back before points start being deducted. And they get their maps early.

While a Score O may not feel like “real orienteering” to O purists, there are numerous reasons this type of event appeals to newcomers. First, there's the feeling of something bigger; you can see everyone around you at the start, before everyone takes off in separate directions—which is a fun twist for conventional running enthusiasts trying our sport.

Next, and just as importantly, the risk goes away. You can't mispunch, and there's not that awkward point right after the start when you're on the clock but don't understand the map yet and everyone is watching you be confused. You've already had the map for a few minutes, you've got a plan, and you know exactly what your plan is!

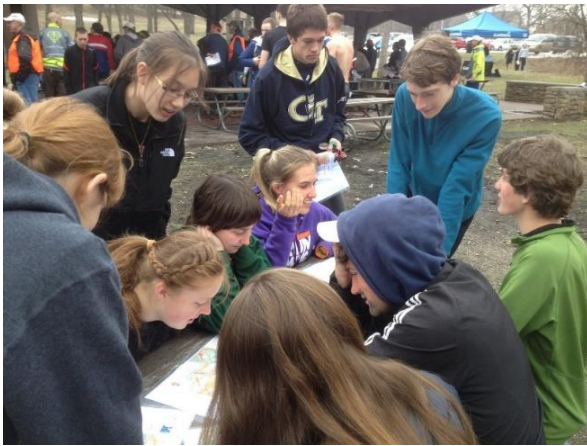
**Training events.** If Score O events are all about speed and timing, these are the complete opposite. Pick something to improve on, take the time to meet each individual where he or she is on that skill progression, and look for incremental positives. Training can be add-ons to existing events or stand-alone events. In most cases, a training event with 25 or fewer people won't require a park permit.

A good place to start looking for training plans is **training.net**, particularly [http://o-training.net/w/Category:Orienteering\\_exercises](http://o-training.net/w/Category:Orienteering_exercises) for a variety of specific training exercises, and [http://o-training.net/w/Training\\_Tips](http://o-training.net/w/Training_Tips) for general training tips.

**Pairs orienteering.** Essentially, the ability to slip into navigation partnered with a more knowledgeable mentor, or bring a newcomer friend into it, was one of the core features that propelled the rapid rise of rogaining and adventure racing. No matter what happens, there's someone to share it with. Some school may even require buddy-teaming as part of district safety policies. So embrace it. Have occasional standard orienteering events where pairs are expected.

### Map reviews

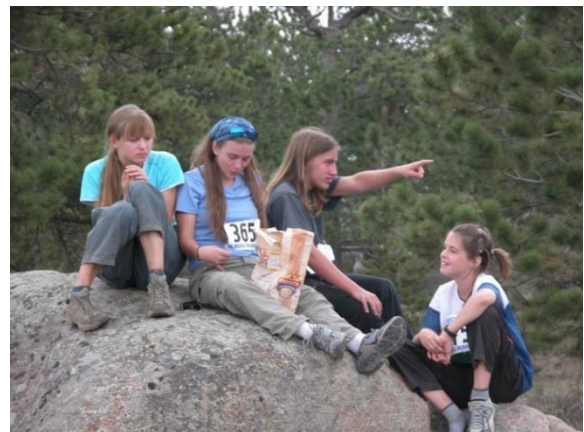
These can happen spontaneously, as participants cross the finish line (don't block Download!), or refuel together at the food table, or hang out at a convenient post-event location. Make sure you build in this opportunity, and look for chances to draw people in, often by just walking up and asking how it went.



*Impromptu, food-fueled navigation discussion*

This single connection with other participants helps important peer-to-peer conversations that result in community and a sense of belonging. It should be a priority for any club, in whatever form.

### *Formal map review*



### *Finish line course discussions*



Whatever happens in your events, share the enjoyment of navigation.

## Using social media

Over two billion people use Facebook every month. Half of all 18-24 year-olds check Facebook when they wake up, and they're not even the largest demographic—that's 25-34 year olds. If you want to engage families, you need to have a *Facebook strategy*.



That's different from just building a *Facebook page*. One thing active users are very good at recognizing and avoiding is a stale Facebook page with nothing to share and nobody interested in it.

Once you create a page, you're going to need to feed it content regularly:

- **Upcoming events.** Announce what's upcoming and how to get involved. Got a venue photo?
- **Recent events.** Share what was exciting about an event you just had, including any photos that someone took.
- **Thanks.** Recognize your top volunteers.
- **Photo album.** Build a collection of photos that show orienteering with your club as the best way to spend a weekend in your area.
- **Reshares.** "Follow" related groups—orienteering, hiking, running—and share their news. This gets your news shared too.


