

IOF Map Commission

BEST PRACTICES FOR SPRINT MAPPING

May 2025

This document has been compiled and edited by the IOF Map Commission (January-May 2025).



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Introduction

The past decade has seen a significant development of sprint disciplines in orienteering. Accordingly, the orienteering sprint map specification has been updated to better meet current needs and be applicable to increasingly complex urban environments. In a way, we are building here on the document Guidelines for sprint mapping and course planning in complex urban structures on sprint orienteering published in 2022. At that time, several new symbols for mapping multi-level structures were introduced and their use needed to be explained to the orienteering community. While the use of the new symbols has since become sufficiently established, a number of issues related to the generalization and legibility of sprint orienteering maps have persisted. This document, entitled **Best practices for sprint mapping**, aims to educate the mapping community and has the following objectives:

- to reinforce awareness of the importance of generalization and legibility in sprint orienteering maps
- to briefly describe aspects of orienteering sprint map production
- to illustrate the most common mistakes through graphical examples and suggest appropriate solutions

The document is intended for beginners as well as advanced mappers and develops some principles that may not be obvious at first glance after reading the ISSprOM 2019-2 map specification, as the specification defines map symbols as such and does not deal with the real-world situation where many combinations and spatial relationships between map symbols occur. The above means that one of the main conditions for working with this document is at least a basic knowledge of the ISSprOM 2019-2 map specification.

The document is the collective work of all members of the IOF Mapping Commission. It includes both real and fictional map examples. The authors would welcome constructive comments leading to further improvement of this document.

Requirements for orienteering sprint maps

Sprint orienteering requires high speed route navigation typically in urban environment. This means that high demands are placed on the athlete in terms of running speed and also in terms of the speed of his decision making, which is based on reading information from the map. Typical urban sprint terrain is a labyrinth of passages between massive obstacles and barriers. It is essential to provide such information in a way that is as easy to understand as possible. This means that map legibility and the related level of generalization play a crucial role.

The map area with all existing features is generally too complex to present everything on the map using defined symbol sizes and minimal gaps. The same is with the runner; while fast running one can't even notice all features on the ground. That's why generalization is needed, and their goal is to reduce the graphical complexity of the map, making the map readable and legible. On the other side, with the generalization, the mapmaker must ensure that all important and to the runners' obvious objects are presented on the map, while the less visible or less important are neglected. Generalization is a complex procedure, consists of eliminating smaller or less important features, graphical simplification

of lines and area borders, exaggeration, enhancement and finally displacement from the original exact position, but preserving relative spatial relations.

Harmonisation is also an integral part of the mapping process. It primarily means maintaining a consistent approach to generalization across the map area. Its importance increases if one map is prepared by several mappers - individual parts of the map should be as consistent as possible in terms of mapping approach so that the runner does not notice any differences in the inclusion or omission of mapped objects.

Mapping process

It is the responsibility of the event organisation (especially the course planner, controller and event adviser) to make sure that the map and terrain are suitable and fair for all competitors. During the preparation of the map, it is standard practice to consult with the course setter and event advisor on a number of situations. These may include not only decisions about which private areas will be accessible to competitors and need to be mapped, but also decisions about the ability to cross certain features. It is common that modifications to an already finished map can take place shortly before the event, for example due to course construction (closing/opening some parts of the map) or due to external influences (reconstruction or other restrictions).

When creating a map, the mapmaker must first select suitable objects to be included in the map (selective generalization). Only significant objects which are important for navigation are selected and only enough objects are selected to keep the resulting situation legible on the map. Overlapping or too close proximity of map symbols under the defined minimum gaps must be avoided. In some cases, it is preferable to represent objects by unifying them into area symbols instead of individual point symbols (for example, instead of mapping individual shrubs/trees in the park, the area can be simplified into an area symbol representing open land with scattered trees).

The use of digital mapping directly in the field offers direct work with the real size of map symbols and can help the mapmaker to decide which objects to include in the map and which not to include, as they would overwhelm the map. It is essential to try to resolve maximum of spatial conflicts that arise between mapped objects directly in the field. During this process, the mapper should also keep in mind that minimum gaps between map symbols are required.

Particular attention must be paid to mapping of multilevel structures. This means that it should be possible to understand from the map (generally while running at high speed) where it is possible to enter and exit the structure, on which level, and how to move from one level to another. It is also important to be able to identify quickly and easily which detail is on the upper level (the upper level is mapped by default) and what is the shape of lower level, and also to identify if steps go up to the upper level, or down to the lower level. Only two running levels can be mapped, even if the structure offers more levels (entry to other levels must be taped during the race). If understanding of the situation is a problem, you need to discuss it with course setter/event advisor. The solution can be detailed and illustrative explanation of the situation in the competition bulletin or mapping of the upper level only.

The next step after the mapping in the field is to finalize drawing of the objects appropriately on the map. This often means that the object to be mapped is drawn in a simplified shape, with a shift or enlargement to the required minimum size (graphical generalization). Example can be removal of small and unimportant shapes from buildings, straightening of minor shape changes on various line objects and simplification of contours for easier understanding of height differences. Typically, most of this process is done at home on a desktop computer. Drawing of sprint maps is very demanding in terms of time, accuracy and clarity of drawing. Drawing of barriers and passages has the biggest importance,

but it is also important to ensure that styled lines such as uncrossable fences, passable walls, small footpaths etc. are appropriately drawn, especially in places where they bend sharply.

