

Los Padres Wilderness Basics Course

Orienting Your Map

Our course teaches a different method for map orientation than the method described in The Complete Guide to Backpacking. Use the below text to replace your text book instruction beginning at the second paragraph on page 94 (“To align your compass...”) and ending at the bottom of the same page.

Compass-Oriented Map Method

First place your map on a flat spot. Roughly orient it by looking at the features around you and comparing them to the map. Then rotate the compass’s circular housing to line up the orienting arrow with the direction-of-travel arrow on the base plate. Place the long edge of the base plate along the left or right border of the map, with north pointing to the top of the map (don’t use any vertical lines drawn inside the map, since they can represent roads or boundaries that may not really go precisely north and south). Turn the map until the compass needle is boxed in the orienting arrow.

For east declinations (for example, everywhere in the western United States), turn the map and compass together until the needle points to the number on the housing that matches your declination. Your map now has its vertical dimension oriented to true north, and its orientation is also correct relative to the landscape around you.

Four steps to orient the map to compensate for magnetic declination:

1. Using the compass dial, align 2 arrows: the direction of travel arrow and needle box arrow
2. Place compass on left edge of map picture, not paper
3. Align 3rd arrow (magnetic needle) by moving map
4. Make arrow offset look like magnetic offset picture at bottom of map by moving map