

Nordic countries to comply with international standards for course setting

Currently there are in principle two sets of course setting standards in use in trailo competitions all over the world; the international (IOF) standard and the Nordic standard, hereby referred to as respectively the IOF and NORD standard. Roughly the difference is that IOF standard concerns precise specification of the center of the circle, while the NORD standard concerns precise control description. More specifically, I see 3 differences for the two standards:

1. Treatment of correct flag at a part of an area object.
2. Zero answer on correct part of an area object.
3. Control description at terrain formation consisting of several contours. [Apparently the Nordic guidelines specify the same as the IOF guidelines regarding this matter even if my impression is that the convention is to handle this differently in the Nordic countries.]

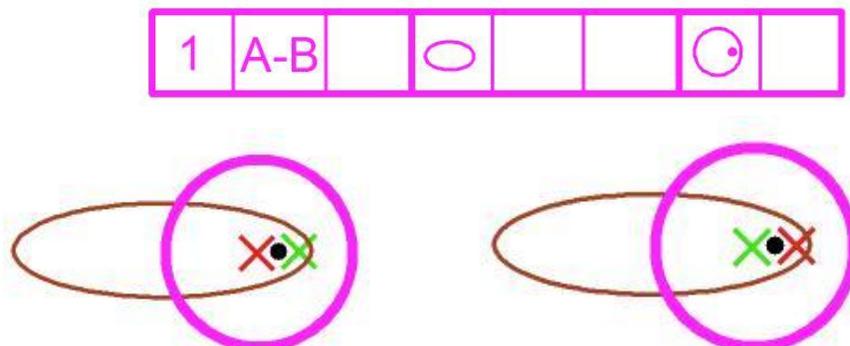
To my knowledge only Norway, Sweden and Denmark uses the NORD standard, while Finland and the rest of the world follow the IOF standard. My suggestion is that all Nordic countries should drop the specific NORD standard and comply with the IOF standard.

1. Treatment of correct flag at an area object

Nordic guidelines: If several flags are located on the same part of an area object, the flag furthestmost in the described direction is the correct one.

IOF technical guidelines: The control position is defined by the centre of the circle on the map together with the control description. (TG 6). The control description may correctly apply to more than one flag. (TG 10). The convention for a direction description (such as NW part), where more than one flag fits the description, that the flag furthestmost in that direction is the correct one does NOT apply in IOF competition. (TG 11)”

Example: NORD standard to the left, IOF standard to the right. 2 flags, green cross is the correct according to the standard, the red cross denotes other flag. The center of the circle is to the left of the boulder, but according to the NORD standard the one to the right is still the correct one.

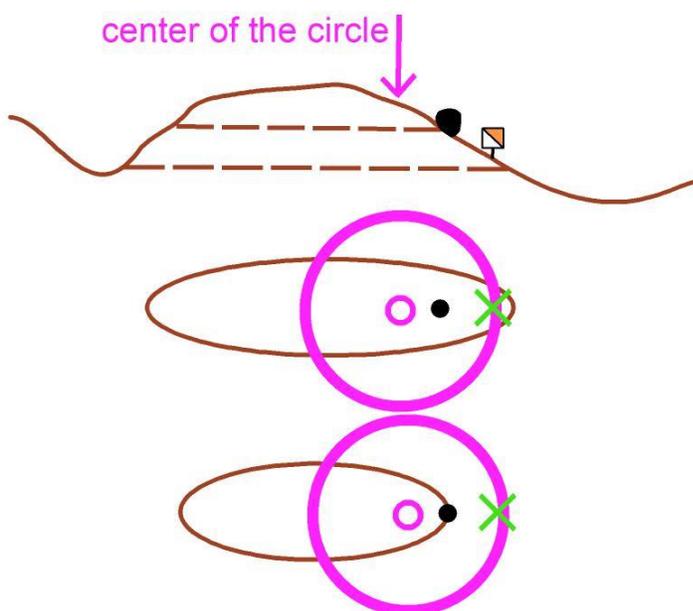


2. Zero answer on correct part of an area object

Nordic guidelines (may be found here but requires very careful reading)/ Nordic convention: When a flag is placed on the correct part of an area object, the solution cannot be “zero” even if the flag is not placed at the center of the circle. “Correct part of an area object is precise enough”.

IOF guidelines: The control position is defined by the centre of the circle on the map together with the control description. (TG 6)

Example: Assume that the map for this situation was originally drawn with the lower contour line as illustrated by the upper map segment. By the IOF standard, this gives a perfectly valid zero answer. The NORD standard does however not allow this as a flag is placed on the same part of the feature (the correct answer would thus be that flag according to the NORD standard). However, using the exact same flag placement and center of the circle, lifting the contour line slightly as illustrated by the lower map sample gives a valid zero answer also according to the NORD standard as the flag is now outside the defined hill. Hence, one has to change the map (not the flag placement) in order to allow for this type of problem using the NORD standard, while the IOF standard allows for both versions.