When finalizing the map, it is highly advisable to make a test print in scale 1:4000 to assess the legibility of individual parts of the map. Particular attention must be paid to areas of high complexity, and it is advisable to consult such areas with the opponent (elite runner, experienced mapmaker) and the course setter. It must be remembered that the map must contain sufficient information for the competing orienteer and at the same time be legible at the running speed and in different weather and light conditions.

Principles of generalization and legibility in a nutshell

Selective generalization

- only important objects
- unique objects (e.g. fountains, statues), passages and all barriers are mapped
- small and frequented objects are not mapped (trash bins, lamps, poles, benches, advertising banners, small bushes)
- do not map private yards (even with open gate), boundaries between houses, fences inside private gardens
- only big houses, big water features and railways are drawn inside private areas (areas that shall not be entered)

Graphical generalization

- simplification straightening of curls, elimination of jagged lines, simplification of shape
- shifting so that the symbols do not overlap, do not touch and have sufficiently large gaps between them
- enlargement to make everything legible and understandable, especially the passages!!
- established practices the main running level is mapped (the base of the building, the height of the house does not decide), the upper level in detail, the lower only schematics

Legibility

- always use the correct symbol sizes according to the map scale,
- strictly adhere to the minimum areas and lengths of symbols,
- keep the defined minimum gaps,
- provide a clean and precise map drawing.

"Perfection is achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away."

— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, <u>Airman's Odyssey</u>

Graphical examples

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Terminology

To simplify the text, sometimes we use the following terms, which are either abbreviations or names used in the community:

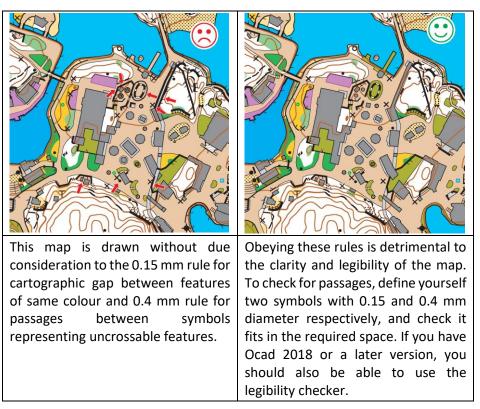
- *OB* Out of Bounds, sometimes abbreviated to OB, to denote any area or surface that runners are forbidden to enter according to the competition rules.
- *Shark teeth* term used in the community to name the 512.1 Bridge or tunnel entrance map symbol

Example schema

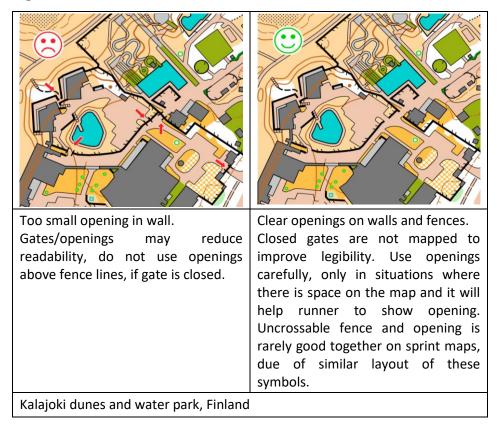
No. Issue name

Graphics	Graphics			
Bad example	Good example			
It refers to the following possible	It refers to the following possible			
situations: ineffective, poorly designed,	situations: effective, well-designed, clear,			
inaccurate, misleading, user-unfriendly,	accurate, user-friendly, high-quality,			
low-quality, illegible	legible			
Sample approximately 5 x 5 cm	Sample approximately 5 x 5 cm			
Arrows or text can be used to indicate	Arrows or text can be used to indicate			
exact position of error	exact position of correction			
Description	Description			
Bad example description (what is wrong)	Good example description (what is correct)			
Additional information Photos, link to Street View or other information if needed				

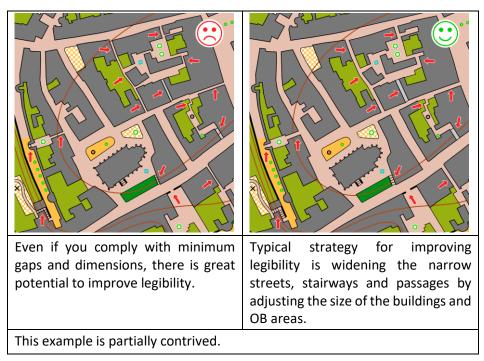
1 Passages and cartographic gaps



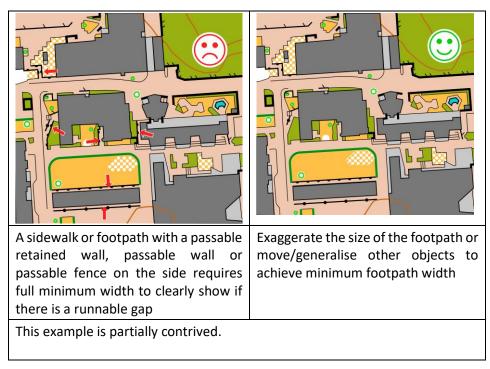
2 Openings in uncrossable walls and fences



