Beginner's Instruction*

A. The Sport
- goal: to find numbered "controls", in numerical order, in fastest possible time
- sport is NOT simply following a compass bearing in a straight line
- challenge is to pick best route for YOU (over the hill or around it?)
- show what a control looks like
- point out control code - proves you have found the right one
- demonstrate how to use punch and numbered boxes on punch card
- go over clue sheet - description of features, list of control codes
- map and course - usually have to copy course onto map yourself - BE PRECISE - triangle is start (and usually finish too) - circles highlight features - control should be found right in the center of the circle
- everyone is timed, even if not "competing" because that's how we keep track of who's out in the woods
- everyone must report to the finish line even if they don't finish the course, otherwise we think they're out there lost or hurt
- everyone must be back by _____ whether they are done or not
- when ready to start, report to starter

B. The Map
- O maps are made specifically for the sport
  - The COLORS:
    - white = normal forest (different from USGS maps, where white = fields)
    - green = forest with undergrowth
    - yellow = fields, open areas
    - blue = water features: streams, marshes
    - black = typically man-made features roads, tracks, trails - the thinner the line, the narrower the trail X's - man-made objects dots, triangles - boulders
    - brown = mainly contour lines: lines follow constant elevation
      - picture a wedding cake viewed from above
      - lines close together = steep terrain, far apart = flat
      - what's uphill, what's down - water is at bottom of slopes,
      - circles are hilltops - brown is also ditches & gullies - perpendicular to contours
  - The SCALE: 1:10,000 and 1:15,000 are most common
  - contour interval typically 5 m

C. The Compass (Note to instructors: One method of teaching how to use the compass is given below. It is NOT the only or the "best" way to teach it. If you have another way that makes more sense to you, please use that method.)
- In Orienteering, the map is primary, the compass is secondary. A compass is not necessarily needed to complete a course.
Simplest use of compass - to ORIENT the map (hence the name of the sport)
Hold the map so that the spot you are heading to is "up" or ahead of you as you hold the map in front of you, even if that means the writing ends up upside-down or sideways. Then ORIENT yourself and the map at the same time so that north on the map is in the same direction as north on the ground. You will then be facing the proper direction of travel, and anything on the right on the map will also be on the right on the ground, ditto for left, etc.
parallel black lines point to MAGNETIC NORTH
red needle on compass points to magnetic north - to orient map, line up map so that parallel black lines are parallel to red needle. Point out ease of making 180° mistake.
have everyone orient their map - point out nearby features on map (parking lot, buildings, major hills, visible trails, etc.)
have them hold the map as though heading to the first control, and then orient themselves and the map to magnetic north. Check to be sure everyone has got it.

At this point, those who don't want more detailed compass instruction can head out. For those who want to know more about using an orienteering compass, continue.

O compass has three parts: rectangular base plate, rotating bezel, floating needle
to set a bearing from one control to another (or from attack point to control):
align edge of rectangular base plate on line from where you are to where you want to go
holding base plate steady on that line, rotate the bezel until the parallel lines within the circle line up with the black parallel north lines on the map
hold map in left hand, compass in right hand in front of you like a deck of cards, with round bezel part closest to your body, arrow at end of rectangular base plate pointing away from you
rotate YOUR WHOLE BODY until the floating red needle comes into alignment with the parallel lines inside the bezel
when red needle is in alignment, the arrow on the rectangular base plate points in the direction of travel - to follow a compass bearing, sight along the baseplate direction-of-travel arrow and pick out a significant object in the distance (a striking tree, bush, boulder). Move to that object - a straight line isn't necessary. When you reach the object, repeat.

*from Quantico Orienteering Website qoc.us.orienteering.org