

## **ORIENTEERING** **UP HILL, DOWN DALE**

Think of it as running or walking with your brain. Orienteering is a supercharged scavenger hunt through woods and fields that pits your endurance and intellect against nature. Navigate your way using only a map, compass and your own wits through a series of checkpoints on two-, four- or eight-kilometre courses in parks or other woodland areas. Do it on your own, with a buddy or an organized group. Kids over age 10 will enjoy it too.



### **Fitness factor**

**Cardio** Running to each control point burns the same calories as cross-country running and improves your endurance. It's one of the best ways to get your heart working harder and more efficiently. Walk a beginner's route or run hard on an advanced course: it's up to you. The more advanced the route, the more obstacles you face--exposed roots, streams, hills, loose rocks. Payback: a higher intensity, fat-burning workout.

**Strength** You'll see improved strength and toning in your quads and hamstrings. Running or walking on rough terrain forces more leg muscles to work for balanced muscle development that reduces risk of overuse injury. Your bones will get stronger; your joints will thank you for getting off the pavement and onto soft trails. Bonus Scrambling over rocks and jumping over logs hones your agility, flexibility and balance.

**Fun factor** You'll get off the hot asphalt and out into the cooling woods. And you're so busy making quick decisions about the best route that you're never bored. "It's a social sport where you'll see everyone chatting about the routes and poring over the maps afterward," says Annette Van Tyghem of the Ontario Orienteering Association. Super bonus: if you're single, it's a great way to meet men, who still outnumber women in most clubs.

**To get started** Sign up for an event. Arrive an hour early: you can get a lesson on basic compass and map-reading skills when you register. Wear sturdy trail, hiking or running shoes with non-slip soles so you don't slip on rocks or mud. Check local clubs for evening beginner clinics.

**Tip** Take lots of water, slather on the sunscreen and tuck a few Band-Aids in your pocket. Wear a hat. Remember: orienteers don't get lost; they just get, er, disoriented.