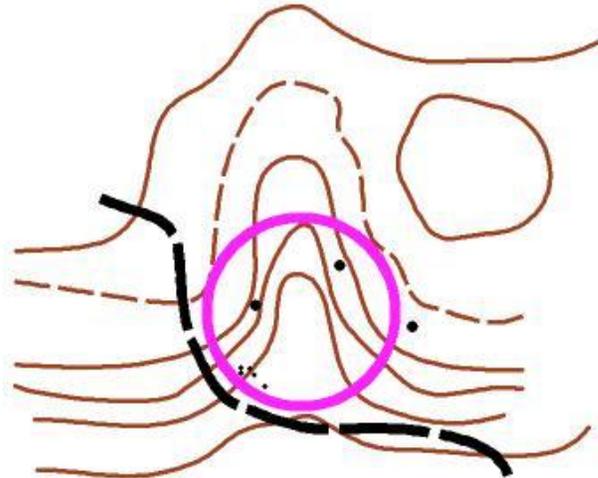
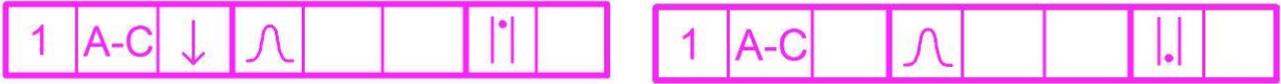


3. Control description at terrain formation consisting of several contours

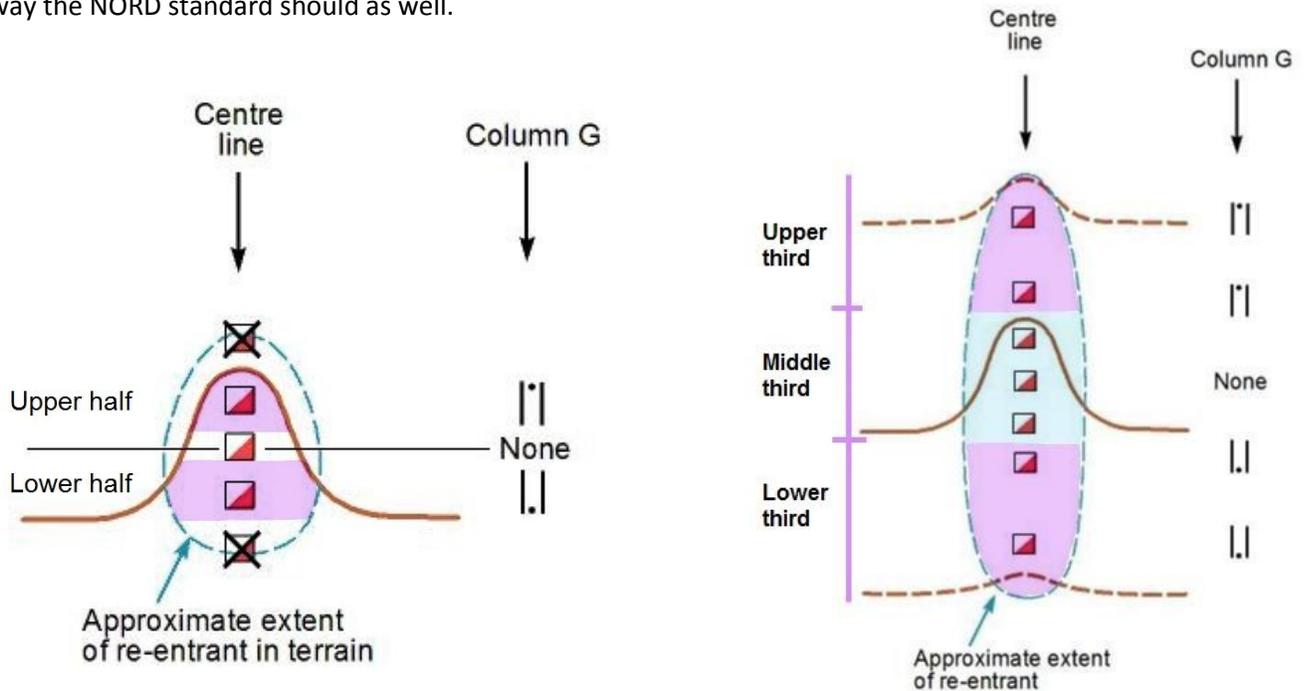
The (non-formalized) Nordic convention (at least Norway and Sweden): Let the control description refer to one exact contour line on the map and not to the full extent of the contour feature in the terrain. [This is only what I understand is the convention. The Nordic guidelines section 1.2, paragraph 2 specifies that the control description should refer to the complete feature, just as specified in the IOF guidelines.]