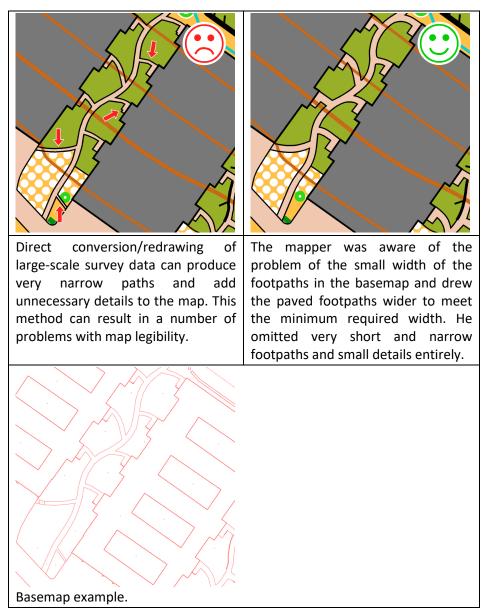
3 Widening narrow passages and streets



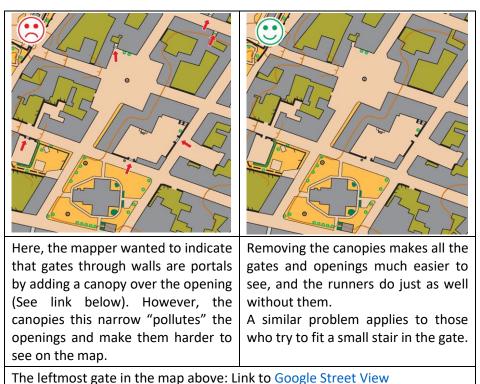
4 Minimum width footpath and retaining wall or passable wall



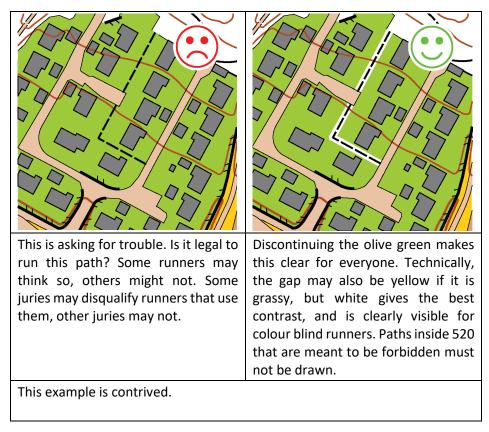
5 Large scale survey basemap vs. final map



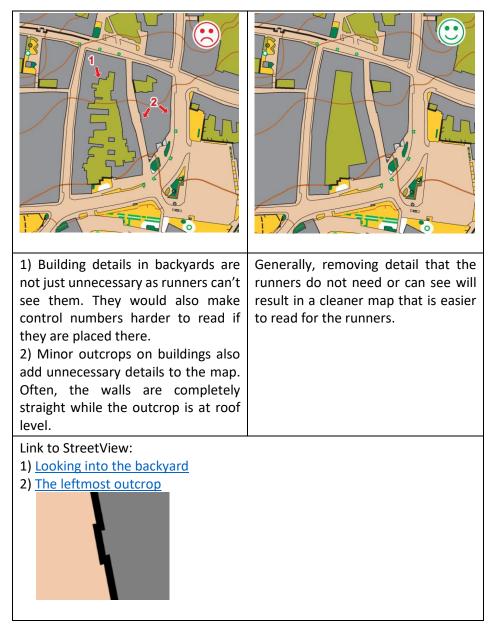
6 Canopies in wall gates



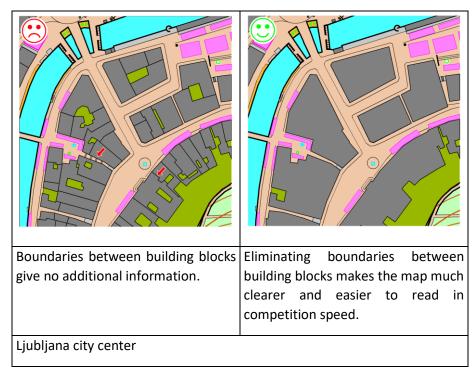
7 Paths through Area that shall not be entered (520)



