

BEYOND THE BASICS CONTOURS

Interpreting contours is one of the hardest and most important skills in map reading.

Definition

A contour is an imaginary line representing equal altitude (height above sea level).
Contour lines show the shape of the land.
Contours on O maps are a mixture of science and art.

Contour features

Contour lines, index contours, form lines, slope lines, hills, knolls, depressions, pits

Contour interpretation

Describe shapes of hills, depressions, spurs & reentrants. Useful words: circular, oval, oblong, linear, pointed, gently rounded, shaped like a...boomerang, banana, tear drop
How steep is the slope? Useful words: gentle, steep, plateau, convex, concave
Describe the angle of slope: facing N, S, NE, SW
Verbalize what you see as you go by contour features.

Interpreting contours WHILE MOVING

1. Progress from standing -> walking -> jogging -> running
2. Holding the map correctly

What to practice today

1. Hold the map & compass correctly all the time
2. Relate the contours on the map to the shape of the land around you all the time; look all around you as you go.