The IOF Technical Guidelines: “The description should take note of the visible extent of the feature in the terrain as well as its representation within the circle on the map. (TG 12)”.

Example: Assume that the below map sample is from a terrain where there is one large re-entrant in the terrain covered by all curves above the center of the circle. The NORD standard would use the left control description which in this case points to the southernmost contour and describes the control placement as placed in the “upper part” of the “re-entrant” established by this brown line on the map. The IOF standard would use the more intuitive control description to the right specifying the flag control placement as placed in the lower part of the re-entrant and hence coinciding with the visual extent of feature.



Comment: Current practice is to split features created by several contours into **two** parts (left figure below) as the case is with features consisting of only one contour line. In the new IOF guidelines it is possible that this is changed so that features created by several contours are split into **three** parts (right figure below) as this is more intuitive. If the IOF standard is changed this way the NORD standard should as well.



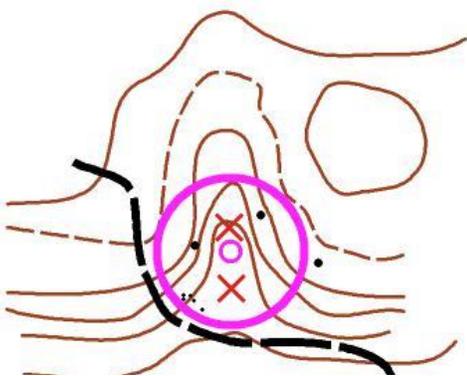
Consequences of the two standards

a) With the NORD practice the exact flag placement and center of the circle is not as important as with the IOF practice, where specifying the center of the circle exactly is important both for the planner and competitor. In this regard both practices has positive and negative sides.

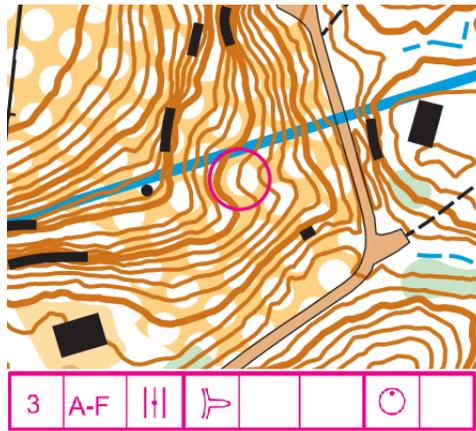
b) With the NORD standard some tasks concerns finding a (hidden) brown line in the terrain. The control description then tells the competitor where the center of the circle is on the map (which brown curve) and not roughly where the flag is in the terrain.

c) With the NORD standard, the control description (column C) sometimes becomes overly and unnecessary complicated in detailed terrain. In many of these cases it does not give the competitor any additional information about the control placement. The IOF standard gives an intuitive and much more useful control description, which coincides with what is used in foot-o. Further, the control description is guiding and the center of the circle is fully specifying the control location.

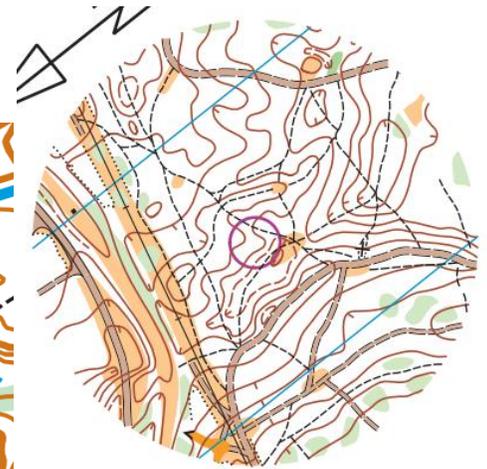
d) The NORD standard restricts the planner's options for course planning. In the below example, the upper flag may not be placed below the brown line (and between the two boulders) as this would mean it is the correct as it is on the correct part of the re-entrant. (According to the NORD standard)



d) This flag placement (red crosses) is not allowed according to the NORD standard as the flag upper is within the same "brown curve contour" as the center of the circle and is hence on the correct part of the correct feature..



b) NORD: The task is to find the brown circle and the control description does not give you any information



b) IOF: Intuitive and informative control description referring to the flag placement in the terrain.