Clearly, doing this well takes time. If you're running the whole club too, one effort is going to be suboptimal.

The good news is, forming and "feeding" a Facebook group is a well-established skill among those in the right demographic group. Do you have frequent younger participants in your events—maybe someone who would like to volunteer but on his/her own time? A couple of social-media-savvy volunteers can go a long way toward making your online presence active and inviting.

Other social media tools exist, and the same foundational rule applies. Strategy first, then commit:

- [Instagram](#). Let a stream of photos of amazing exploration be your calling card.
- [Meetup](#). Build a dedicated base of regulars who love to go navigate.
- [Groupon](#). Give a steep online discount for a specific event (National Orienteering Week promo?)

At Newcomer Readiness Level 2 (Welcoming), your club will grow. But you won't be at maximum participation retention until Level 3 (Inviting). So here's how you get there...




**John Hanc**

October 8 at 6:04am · Newsday · 🌐

⋮

My story in today's Newsday about the sport of orienteering--and my experience getting not-quite-lost in the woods with a fun bunch of orienteers at a recent event here on Long Island.




**LI orienteering is far from a lost cause**

Tramping uphill through ankle-high grass under a searing late September sun, one wonders if taking that narrow path off the main road at Nissequogue State

[NEWSDAY.COM](#)


👍 23
💬 4 Comments

👍 Like
💬 Comment
➦ Share



**Serena Carter Brochu** I just read it and remarked on it to Bill. I hadn't noticed the author though. (Oops.) Sounds like fun!

Like · Reply · 📌 1 · October 8 at 7:55am



**Stella Davie** I want to join that club!!!!

Like · Reply · 📌 1 · October 8 at 8:56am

## Becoming a Level 3 Inviting Club

First, put yourself in the shoes of a couple of three other people—a land manager, a new visitor, and a new member—and imagine the impact of a simple, timely thank-you note:



- The post-event note to the **land manager** thanks him or her for the opportunity to use that great venue. It shares how valuable the opportunity was for folks who might not otherwise feel connected to parks and the outdoors, and gives a follow-up number and e-mail in case there were any problems. That simple act accomplishes three goals:
  1. It makes the club stand out in a good way. How many other venue renters are this considerate? Let's invite them back!
  2. It reminds the land manager why orienteering is an important sport to the community. If anyone questions the value of orienteering in that park, you have a built-in advocate in discussions where you may not be present.
  3. If there really were any problems with your event, this provides the channel for quick de-escalation and resolution.
- The post-event e-mail to the **new visitor** thanks him or her for attending, and offers some resources, including a contact name, training aids, and an invitation to upcoming events. The participant feels less invisible, starts to get a sense of community, and has further connections to look forward to, including getting better.
- The post-joining welcome mail to the **new member** thanks him or her for being a part of the success of the club, reinforces what the benefits are, adds references of interest to more serious participants (club gear, communication channels), and invites the new member to join the volunteering community—that is also thanked well, by design.

## Making Thank Yous work

So if sending Thank You notes is so important, why doesn't every club send them?

For the same reason that other organizations often blow it off—there are always more events, and more people doing things worth thanking for, and the work never ends. Besides, do we even track who was new at the last event? Let's wait... Even with the best of intentions, you can end up drifting back to apathy about a very important task.



So here are three Thank You tips.

1. Recognize a Thank You note volunteer, and all the invisible activity happening to make ongoing thanks a reality
2. Remove the work from figuring out who is new. Is it a waiver checkbox? Did you set it aside? Did you collect an e-mail address?
3. Automate what you can. If you identify newcomers accurately, you can use the same welcome e-mail from MailChimp. All you need is to input names and tweak upcoming events.

## Developing new leaders

So now you have a bunch of new members doing a range of important tasks, and yet it's still the same super-volunteers doing the top jobs. It may be frustrating at times, so it's worth remembering... Have you actually asked members to do more?

