

# Trail-O Training

## Concept

Trail-O is a puzzle based on orienteering concepts. You are given a map with a control circle and control description on it. You may only walk on paths and roads shown on the map. As you approach the area you will see a viewing spot. From this spot you will see from 1-5 control bags in the field. Your job is to determine which control bag, if any, matches the control circle and description. How hard can that be?

## Directions

1. You must stay on the paths and trails shown on the map.
2. From the viewing station (there will be a sign) you will be able to see all of the control bags. The control description will include info like A-C, A-D or A-E. A-C would mean there are 3 bags. From the viewing station, the bags from left to right should be thought of as A, B and C. The only purpose of the viewing station is to make sure you can see all bags and know which is A, B, etc...
3. You are free to walk up and down the paths to actually solve the puzzle (in most cases you have to).
4. Look at the map and compare it to the terrain – determine which features are mapped and which are unmapped (maps don't show everything – some things are too small and some are simplified).
  - a. You may need to use vegetation, features and/or contours to narrow down the answer.
  - b. Look everywhere, not just at the control bags. Relative positions of some features, even at a distance from the bags, can provide valuable clues.
5. A compass can help you keep your direction straight (N from S), but not required on this course. The trails and features allow you to orient map, and the arrow on the map shows North.
6. "None of the above": There is one small twist to the game – if you can prove to yourself that none of the bags are correct, then choose "Z" as the answer. For a course setter to set a puzzle with the answer Z, they should make sure that you can clearly eliminate all of the bags as being correct.
7. Now decide which bag matches the center of the circle – pick an answer in your head (A, B, ... or Z).

## Answers

On the trail shortly after each viewing station is a control stand with the answer hanging from it. On it I show the letter answer, a piece of the map showing all of the bags placed in the field with the correct one circled, and an explanation of how I solved the puzzle. Feel free to go back for another look at the terrain.

## Caveat

This is just a demonstration of Trail-O. No one has vetted the controls, and I have not made map changes – there could well be minor discrepancies. If you attempted to solve the puzzle differently than I did and got a different answer, then I apologize for any frustration on your part. A true Trail-O competition, just like Foot-O, requires vetting and map corrections. Hopefully, though, you have still been given a sense of what Trail-O can be like.

## Why Trail-O?

If solving puzzles isn't enough fun in and of its own, Trail-O will also hone your ability to compare your map to a piece of terrain in front of you. This can help you in regular Foot-O when you are searching for a control point, running through an area requiring fine navigation, trying to relocate, or selecting control sites as a course setter. Some of the best at Foot-O turn out to be the best at Trail-O. I don't think that is a coincidence.