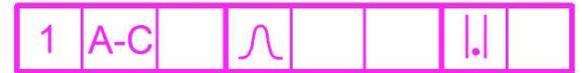
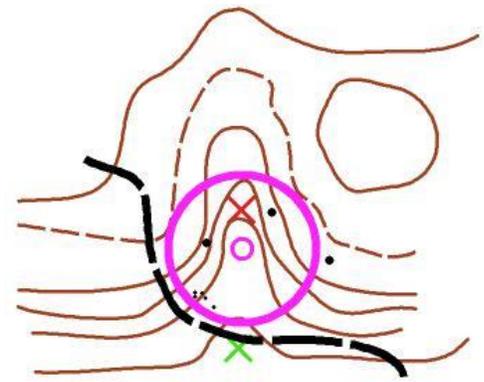


1	A-D	•			○
2	A-C	•			
3	A-D		>		○
4	A-D	↑	≡		
5	A-D		>		○
6	A	↓	>		○
7	A-D	↘	∩		
8	A-B		≡		
9	A-C		≡		→
10	A-B		>		○
11	A-B	↑	≡		○
12	A-C	→	>		○
13	A-C		≡		○
14	A-D	↓	>		○
15	A-C		>		
16	A-C		∩		
17	A		≡	↖	↗
18	A		≡		↘
19	A-D	↘	∩		○
20	A		>		○ ↑
		○	30 m		○

c) Unnecessary complicated column C caused by having to point to the brown curve and not the feature.

Notes

[In my opinion it is disturbing and problematic to use the NORD standard for point 2 and at the same time the IOF standard (or Nordic guidelines!) for point 3. That is, if the control furthest in the specified direction should be correct and one at the same time should let the control description refer to the complete feature when it is established by several contour lines. In the illustration to the right this would mean that a flag placed at the green cross would actually be the correct solution here. (Assuming the re-entrant continues all the way below the path.) That is, one cannot place any other flag further down in a large or long re-entrant if the current Nordic guidelines are followed strictly. In my opinion this limits the course setting considerably.]



[It has been pointed out to me that there is also one more difference between the NORD and IOF standards: According the IOF guidelines “double” control descriptions like house, southern side, western part is not allowed (by using column F). This is however allowed according to the Nordic guidelines. This may be used for “part of” between (where regular between often is as interesting), for houses as mentioned above (although it seldom gives a very interesting elite problem, it MAY be usable for beginners courses). For part of a cliff top when the cliff is quite long or partly hidden, the NORD convention offers more flexibility which may be beneficial in some quite rare cases. (Double control descriptions where used in 6 out of 35 competitions I participated in last season, 2 of them where between where standard between could have been used instead, two of them where cliff side+part where only part COULD be used as well although it is slightly less informative and the last two where part of cliff top which I believe could not have been used exactly as they were used in those competitions.). There may of course be other situations as well, but I believe those are quite rare and may be replaced by other similar tasks.]

Concluding remarks

The Nordic countries has more or less standalone developed our beloved sport the last years by changing both the practice for course setting (more orienteering, less judgement), developing the TempO diciplin, removing the double penalty on timed controls etc... However, now I believe it is time for the Nordic countries to follow international standards as well. Having one set of rules for flag placement all over the world has many advantages. Following the IOF standard gives, as mentioned, course setters more flexibility to set more interesting problems, **but does not lock any doors.** [This is not entirely true with the new point regarding double control descriptions as leaving that will give slightly less flexibility regarding a few types of control problems] Even if the center of the circle should be placed exactly the same type of problems as one has set with the current NORD standard can be used, one should still set “clear zero problems”, preferably on other mapped features etc., the control description just becomes more intuitive, and the competitors must certainly still judge whether the control is “close enough” to the correct point as one can never set a control 100% correct (but often 99%).

The NORD standard has some benefits when old rough maps are used or when the course planner has been careless when setting the circles in OCAD (or if the course is set by hand and copied). When the NORD standard were developed many years ago the mapping and printing process was completely different. They

made perfectly sense for typical trailO competitions at that time, but I believe that circumstances as mentioned above belong to the past, and that the IOF standard makes much more sense for modern trailo also in the Nordic countries. If the course setter cannot set the center of the circle precisely on the map in 2014 I think it is not about precision anymore.

There are currently very active Nordic representatives in the TOC in IOF. Therefore, I do not doubt that the "Nordic view" on different cases will be heard, and I suggest that the norm should be that the Nordic countries follow what is decided in TOC as well. That is not to say one cannot try out suggestions etc, but that overall the IOF guidelines for elite orienteering should yield also in all elite competitions in Nordic countries, while the Nordic guidelines should be the simplified short version written in Scandinavian language.