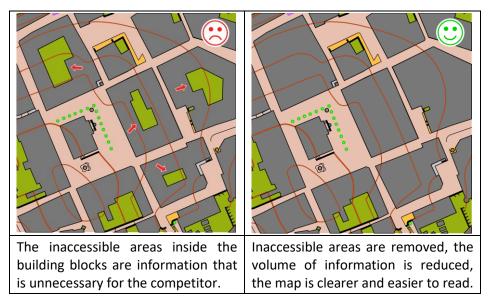
8 Overdetailed buildings



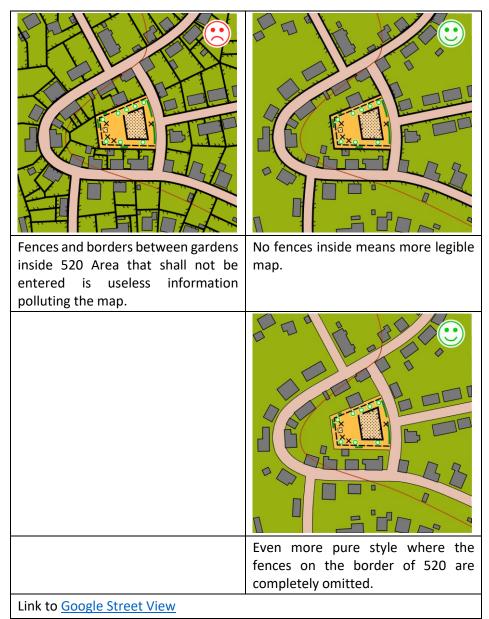
9 Do not show boundaries between adjacent buildings



10 Inaccessible areas inside building blocks



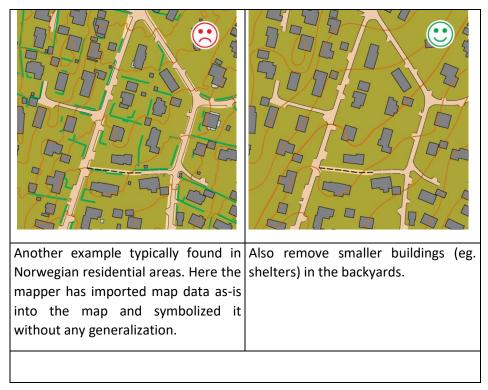
11 Don't draw fences and borders inside 520



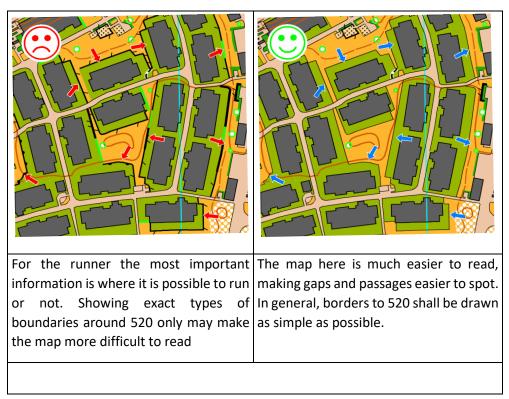
12 Don't draw objects inside forbidden areas



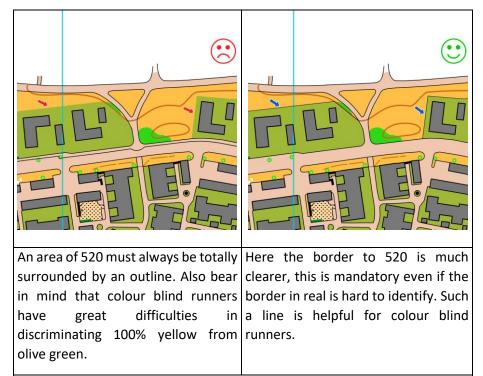
13 Don't draw objects inside forbidden areas 2



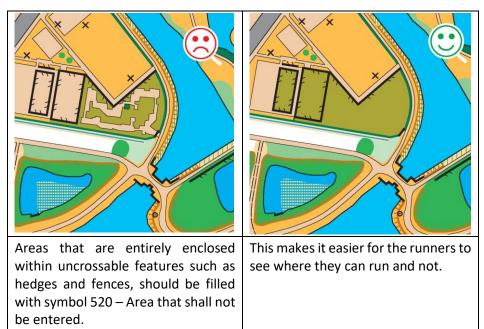
14 How to handle boundaries along forbidden areas



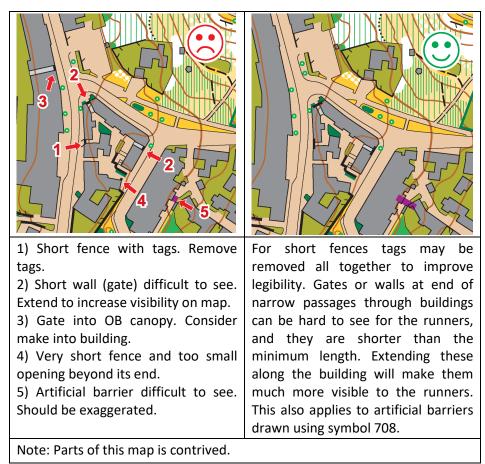
15 The 520 must be surrounded by some kind of boundary line



