

OFF-TRACK BUSH NAVIGATION TIPS

Acknowledgement: Thanks to the Victoria Police Search and Rescue Squad for these training notes.

These navigation tips can help you to minimize navigational errors, or to identify and rectify errors sooner.

Tip 1: Know your start point

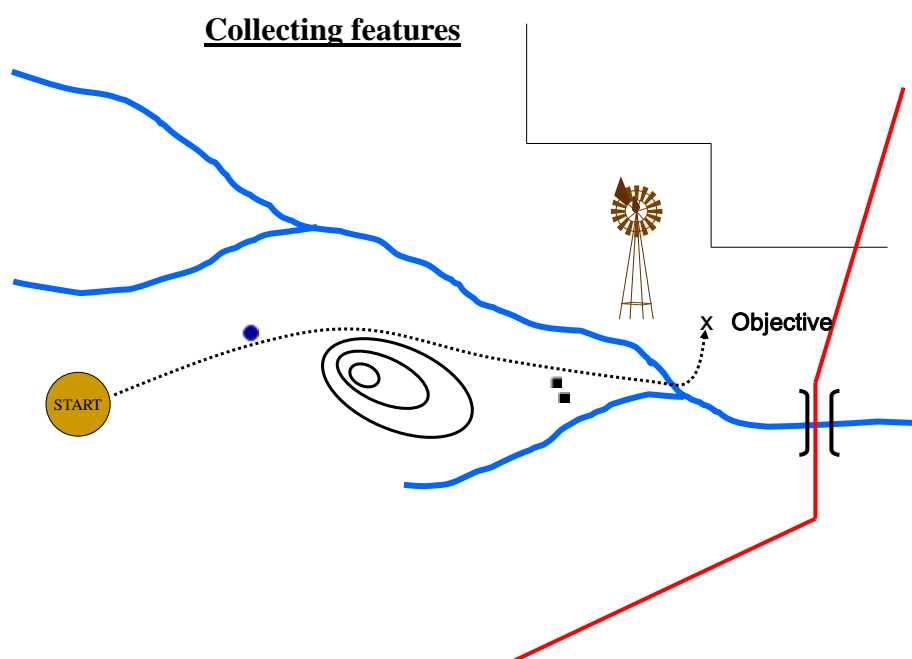
- Always double check your starting point
- Confirm that you are starting from where you think you are.

Tip 2: Plan your route

- Spend a bit of time before you start for the objective
- Work out where you want to go and how to get there
- Visualise the terrain or route you expect to take.

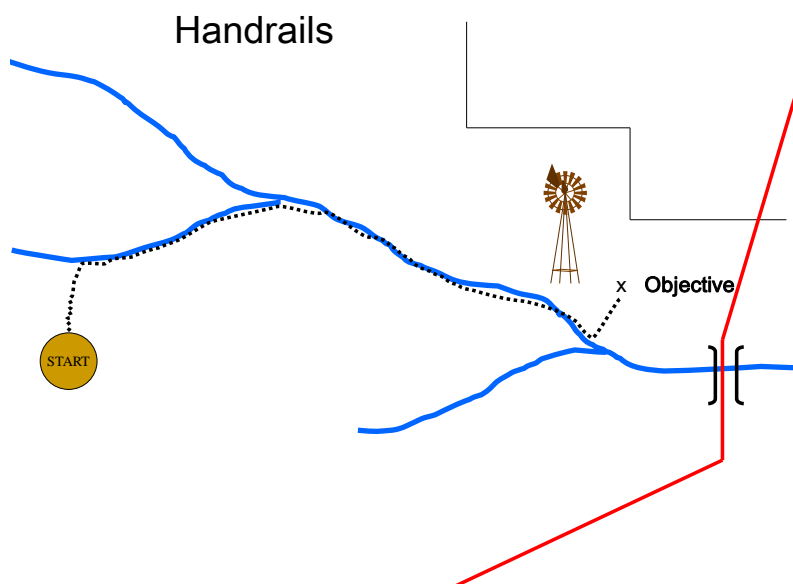
Tip 3: Use collecting features

- Pass “collecting” features that you can identify on the way to your objective
- Break the overall objective into several small stages, each with identifiable features.



