



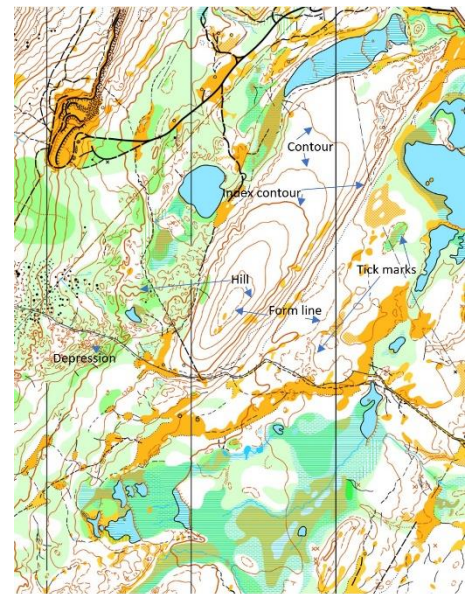
Contours

Reading contours is a vital skill for an orienteer but we don't get a lot of practice with contours. You can often orienteer well enough without really using the contours on a city orienteering map. The advantage of knowing how to read them, however, is tremendous, especially if you want to run in the forest. For some lucky people contours just pop out at them! For others of us, we might have to stop and look to see if the contours are showing a hill or a valley.

This week's activity is about getting to know contours better. It is a coloring exercise. The idea is print the attached map in black and white. The map only has contours on it. Using a gradient of colours, colour between the contours. Each level of contour should be the same color.

Some things to keep in mind about contours:

- Contours can be 5m or 2.5m. For most of our Alberta maps, contours are 5 meters – more important when you're running than colouring.
- Every fifth contour is an index contour – it is a thicker line, to easily identify at running pace.
- Form lines are dashed contour lines – this indicates that the mapper felt it was an obvious change of height but not part of the new contour level. Ignore these in the exercise.
- The top of a hill is marked with a full circle (in the shape of the hill).
- Depressions are also marked with full circles but should have tick marks in them (on the ends usually). The marks indicate which way is down.
- Tick marks are found on contours (not just depressions) to show the direction of down. Reentrants (valleys) might also have tick lines for example.



Training exercises for orienteers will often include a contours-only exercise; navigating without forest & field colours can be tricky if you can't read contours well.

Here are two maps with contours only. Colour the map to really get a handle on contours. You could also just try to identify hills, reentrants, depressions, spurs. Here is what a contoured-coloured map might look like. The red, yellow, light green contours are at the same elevation. Grey is the lowest elevation shown on the map.

[2020 Sandy McNabb contours.pdf](#)

[Moose Creek contours only.pdf](#)

Have fun. Stay healthy. Think orienteering!