Not a blanket "can someone do this?" e-mail, but an authentic, look-in-the-eyes invitation to a known person to volunteer at the next level of his or her current chosen volunteer activity. After all, there are logical progressions in different areas:

|                   | 1. Entry level                              | 2. Assistant leader                      | 3. Leader (Club representation, board member)         |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Maps</b>       | Control pickup                              | Control setting                          | Course designer<br>Mapper, mapping contracts          |
| <b>People</b>     | Registration, Food table                    | Assistant meet director                  | Meet director, Member representative<br>VP, president |
| <b>Technology</b> | Start                                       | Finish line                              | E-punch coordinator<br>Equipment manager              |
| <b>Processes</b>  | Helping with parking                        | Recognition (notes)                      | Land permission coordinator                           |
| <b>Promotion</b>  | Sharing Facebook posts, Distributing fliers | Writing Facebook posts, Designing flyers | Managing online media, writing newsletter             |

What are you doing to encourage the flow of volunteers from left to right? Face-to-face interactions and regularly scheduled leadership training events are critical.

### "Plays well with others"

The ultimate in leadership is taking your club-developed skills on the road. Have road trips to neighboring club events. Combine events into a regional planning calendar and share info in the newsletter. Encourage your best navigators at any age level to try out for the national team.

Heck, maybe even do a tour on the Orienteering USA board to connect our clubs event better, for the good of all.

If you've figured out how to do something uniquely well, share that with other clubs to improve the sport. In the coming year, the OUSA board will focus on a number of long-overdue initiatives, including mapping, a website template rollout, marketing/promotion, and improvements in the consistency and quality of national events.

We still don't have all the answers yet, and like you, we still have local responsibilities and finite time to make big things happen. But together we've got a better shot at success. Please look for ways to help your club be more newcomer-friendly, using the checklist and resources on the following pages. And if you have resources of your own, share them!

The screenshot shows the website for Quantico Orienteering Club. The header features the club's logo and name, along with the tagline "Racing and hiking the parks of the Mid-Atlantic region since 1967." Below the header is a navigation menu with links for "About Orienteering", "Upcoming Events", "Results", "Get Better", and "Get Involved". A main banner image shows people hiking outdoors with the text "Have fun outdoors...". Below the banner are sections for "Try Orienteering" and "Upcoming Events". The "Try Orienteering" section includes text about the sport and a link to learn more. The "Upcoming Events" section lists three events: "Hemlock Overlook" on Sep. 17 Sun., "Swanson Road" on Sep. 24 Sun., and "Patuxent" on Oct. 15 Sun. There is also a link to "See All Upcoming Events".

*Quantico OC has been highly effective in combining newcomer-friendly messaging, welcome/thank you notes, training, social events, and membership management into a powerful engine for orienteering club growth.*

## Additional resources, OUSA contacts, and works in progress

**Club Website Template Development:** Ian Smith ([iamsinht@gmail.com](mailto:iamsinht@gmail.com), 617-276-5173)

*Looking for clubs (especially level 1 or 2) who want a website upgrade.* OUSA has developed a simple, low-overhead template for small clubs to use to boost their web presence in a newcomer-friendly way. There is no cost for this service.

**Mapping and mapper development:** Peter Goodwin ([pgwolfe66@gmail.com](mailto:pgwolfe66@gmail.com), 603-998-3582)

*Looking for mappers or aspiring mappers.* OUSA is making available tools for updating existing maps for more accuracy. Training on how to make your first (city park) map. Developing a list of mappers. And helping mappers raise the caliber of national maps.

**Club Development & Marketing:** Bob Forgrave ([bob@forgrave.net](mailto:bob@forgrave.net))

*Looking for newcomer-ready (level 2 or 3) clubs to share successes.* OUSA now has a free online resource for sharing, and improving club-created documents for best-practice sharing. Contact Bob for login invitation to this Slack site (see right). Outcomes will include OUSA best-practice guides and documents/tools for these five topics:

- Running quality local events
- Building permanent courses as outreach
- Building an effective youth league
- Starting a new club
- Planning and running a quality national event

When complete, these will be made available to all clubs.

*Looking for newcomer-ready (level 2 or 3) clubs to experiment with paid promotion (Anniversary Campaign-funded).* Test the effectiveness of paid Facebook promotion, Adwords keywords, Groupon deals, or paid PR. Successful tests will be replicated wider as a best-practice.

**Youth development:** Barbara Bryant ([barb.bryant@gmail.com](mailto:barb.bryant@gmail.com), 617-335-4847)

*Looking for aspiring coaches committed to club youth development.* OUSA will be developing youth programs that teach navigation, work with schools, and integrate with youth activities such as scouting. Regional training camps are also valuable assets.