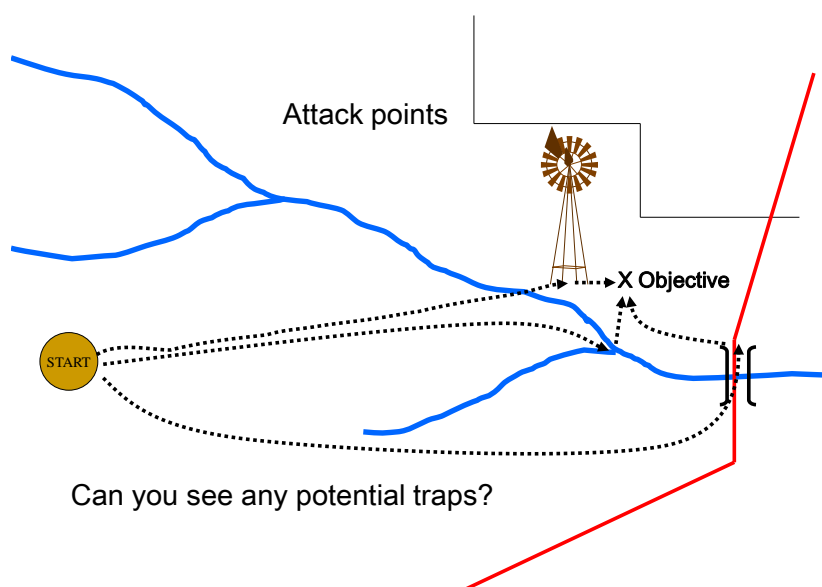
Tip 4: Use handrails

- Use a linear feature to guide you closer to your objective
- A linear feature could be a creek, road, track fence, edge of vegetation change, cliff line etc.
- **Caution: every map has unmapped tracks that can lead you astray. Do not blindly follow any old track.**



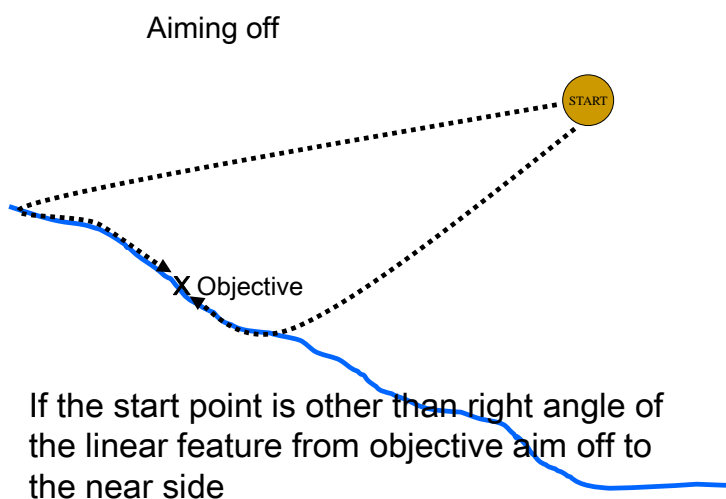
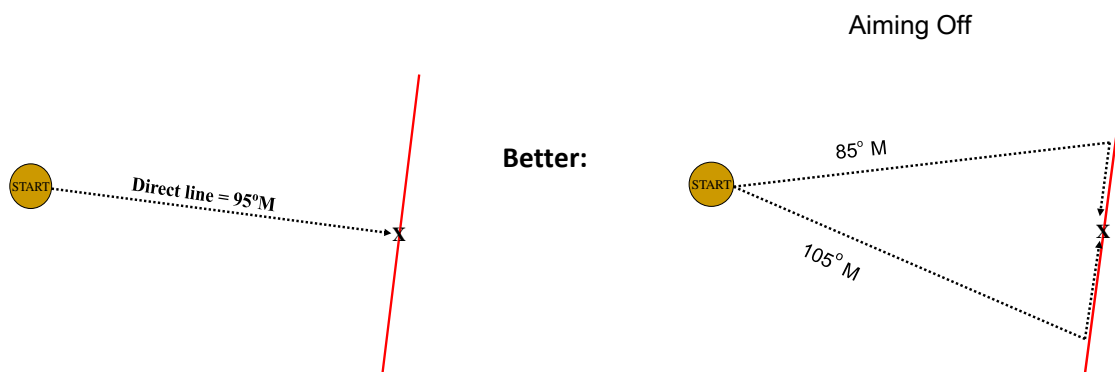
Tip 5: Focus on attack points

- Is there a feature close to your objective that is obvious or easier to find?
- Focus on that feature (attack point)
- This tip is very useful when there are few other features along the way and/or the route is long.



