

How to take a bearing

Step 1

Find the two points on the map that you want to travel from and to. Line up your compass edge between the two points, so that your direction-of-travel arrow is pointing to your destination.



Step 2

Rotate the compass housing until the orienting lines in the centre are pointing to the top of your map.

You can do this by lining them up parallel to the grid lines.

Step 3

Now rotate the dial until the north pointer lines up with the mark on the dial that joins the direction of travel arrow (this is called the index line).

Step 4

Now read the bearing at the bottom of the direction-of-travel arrow, at the index line. In our example, the bearing is 320° .

You will need to take into account the difference between grid north (on your map) and magnetic north (on your compass). This is called magnetic variation and your map will tell you how many degrees to add to your bearing. This can vary depending on where you are in the country. In area it is normally around 2 or 3.

Step 5

To head in the right direction, you must now re-orientate your compass. This means turning the whole compass around until the magnetic north needle points in the same direction as the orienting arrow.

The way the direction-of-travel arrow is now pointing is the direction you must walk in to get to your destination.

To help you stay on track, it's important to take regular bearings during your journey. Being one degree out at the start of your journey is not too serious, but if you continue in the wrong direction for too long, you will end up far from where you want to be.

Wherever possible, try and divide your journey up into short sections, taking new bearings from the landmarks that you pass on the way.