

Compass Requirements

This course requires a high-quality compass, purchased before and brought to the first class. The Olympia Mountaineers do not have suitable compasses to loan for the class. The compass you bring to use **MUST have the following features**:

- **Adjustable declination.** Some compasses are sold with “declination scale,” which means the declination is NOT adjustable. If you have a question at the store, ask the salesperson to show you how to adjust the declination. If you can’t adjust for declination, don’t buy the compass.
- **A transparent rectangular base plate.** You’ll need the transparency and the straight edges for plotting and triangulating on the map.
- **A sighting mirror.** Nothing improves the accuracy of your compass work like having and learning to use a sighting mirror.
- **Degrees in 2-degree increments and marked from 0 to 360°.** You’ll need the accuracy of the 2-degree increments. Some compasses, called “quadrant,” are marked 0-90° four times around the bezel. These are not useful.
- **Meridian lines.** These lines are marked on the bottom of the rotating housing, line up to north on the scale, and rotate with the housing. These lines are how you use the compass with a map.

Additional, useful features include:

- **Large baseplate.** Three to four inches is normal. Less than that is not very useful for straightedge work on the map.
- **Ruler and/or gradient scale.** Usually engraved on the baseplate edge.
- **Clinometer.** This swinging arrow allows you to estimate slope angle and calculate heights (with a little geometry).
- **Luminous points.** This is handy in darkness or dim lighting.

Acceptable Models

Expect to spend around \$50. You do not need a “global” compass for this class – these cost more – though you may need one if you plan to use it for navigation in the southern hemisphere, where your northern-balanced needle will drag and not spin freely.

The following models meet the requirements above. Many are available from local retailers. Be careful, however, as not all salespeople are knowledgeable about compasses and may try to sell you a compass that you won’t be able to use.

- **Brunton Tru-Arc 7** (<https://www.brunton.com/collections/navigation/products/truarc-7>)
- **K&R Alpin and Sherpa BW2** (<http://www.kandrusa.com/sico.html>)
- **Silva Ranger** (<https://www.thecompassstore.com/544925.html>)
- **Suunto MC-2** (<https://www.suunto.com/en-us/Products/Compasses/Suunto-MC-21/Suunto-MC-2-Mirror-NH-Compass/>)

The following retailers may be able sell you the recommended compasses:

- [Recreational Equipment](#)
- [The Compass Store](#)