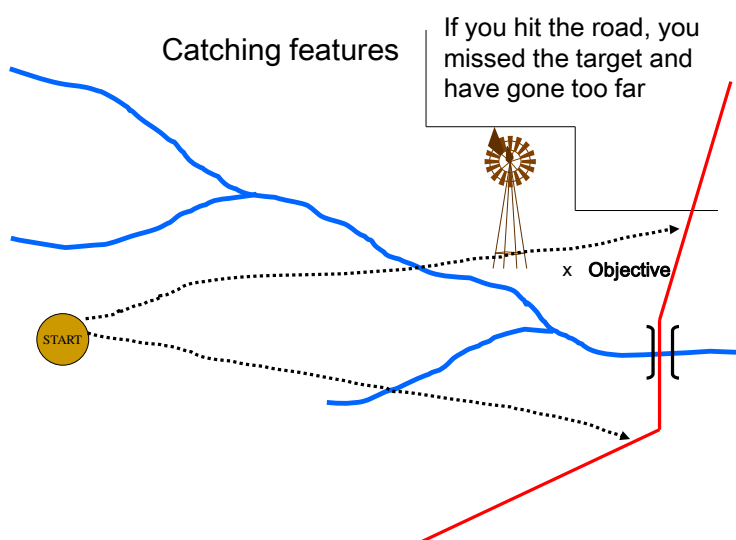
Tip 6: Aiming off

- If the Objective is on a linear feature at right angles to your approach, always aim off.
- If walking on a bearing and the route is very long, chances are you will not finish exactly at the objective. Aiming off will make sure you know which direction your objective is (left or right) when you hit a particular feature, i.e. track, creek, fence etc.



Tip 7: Use catching features

- Always think of something beyond your objective that will let you know you have missed the target
- A catching feature is a safety net that will prevent a small error becoming a big waste of time and energy



