Using a Compass & Map

Part 1: Orient the Map

Hold your map so North is facing forward. Turn the compass dial so that the orien-
ting arrow is aiming at the direction of travel arrow. Put the compass onto the
map (orienting arrow should point to North on the map). Hold the compass and
map together and turn them until the magnetic needle is on top of the orienting
arrow (Hikers call this “red in the shed.”) Now your map is facing the same direc-
tion as the objects around you. (The map is oriented.)

Part 2: Using the Compass to find your next spot on the Map

Orienteering courses have a specific starting place (On our trail, this is the “Outdoor
Classroom” sign [back side]). On the map, these are the triangles (blue—easy
course, red—advanced course). Your goal is to use the compass & map to find each
of the numbered signs on the course. These steps will explain how to do this. This
is a type of race, so keep track of how long it takes to finish the whole course.

1—Use the ruler on the compass to measure from your current position to the next
place you want to go. After measuring with the ruler on the compass edge, calcu-
late the real distance using the map scale. Remember this distance. (It’s a good
idea to measure how many feet you walk in either a single step, or every 5, or 10
steps. This will help measure distances when following a map.)

2—Place the edge of your compass on the line from where you are to where you
want to go (The direction of travel arrow should be pointing that same way.). Turn
the dial so the orienting arrow points North on the map and the orienting lines are
parallel with the North—South lines on the map.

3—You can separate the map from the compass now and hold the compass out in
front of you (but can still see the dial). Turn your body so the needle is on top of the
orienting arrow (red in the shed). As you look from the compass and straight out in
front, you should see your target (tree, fence, etc.). Walk the distance you meas-
ured in step #1.

*If some obstacle is in between you and the target, aim for some other object in between you
and the target. Walk to that place, then repeat from step #1. If something is in between you
and the target that you can’t walk past, then find a new place that you can see on the map
and you can see in real life. Use this as a temporary target and walk to it. Repeat from step
#1.

4—Once you get near your target, look for the clue word (tree, fence, etc.). When
you get close to the target, you should see a sign marker. Record the letter on that
sign. At the end of the trail, you will use the letters to spell a word. Now try to get
to the next number on the map (Repeat from #1).