

How to get the most out of your junior squad training day

(A Guide for Juniors and their Parents / Coaches)

This guide is intended to give you some hints on how to get the most of SEJS training days, but the principles apply to many areas of life.

1. Introduction

When you join the squad, you are just starting to develop as an orienteer. Each session has a number of exercises and a coach will guide you in choosing which ones to do, based on your experience. You will probably learn something new each time without much preparation on your part. However as you improve, you may find that the exercises don't meet your personal requirements. This guide will give you some ideas how to change this.

2. Prepare – work out what would help you

First, you need to work out what your needs are. A good way to do this is to analyse recent courses and work out what went well and what didn't. Fill in a race analysis form from the SEOA website or similar, and draw your route on your map. Use Routegadget (Figure 1). After a few events a pattern may emerge. Ask a coach for help if you need it or a parent (they have their uses, as well as the taxi service). Things you might spot are: I get lost in the circle, I end up miles off course on long routes, and I lose time on easy legs even though I run fast, I overshoot near the start, or I slow down at the end. There are lots of other things!

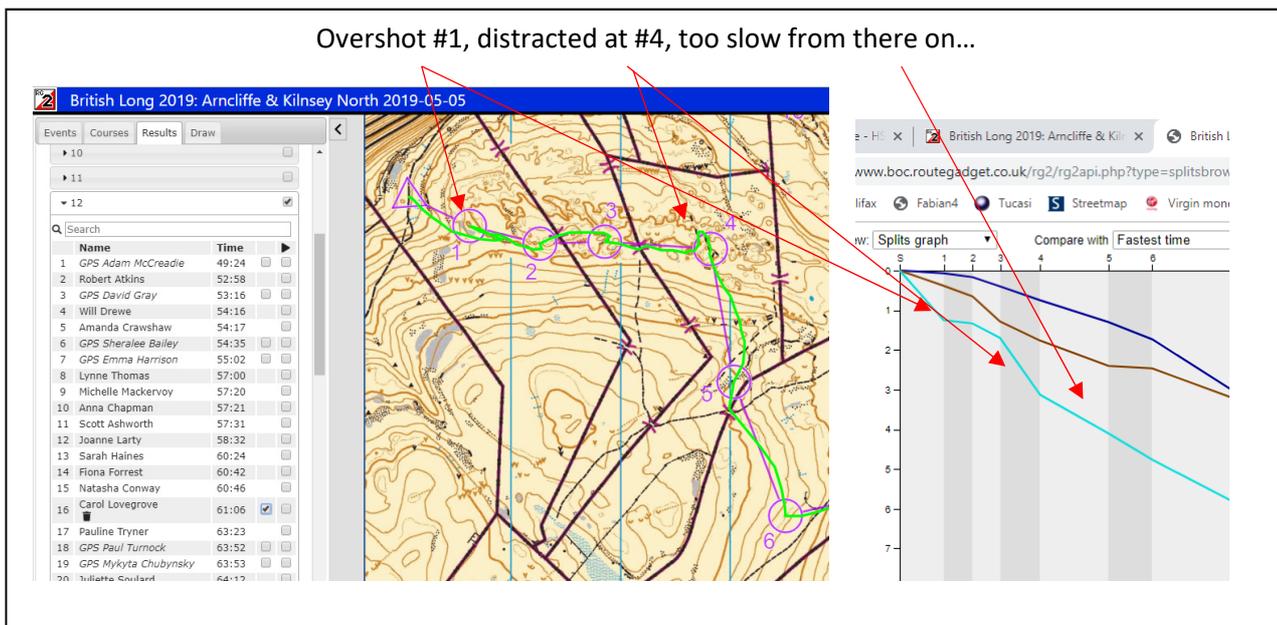


Figure 1 Using Routegadget

Once you've worked out what is going wrong or could go better, tell the squad coaches, so we can plan some exercises to help. Obviously if 24 juniors do this, we'll have 24 different things to work on, but at least I'll have some ideas to start with. I might not manage to fit all your requirements into one session, but we can work in that direction. You don't need to ask for a particular exercise, just "I keep going too far" for example (Figure 2). Your clever coaches will work from that. However, if you really want a particular exercise, just say!

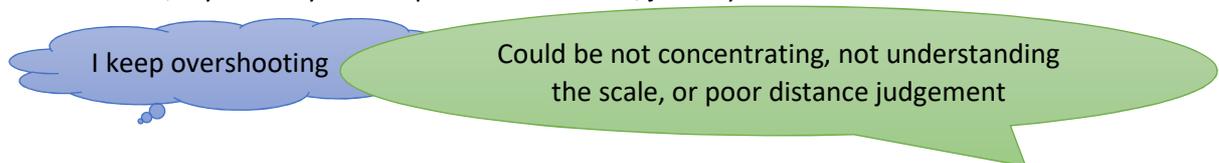


Figure 2 Talk to a coach to work out the problem

If you need practice on tricky contour-infested hillsides, you may need to move Up North, or maybe we'll organise a training weekend away! There's not a great deal we can do about geography, but most other things we can do. As I say, tell the coaches what you'd like and we'll try to oblige.

However, you need to do this at an appropriate time. Spoiler alert- not the night before the session.