**Competition:** Alex Jospe ([acjospe@gmail.com](mailto:acjospe@gmail.com), 617-610-2387)

*Looking for clubs that would like to hold national events or share hosting skills.* OUSA is simplifying the branding and types of national events, while also looking at ways to ease delivery. The end goal is a consistent schedule of known championship events of expected quality, interspersed with other national and regional events that also contribute to national ranking. We will also be assembling a competition handbook.

*A final note: These are not OUSA employees, just local club leadership members like you, rallying contributors to make big things happen. Want it all to happen faster? So do we. Join us on an activity!*

### OUSA Marketing ▾

● bobfo

🔍 All Threads

Starred

# general

# random

Channels

# 1clubhandbook

# 2runningevents

# 3permcourses

# 4youthleague

# 5newclub

# 6nationalmeets

## SELF-CHECK: Newcomer Readiness Improvement Checklist

Chances are, your club is a unique combination of skills and resources at several levels.

This table helps you take inventory, quantify where you are today, and even give it a number, so you can compare again at the end of the year to see how much your club has improved under your leadership.

Then celebrate the shared achievement!

**Note:** *Points represent skill level, not degree of importance. (For example, "Insurance at events" is listed as just a 1, but is expected by most land managers and is essential defense against the worst-case scenario of a lawsuit.)*

| Volunteers                                      | At least this level of newcomer readiness | Points if you have it: |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Course designer-meet director                   | 1                                         |                        |
| Registration                                    | 1                                         |                        |
| Newcomer instruction                            | 1                                         |                        |
| Finish tracking                                 | 1                                         |                        |
| Newsletter editor                               | 2                                         |                        |
| Photographer                                    | 2                                         |                        |
| Food table coordinator                          | 2                                         |                        |
| Control pickup as separate role                 | 2                                         |                        |
| Separated course designer & meet director roles | 2                                         |                        |
| Course setting help, vetting for accuracy       | 2                                         |                        |
| Land permissions coordinator                    | 3                                         |                        |
| Land permissions follow-up (thanks)             | 3                                         |                        |
| Promotions/marketing coordinator                | 3                                         |                        |
| VOLUNTEER POINTS                                |                                           | 25                     |

| Communication                                        | At least this level of newcomer readiness | Points if you have it: |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Current, jargon-free website                         | 1                                         |                        |
| Website welcome & intro to orienteering              | 1                                         |                        |
| Accurate time/place on web                           | 1                                         |                        |
| Directional signage to event                         | 1                                         |                        |
| Function signs (parking, check in, start, finish)    | 1                                         |                        |
| Monthly newsletter (events, thanks & needs)          | 2                                         |                        |
| Dedicated effort to connect with newcomers at events | 2                                         |                        |
| Can communicate with groups: families, Scouts, JROTC | 2                                         |                        |
| Automated alert e-mails possible to event attendees  | 3                                         |                        |
| Resource production: guides, handouts, videos        | 3                                         |                        |
| Active Facebook participation by club                | 3                                         |                        |
| COMMUNICATION POINTS                                 |                                           | 20                     |

| Outreach, event & processes                                                                       | At least this level of newcomer readiness | Points if you have it: |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Insurance at events                                                                               | 1                                         |                        |
| Listing in free web/print calendars                                                               | 2                                         |                        |
| Social events (mass start, pairs orienteering, post-event get-together, volunteer recognition...) | 2                                         |                        |
| Training events & skills development                                                              | 2                                         |                        |
| Map reviews                                                                                       | 2                                         |                        |
| Social media strategy for active Facebook page                                                    | 2                                         |                        |
| Thank you notes to land managers                                                                  | 3                                         |                        |
| Welcome e-mails & resources for new visitors                                                      | 3                                         |                        |
| Welcome e-mails & resources for new members                                                       | 3                                         |                        |
| Training and processes for leader development (AKA succession planning)                           | 3                                         |                        |
| Regional event planning coordination                                                              | 3                                         |                        |
| Regional planning representation (OUSA board or working team)                                     | 3                                         |                        |
| Outreach to outdoor groups (runners, hikers, scouts, JROTC)                                       | 3                                         |                        |
| Active paid promotion (Facebook ads, Adwords, Groupon, multimedia PR)                             | 3                                         |                        |
| OUTREACH, EVENT & PROCESS POINTS                                                                  |                                           | 35                     |

**TOTAL POINTS** **80**



*Created for Orienteering USA in November 2017 by Bob Forgrave, Cascade OC.  
Available in PDF or hard copy. Comments welcomed. See OUSA contact info inside.*