🗺️ Boots On Adventures – Map Symbols Cheat-Sheet

Quick Reference Guide for UK Walkers & Hikers

🧭 1. Map Basics

Symbol	Meaning	Notes
🔵	Water features	Rivers, lakes, streams, reservoirs
🌲	Woodland	Light green = deciduous, dark green = coniferous
🟫	Contour lines	Represent height above sea level; close together = steep
⚪	Open land / moorland	Unshaded areas often show grassland or moorland
🟪	Urban / built-up area	Grey or pink shading indicates towns or buildings

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🚶 2. Paths & Rights of Way (Ordnance Survey)

Symbol	Meaning	Access Type
Green dashed line	Public Footpath	Walking only
Green long-dash-short-dash	Bridleway	Walking, cycling, horse riding
Green long dashes	Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)	Walking, cycling, horse riding, vehicles
Green diamonds	Permissive Path	Access allowed by landowner
Black dashed line	Path (not a public right of way)	Varies – check map legend

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🏞️ 3. Terrain & Natural Features

Symbol	Meaning	Description
Brown contour lines	Elevation	Height difference every 5m (or 10m on small-scale maps)
Blue wavy lines	Rivers & streams	Flow direction shown by width or arrow
Blue outlines	Lakes & reservoirs	Permanent water bodies
Marsh symbol (blue reeds)	Marsh / wetland	Avoid in heavy rain or poor visibility

Symbol	Meaning	Description
Grey cliffs or rock edges	Cliff / scree	Steep or dangerous terrain

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🏠 4. Man-Made Features

Symbol	Meaning	Description
Black squares	Buildings	Solid structures or farms
⛪	Church with tower or spire	Distinguishes church types
⚑	Trig point	Survey marker; often hill summits
🚗	Car park	May be public or private
🏕️	Campsite	May include caravan or tent symbol
🔥	Picnic site	Often includes benches or tables
⚡	Power line	May cross open fields
🚂	Railway line	Check for crossings and stations

🧭 5. Boundaries & Landmarks

Symbol	Meaning
Black dashed line	Field boundary or fence
Black dotted line	Track or undefined route
Pink shaded area	Urban area
Green shading	Woodland or forest
Purple boundary	National Park, AONB or access land boundary

🌰 6. Contour & Height Examples

Contour Intervals (OS Explorer Maps):

- Each line = 5 metres elevation change
  Hilltops:
- Brown rings with spot height (e.g. “287”) show summit elevation.
  Valleys:
- Contours curve upward around rivers or streams.

🧻 7. Quick Reference Tips

✅ *Always read the map legend for area-specific symbols.*
✅ *Contours tell the story of the landscape — learn to "see" hills and valleys.*
✅ *Match map features to real-world landmarks every few minutes when walking.*
✅ *Use grid lines to estimate distance — 1km squares on OS maps.*

👣 Learn More With Us

Want to build confidence using these symbols in the real world?
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