3. Communicate – tell the coach planning the session

If you let me know you're coming the afternoon before the session, I'll be delighted to see you, but the maps have been printed, the control flags sorted and the coaches allocated, based on terrain, junior's ability and personality, so you'll get some exercises and someone will be there when you get back to talk to. You'll have a nice day out with your friends and you might learn something useful, but that's about it.

I generally plan a session about 2 weeks in advance and the maps arrive a week in advance (Figure 3). So if you want your personal needs included, I need to know what they are 2+ weeks before the session. Email, phone, text; all methods work! The dates are all on the SEJS pages of the SEOA website, so get in the habit of checking to keep track. Sometimes they change, but not often.

If you tell me a week in advance and if I've got time, I might be able to use the existing control sites to plan you a special exercise (it won't be on a waterproof map). I won't be adding extra controls or moving any at this stage, and that's assuming I have any free time.

If you only tell me a few days before the session, I'll try to think how I can adapt the exercises for your particular needs and I'll allocate a coach to you. I'll try to brief the coach about your needs.

The night before....too late. Opportunity missed. Nice day out with friends, some basic technique practice; nothing wrong with that, but you could have so much more!

4. Implement – on the day

On the day, assuming you've prepared, you'll know what you want to work on. Look at the available exercises and discuss with your allocated coach what you're aiming to get from the session (Figure 4). Don't just pick up a map and run off; this isn't an event, it is training. You may have to wait a few minutes at the start of the session while everyone gets going; use this time to look at the maps. Before you set off, discuss the exercise with your coach to make sure you understand it and how you're going to approach it.

Timeline to a session:

2 weeks before: Coach plans session. Before this, you can ask for specific exercises, or a skill to work on.

1 week before: Maps arrive. You can ask for ideas to tailor the planned session, but no new exercises.

2-3 days before: Coaches allocated. Your needs can be passed on to your coach for the day, but no changes to maps.

The night before: Kit packed. A coach can be briefed to talk to you before you set out.

On the day: Sign the register. A coach will talk to you when they get a chance.....

Figure 3 Planning timeline

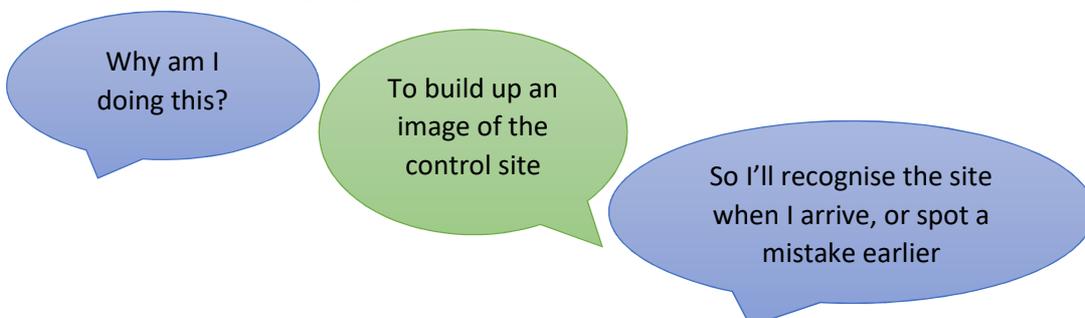


Figure 4 Discuss the exercises with a coach

Next comes the easy bit: **do the training exercise.....**

When you get back, discuss how you got on with your coach. If they have disappeared to shadow someone else, talk to another coach; you may have to brief them about what you're doing, especially if you've made some personal modifications. Then choose another exercise and repeat the process.

At the end of the session, make sure you're clear about the feedback your coach has given you. If you're unsure about anything, ask; we'll be happy to explain. If for any reason you didn't get on with your coach, or a partner in a pairs exercise, you can let me know privately. I can't promise you won't work with them again, but if I don't know there's a problem, I can't do anything about it.

5. Practice

Try using the next few events to practice the areas you worked on. Remember, not all events are competitions; most are training opportunities. You should start to see gradual improvements. If you don't, come back to us and we'll try another approach. Remember, you need to keep working at things; you're not going to improve overnight.

6. Review

Analyse your routes and identify any new problems. And you know what to do then.... ask me for some specific training exercises (Figure 5).

7. Conclusions

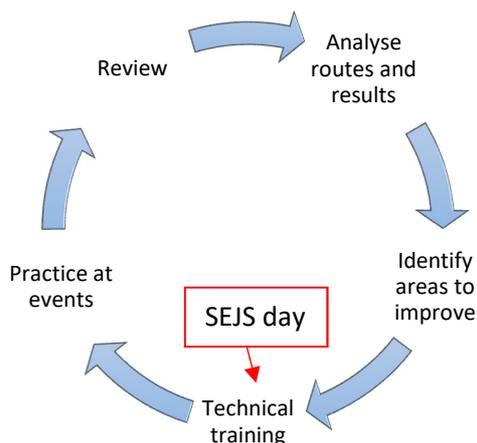


Figure 5 The review cycle

The squad is very keen to tailor the training sessions to athletes' requirements. Work out what you'd like to do, let the coaches know in a reasonable timeframe and we can do it. Otherwise, you'll get what WE think you need. Remember, it's an ongoing process and running the training exercises on the day is just a small part of the whole cycle; to get the most out of squad training days, you need to prepare, practice and analyse as well.

Run well!

Carol Lovegrove
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