

Spring 1955
Early sample tests

The general types of orientation means in the city, in order of their approximate importance in Boston:

1. Lines – Wash, Tremont, Boylston, Beacon, Mass Ave, Chas bridge
2. Spaces – Common & Garden
3. Barriers – River, harbor, expressway.
4. Points – State House, No. & So. Stations
5. Use-areas – Retail shopping, Back Bay
6. Slopes – Beacon Hill.
7. Grid – in Back Bay.

1. Lines should not turn subtly & continuously; shld have dominant direction; should connect & not at ambiguous angles; should be reinforced with use and traffic & spatial cohesion.

2. Spaces must be distinctive; visible from distance and yet not spilling out loosely; furnish orientation for moving out; should interconnect; allow views of near & far landmarks.

3. Barriers can orient over a large area but may also make a sharp break; must prevent ambiguity of which side am I on? or of a constantly turning enclosure; connect or identify end points

5. Use-areas must be distinctive in detail & texture & activity; should have sharp edges & gradations of intensity

6. Slopes should form a consistent overall system, & the paths have relation to their direction.

7. Grids should be regular in direction & to some extent in interval, but need not be mechanically so, nor need all streets be perfectly continuous.

4. Points must be distinctive visually & functionally; be of functional or historical importance; be commonly seen or used; be visible from a distance; be well related to major system.

Also very commonly used is an interior memory system, recording turns & distances & maintaining the desired direction (very common) & noting how far (perhaps used). This method weakens as time goes on without further clues, or if many shifts of direction are made, or if direction changes are subtle or ambiguous.

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{one circle} = Strong {two circles} = Strongest

From available data, an orientation map of central Boston would show:

{two circles} The sense of the Chas R & the harborside, a little uncertain of their joint.

{one circle} The expressway block across the N end.

{two circles} The Common & Public Garden

Certain lines:

	Atlantic Ave	{one circle} Boylston
	Charles St	{one circle} Beacon St
{one circle}	Washington	Hanover (cut)
{one circle}	Tremont	State
{one circle}	Mass. Ave	Commonwealth
	Cambridge St	

(with certain confusion points:

the Boylston-Tremont convergence

the break in Hanover

the gap at Scollay Square

the turning of Atlantic Ave)

Certain use-areas:

	Chinatown	Financial district?
{one circle}	Wash St. shopping	P.O. district?
	Faneuil Hall mkts.	{one circle} Back Bay
	North End	

Some reference spaces:

Scollay sq.

Dock Sq.

P.O. Sq.

Copley Sq.

Some reference points:

{one circle} State House

Statler

Faneuil Hall

Sumner tunnel

{one circle} North Station

{one circle} South Station

Post Office?

Old State House

{one circle} Charles River bridges

Park St. Church

? Custom House Tower

Court House Annex

~~Old South Church~~

King's Chapel

Parker House

{one circle} Jordan's & Filene's

{one circle} The slope down from Beacon Hill, & to the Docks.

Orientation confusions, Boston:

Breaks:

From the line Faneuil – Scollay – Cambridge St.
(or State – Court – Pemberton) to:
Haymarket – North Station

& this last from:

Hanover – North End (due to expressway)

Between Wash St – P.O. Square and:

So. Station – Atlantic Ave.

“ Custom House – Atlantic Ave and:
Washington St. or S. Station.

“ Back Bay & Tremont – Washington
(the Boylston – Tremont confusion is involved)

“ Back Bay & S. End systems

Major disorientations:

Peninsula outline & distortion of harborside

Disorientation of Boylston & Tremont

N–S directions

The turning of Atlantic Ave

Local confusions:

Scollay Sq., Park Sq, Dock Sq, Shawmut & Tremont

Shape of the Common

Separation of the Faneuil markets

Distortion of Charles & Leverett Circles

Confused areas: area S of Common, Haymarket area

N of Fort Sq.

The following major orientation system appear,
due to the breaks:

No. Station – Haymarket – W. End.

No. End

Washington – Tremont – P.O. Sq. – State St – Scollay
Sq. Common, to which is attached not quite
so firmly: on one side Faneuil Hall, on the
other Beacon Hill – State House.

Back Bay – Copley Sq. (links w/ above three
Common, but this is ambiguous).

So. End

So. Station – Chinatown – lower end Atlantic Ave.

General tendencies:

to relate in a chain of events based on habitual
paths

to enlarge the known, diminish the unknown
(while the distance thru the unknown may
seem further