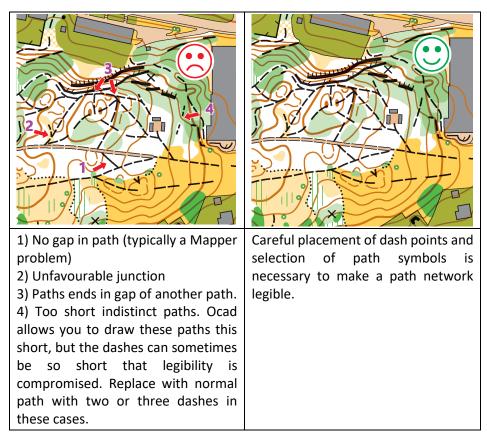
16 Mapping inaccessible areas



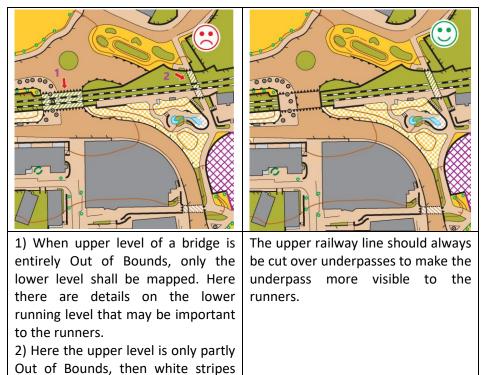
17 Short walls, uncrossable fences or railings



18 Short Paths



19 Bridges or underpasses only runnable at lower level

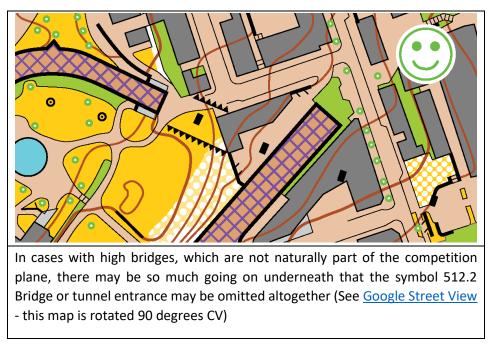


(512.3) must be used.

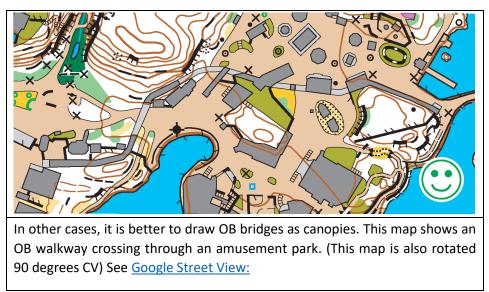
Link to Google Street View.

19

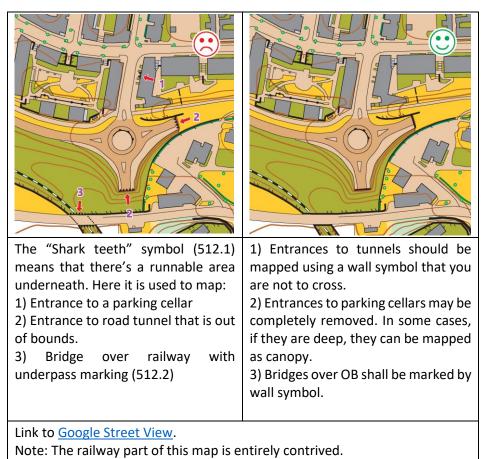
20 High bridges, which are not naturally part of the competition plane



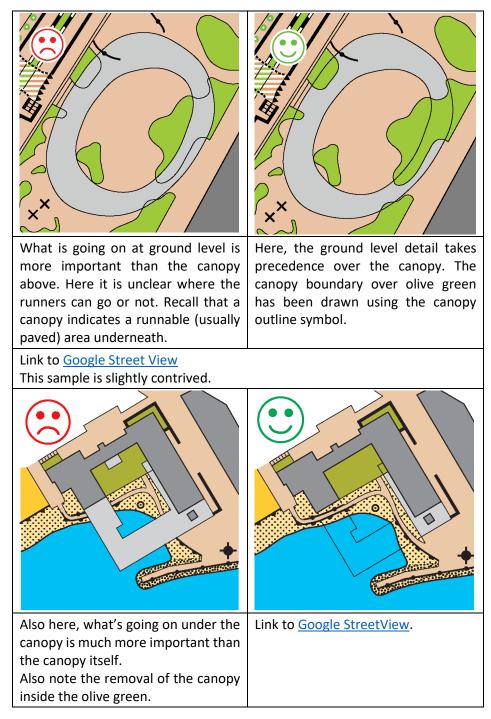
21 Bridges – other cases



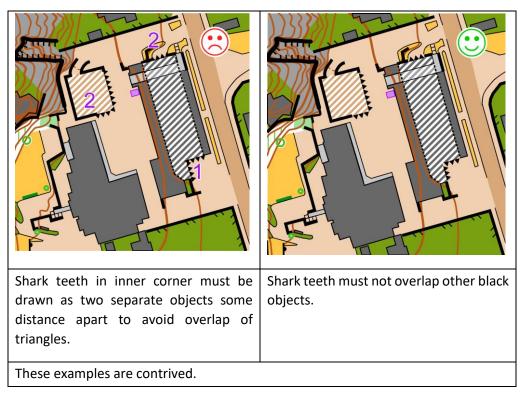
22 Tunnel entrance into out-of-bounds area



