

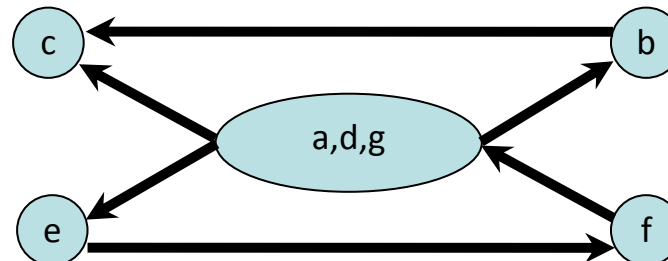


## 4. Route

A good route is fundamental to a successful event. There is no magic formula to producing a good route; what works well for one area, or even one rider, will not for another. Some people love hilly rides, and others prefer flat roads. Some people don't mind mixing with traffic, and others want to stay on quiet lanes all day. Finding a good route that is popular with others is partly down to luck, and partly down to trial and error. However with some thought, a bit of local knowledge and plenty of preparation, you'll probably come up with something that people will like.

### Basic route shapes

Below are a few basic route types. Each has advantages and disadvantages, and each works better for different types of events.

<p><b>Linear</b> Goes out and back along the same route. Examples include Paris-Brest-Paris and The Cambrian 200.</p> <p>The classic audax route to a distance destination and back, using controls to guide riders onto the best route available in each area along the way.</p>	
<p><b>Polygonal</b> Travels in a loop, calling at each place once before heading back to base. Most audax routes are like this.</p> <p>This allows much more freedom to pick a scenic route, but you may need to manage more controls.</p>	
<p><b>Loops</b> Multiple loops, each finishing back at base.</p> <p>This allows smaller organisers to focus their resources in a single control, but can lead to lots of controls on the route and encourage riders to pack.'</p>	

You can mix and match these styles too, to create a route that works best for you. For example, The Hebden Bridge Star uses six loops, to climb six hills around Hebden Bridge. Some of these 'loops' are polygonal, and some are linear.

### Planning your route

It's always good to plan an event in an area that you know well. Your local knowledge will help you decide which roads are best to cycle along, and when they are likely to be quiet. You'll also know where the best views are.

Working out a good route is largely down to trial and error. So, start by thinking of a place where you'd like your ride to start and finish. You'll have to get to the start early on the day of your event, so it's a good idea to pick somewhere local to you.

Where you go from here is down to what ideas you already have. Have you found some local cafés that would make great places to take a break? Then see if you can plot a route that goes to them all. Do you know some pretty lanes or hills with fantastic views at the top? Then perhaps you can build a route around these sections.

If you're really starting with a blank sheet, try this approach to drafting a 200km polygonal route.

- Pick somewhere that could be a start and finish.
- Which way looks best? If it's north, then look for a control about 50km north of your start. Let's call this control A.
- From control A, assuming you went north, look for a likely control about 50km to the east. This is control B.
- From control B, head south for 50km, looking for somewhere for control C.
- Finally, plot a route back to your start. This should give you something to work with.
- If this doesn't work for you, then pick somewhere 100km away from your start, that you think would make a good control for a linear route.
- Now look at the roads between the controls. Are they the sort of roads that you think people would cycle along? If not, move your controls so that they allow for the route you'd prefer to use.
- To add some distance to a leg, or to make it bend or 'bulge', then use an information control along the section.

### The shortest distance rule

Audax UK calculates route distance using the 'shortest distance' rule. For example, for a route to be considered as valid for a 200km event, the shortest possible distance between controls must add up to at least 200km. It can be longer than 200km, but not shorter.

#### Top tip!

To successfully finish an event, the rider must pass through all of the controls on your route. However they do not need to use your routesheet. They are free to pick any route they choose. The advantage for you is that you don't have to use the shortest distance yourself when writing your routesheet. If you know a more pleasant route, then use that.

Calculating the shortest distance between controls is easy if you use mapping software. Autoroute is used widely by organisers and the events team, though free online services, like Google Map or ViaMichelin, will also do the job. In any event, the events team will check your event to make sure it's up to standard. If you're unsure about your route, then speak to your mentor or the events team.

#### Top tip!

Online mapping tools assume that you are driving, and will favour fast roads to direct roads. For Google Map, always select the 'walking' option. For ViaMichelin, use the 'cycling' option.

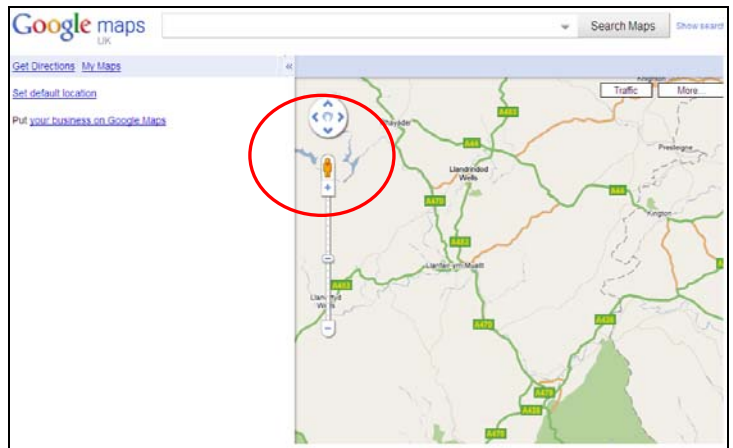
### Testing your route

Believe it or not, some people actually run audax events without ever actually riding the route. They rarely last long as organisers though, because they usually end up with poor routes and worse routesheets. Once, while testing a route in the Brecon Beacons, I discovered that what looked like a pretty backroad on the map had long been churned up by tractors, and was now a very muddy track. Any riders not on mountain bikes would have cursed my choice of road, especially when there was a pretty, traffic-free road 500 metres to the left.