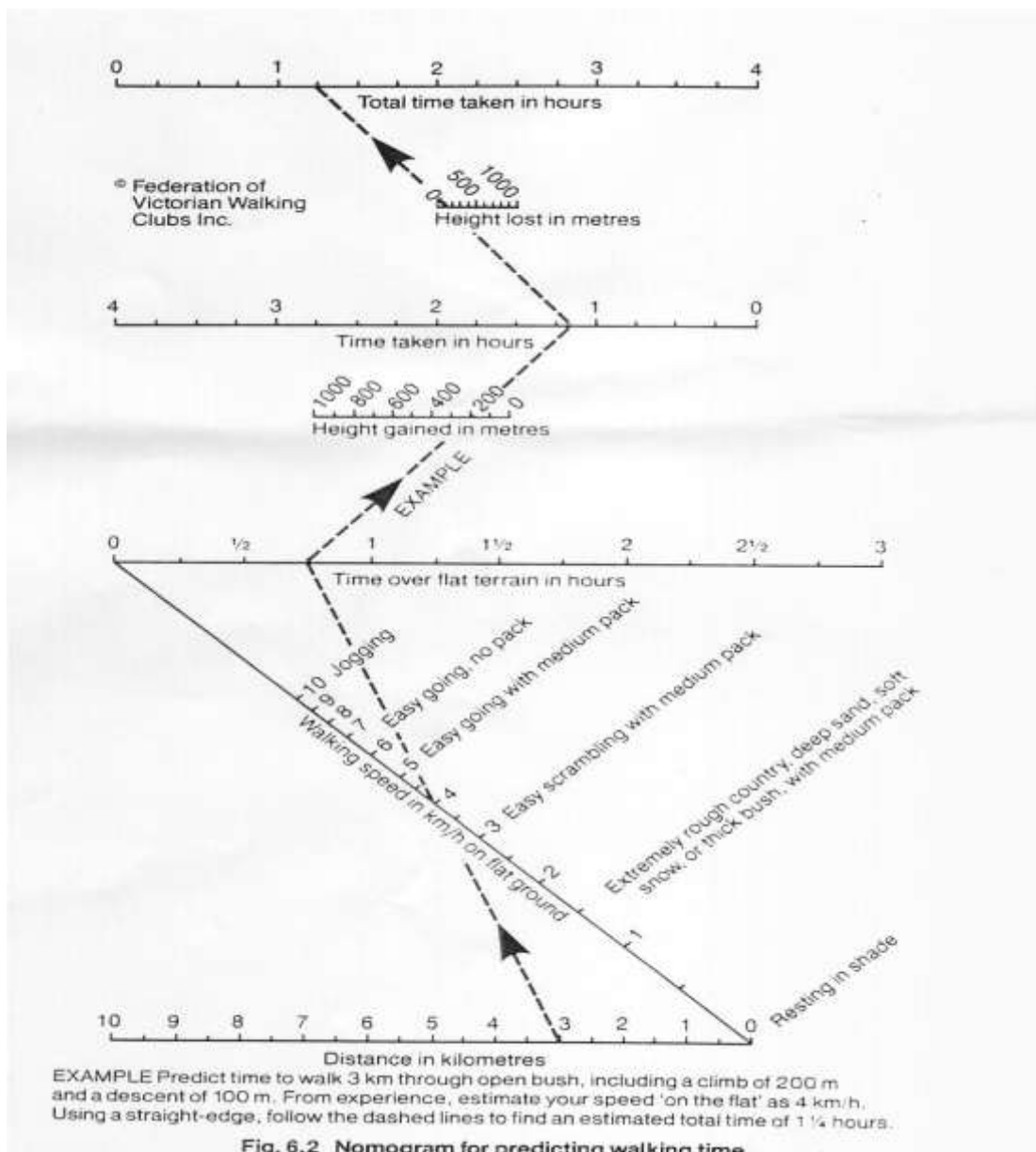
More on catching features

- You are at the base of a hill and the objective is at the top – What is your catching feature?
- Try to use something **close** beyond the target
- Changes in the shape of the ground are useful
- Changes in direction/bearings of creeks or spurs are useful

Tip 8: Establish distance/time

- Estimate your walking time and/or pacing for each leg of your journey
- This will give you an idea when to expect to find targets and if missed, will also indicate that something has gone wrong
- Predicted walking time
- The best way to do this is by drawing on your experience over similar terrain. You could use “Naismith’s Rule” as a guide

First appeared in 1892, and has been modified at various times over the years to resemble this graph.....



Tip 9: Limit your choices

- Creeks join together as they flow downstream, and divide as they go upstream - which way limits your choices?
- Spurs divide as they lose height, and join as they gain height - which way limits your choices?

Tip 10: Slow down as you approach

- Slow down and be more careful as you approach the objective. Use your observations and confirm your position
- Move around the vicinity - many features remain hidden unless you look around

Tip 11: If you get stuck, sit down and think

- Do not blindly press on hoping that it will fall into place
- Don't try and convince yourself that the shape of the ground fits the map when it doesn't
- Orientate your map, study it, and work out what you should be able to see from where you think you are on the map. If it doesn't match, you are somewhere else!

Tip 12: Suspect opinions

- Navigation opinion has a domino effect in a group, reaching quick consensus - whether correct or wrong
- Don't be influenced by an early opinion from others and hold on to your own until you are sure. To save face, say you are confirming
- Listen to others and consider that they may be right, however don't be led if the evidence doesn't fit

FINALLY

- Don't be afraid of making a navigational error.
- ***The only people that never make mistakes are those that stay away from the bush.***
- The key is to recognize a mistake early, then rectify it before it becomes a problem
- Have your map and compass out every time you are out in the bush.
- Walk with a highly skilled navigator
- Go on a rogaining event regularly: [Victorian Rogaining Association](#)