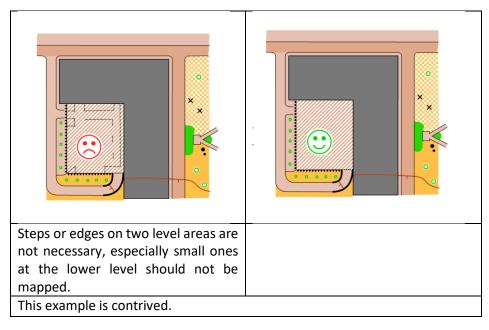
23 Canopies over out-of-bounds areas



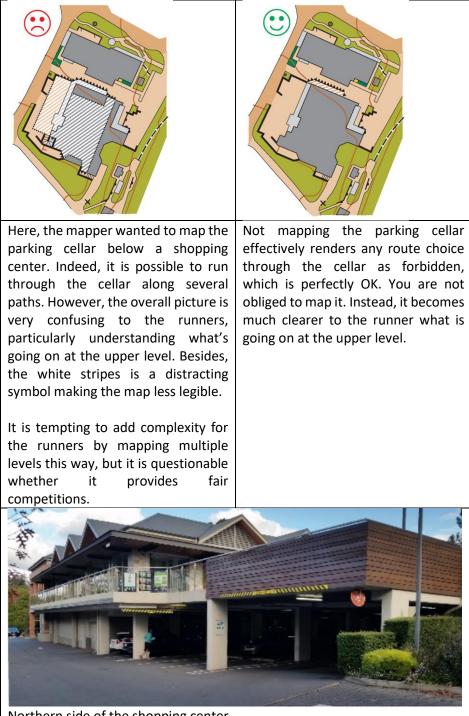
24 Shark teeth generally inner corner



25 Step or edge of paved area at lower level – limit the use for the short sections



26 Overly use of 512.3 - area passable at two levels

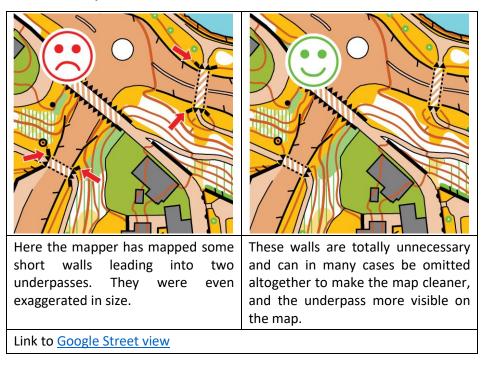


Northern side of the shopping center.

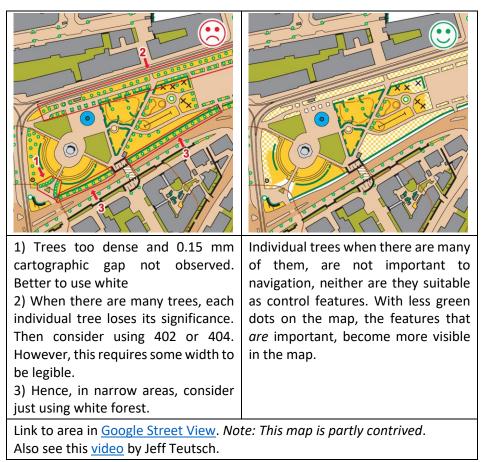
27 Bridge with underpasses

It is not possible to cross the purple street under the bridge. "Shark teeth" and two- level symbols	Use one level symbol on the bridge, if under bridge is not allowed to run.	
do not match.		
This example is contrived.		

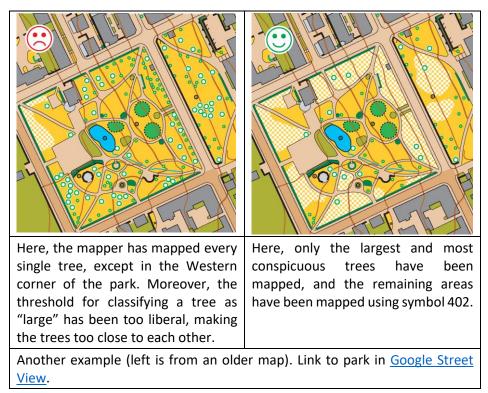
28 Entrances to underpass



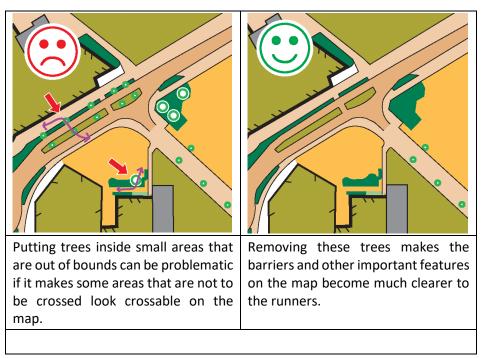
29 Mapping single trees vs area symbols



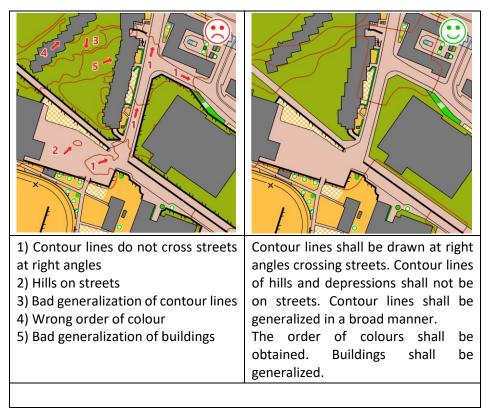
30 Mapping single trees vs area symbols 2