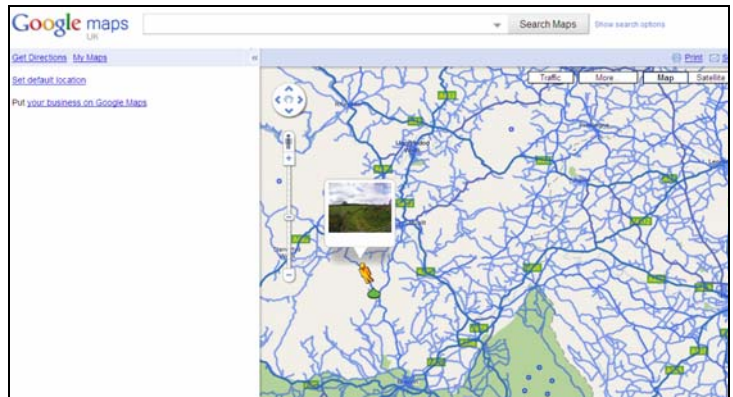
It's a good idea to test the route at the same time of day, and on the same day of the week, as you plan to hold your event. Often, roads that are busy in the week can be very quiet on a Sunday morning, so use that to your advantage, perhaps for a speedy start on an otherwise busy road.

This is a good chance to try alternative routes, to see what works best. Take your time with this, and don't get wedded to a route too early.

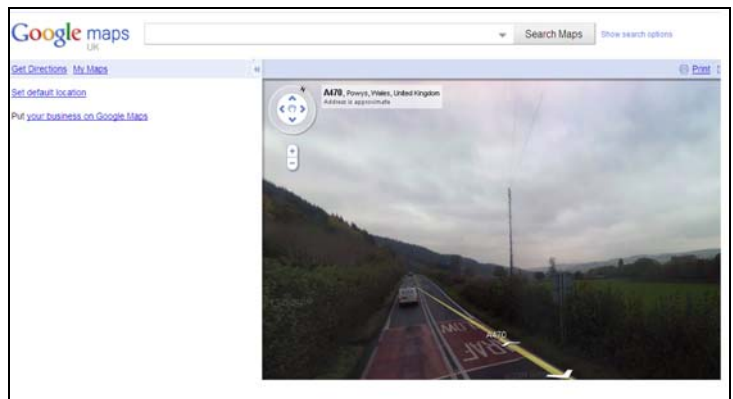
**Top tip!** Google Street View provides panoramic views from various positions along many streets in the UK. Go to <http://maps.google.co.uk> and find the area you are interested in. Then click and drag the orange character highlighted in the red circle to the right.



When you do this, the roads that have Street View will highlight in blue.



Drop the character on the road you want to see, and up pops the street-level view.



### Writing your routesheet

When you have created a likely looking route, you'll need to draft your route. Make sure you carry a pen and paper, a camera and an odometer. A GPS unit is very useful, so take it if you have one and record your route.

As you ride the route, stop at each junction, and write down the instructions that would allow the riders to know where to go. Make a note as well of the distance since the last instruction. It may be worth taking a photo of the junction, so you can check your notes when you get home.

There is no approved way to write a routesheet. Some people like symbols, others prefer to use letters. For example, if you want people to turn left at a T junction, onto the B1023, and sign at the junctions says 'Bangor', some people may write:

L@T \$ B1023 Bangor

Others may write

← B1023 BANGOR

It's up to you how you go about it, but here are a few tips.

- Use a sans-serif font, i.e. one that has no 'feet'. This guide is written with a sans-serif font called Arial.
- Use a large font size. Again, this guide is written in a 11-point font. You may prefer to use a 12- or 14-point font.
- Use black type on a white background. Don't use grey to highlight different lines, as some people find this difficult to read.
- Don't add too much information. Adding distances between instructions is useful, but if you then add the cumulative distance, it can start to get confusing. Remember, riders need to be able to read an instruction with just a short glance. If they have to take longer, it could get hazardous.
- If you have to use a busy junction, or a road in very poor condition, mark it on your routesheet so riders know to take particular care.

### Checking your routesheet

When you've written your routesheet, check it by riding the route. Better still, get somebody else to check it for you, as it's hard not to ride a familiar route on autopilot.

Finally, check the route one last time, as close to the day of the event as possible. Roadworks appear without warning, and in the summer it's common to find that foliage has grown over a sign that was clearly on view a few months earlier.