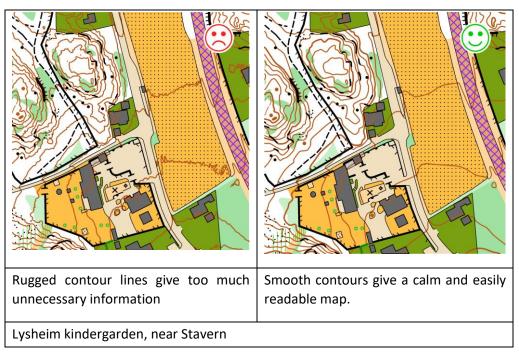
31 Trees in uncrossable areas



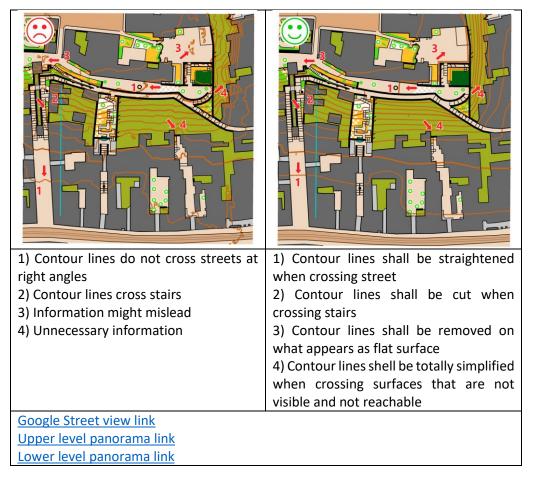
Overdetailed contours



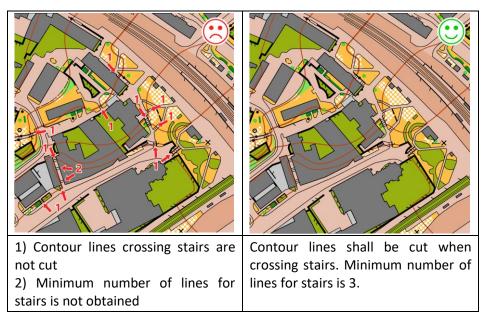
Jagged unsmoothed contours



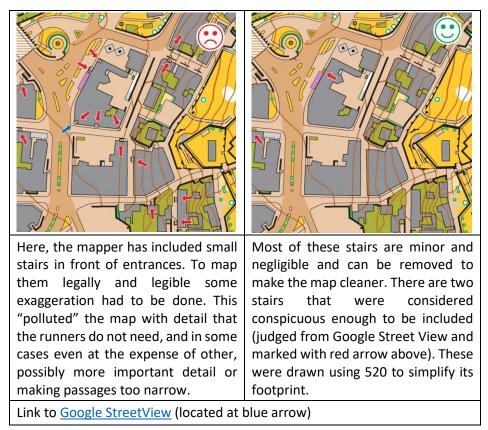
34 Total simplification of contours where not visible



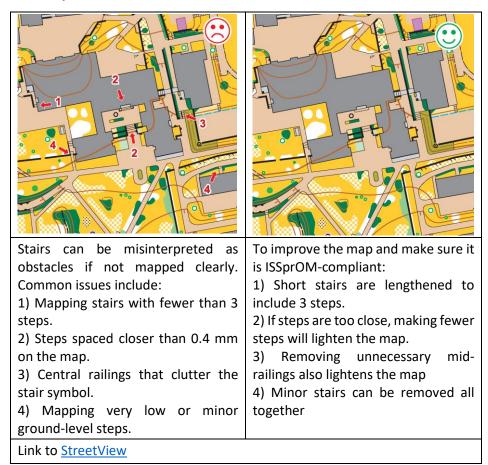
Contours crossing stairs



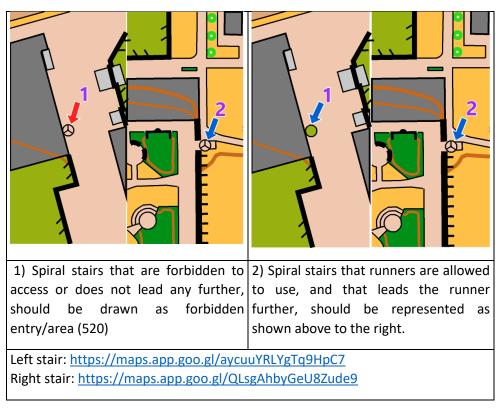
36 Minor stairs to entrances



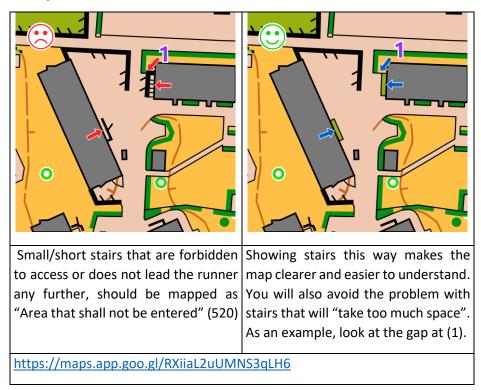
37 Stairs and steps



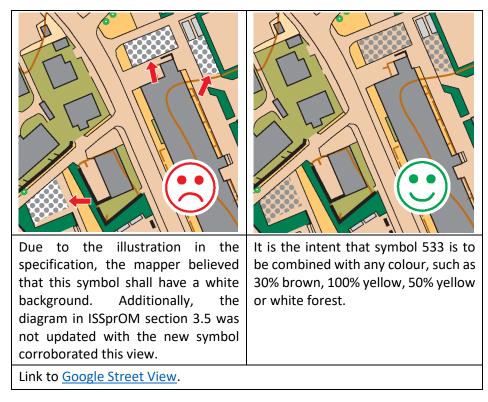
38 Spiral stairs



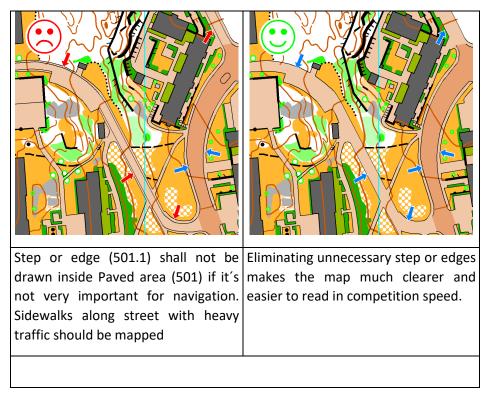
39 Unnecessary stairs



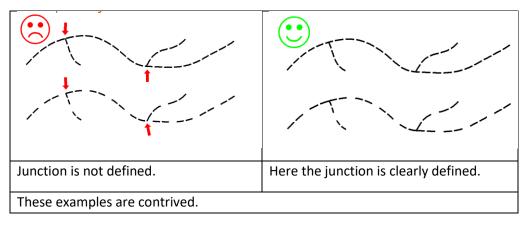
40 Area with obstacles (533)



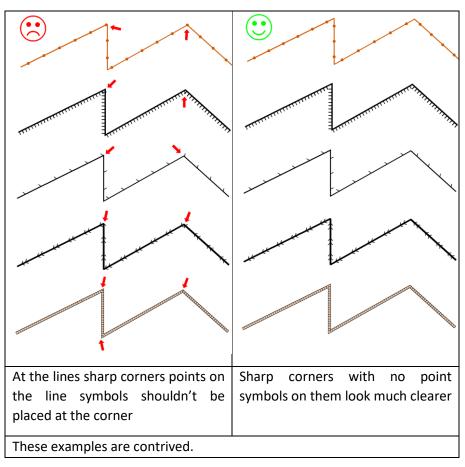
41 Mapping sidewalks in area without traffic



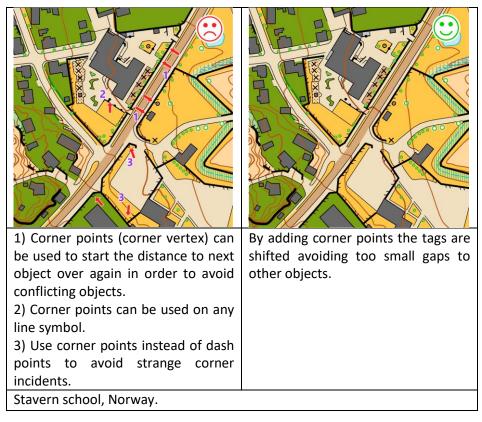
42 Footpath – junction from the centre of the dash



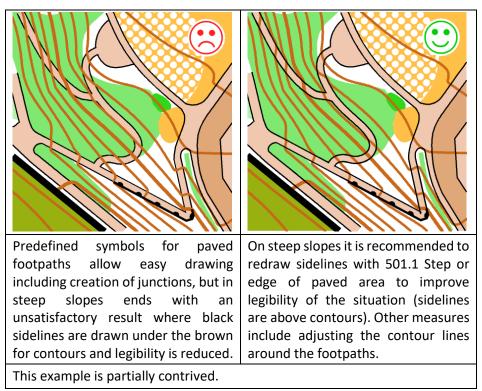
43 Styled lines - sharp corners with corner point



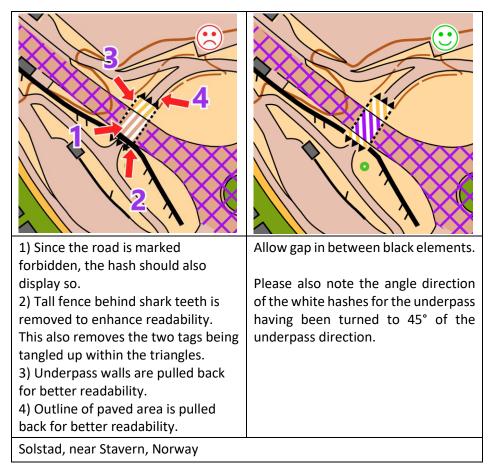
44 Dash points and corner points



45 Drawing of paved footpaths in steep slopes



46 Shark teeth cartographic gap



Errata (changes to the document):

Date	Description