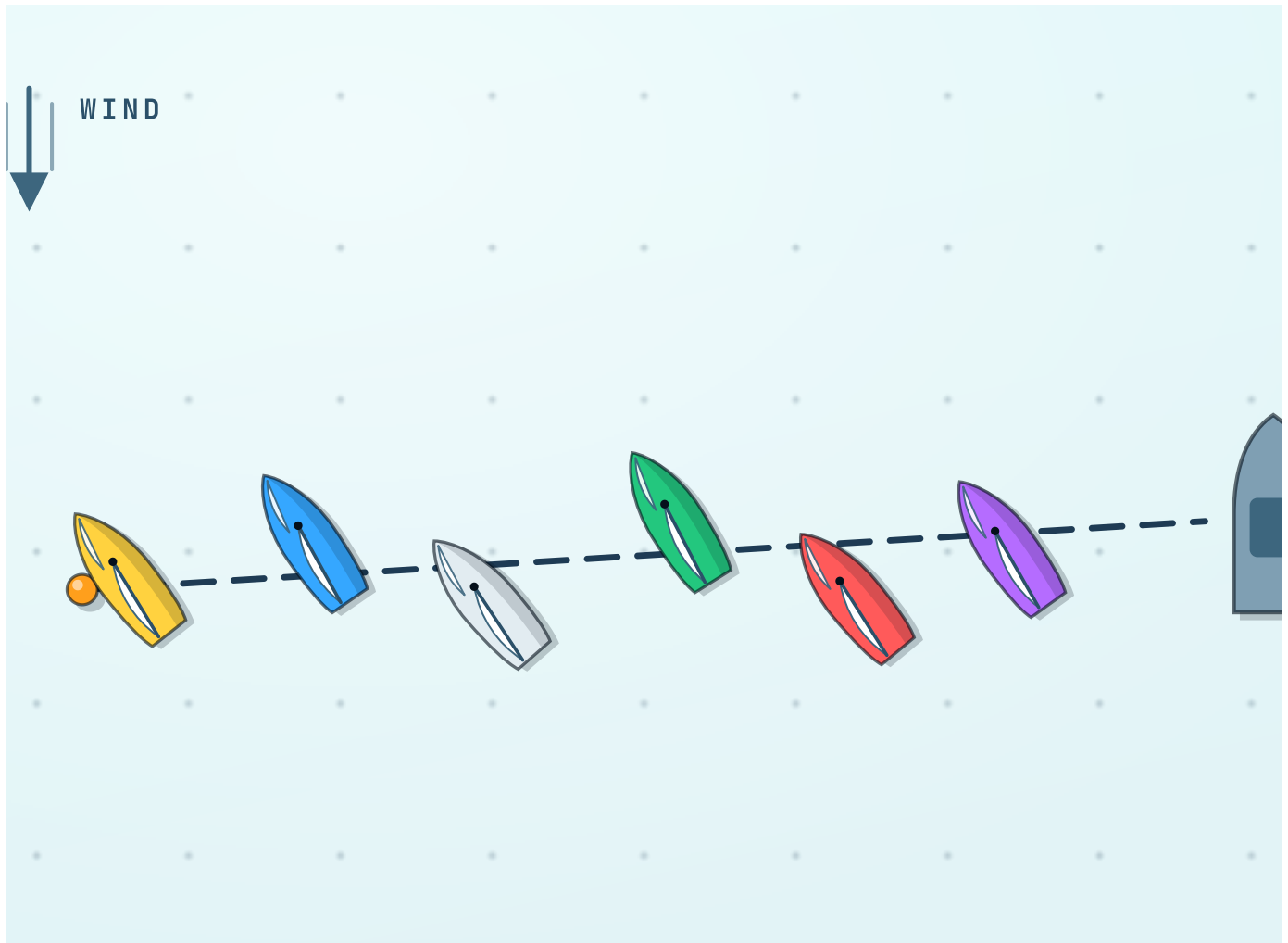


The Racing Rules of Sailing in Pictures

Who's right on the water: boat-on-boat situations, marks, the start, flags and penalties — in plain language with animated diagrams.



A retelling alongside the official text of RRS 2025–2028. In a dispute, the RRS 2025–2028 and the World Sailing Case Book decide.
regattalens.pro/rules

Contents

01	The five key rules	4
02	Limitations: 14–17	11
03	Marks and obstructions: 18–20	16
04	Special cases: 21–23	25
05	Start	27
06	Course and finish	34
07	Penalties and fair play	39
08	Protest and scoring	46
09	Changes in 2025	49
10	Glossary	51

HOW TO READ THE DIAGRAMS



Wind always from the top

In every diagram the wind blows from top to bottom.



Yellow, Blue, White

The hull colour is the boat's name, not her rights.



Priority road

This boat has right of way.



Give way

This boat must keep clear.



Entitled to room

At a mark or obstruction: this boat is entitled to room. That is not right of way.



Give room

This boat must give the other room at a mark or obstruction.



Breach

This boat has broken a rule.



Positions ①②③

Where the boat was at each moment. Faded ones are earlier, the bright one is the latest. On the website, the numbers under a diagram are clickable.



Rule text

Verbatim from RRS 2025–2028. A circled number is the same position on the diagram; a dotted line marks what is new in 2025; italics mark a term from the Glossary.



Mark zone

A circle three hull lengths in radius. The dots on the water are one hull length apart.

Five rules that settle almost everything

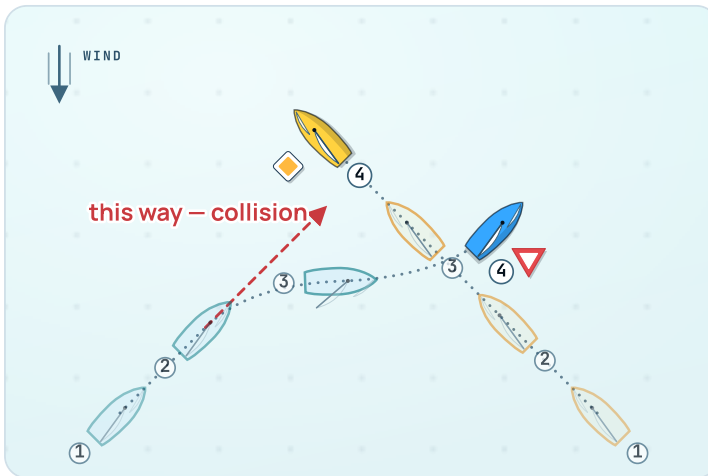
When two boats meet, the rules ask one question: **who must keep clear?**

Four rules of Section A and the “snapshot” at the mark almost always give the answer. Learn them, and nine encounters out of ten become simple.

10

On Opposite Tacks

Port tack keeps clear of starboard.



- 1 Yellow is on starboard tack — the wind is on her starboard side. Blue is on port. Their courses converge.
- 2 Blue sees she cannot cross ahead of Yellow and bears away early.
- 3 Blue passes astern of Yellow.
- 4 Yellow did not have to do anything — so Blue kept clear properly.

RRS 2025-2028 • Rule 10 • p. 16

When boats are on opposite tacks ①, a port-tack boat shall keep clear of a starboard-tack boat ②.



Blue — on port tack: ducks astern or tacks early.



Yellow — on starboard tack: holds her course.

I'm on port. I duck astern now, while there's time, not at the last moment.

BLUE, PORT TACK

I'm on starboard. I hold a steady course so she can see where I'm going.

YELLOW, STARBOARD TACK

Tack is determined by the side the wind is on: wind on the starboard side means *starboard tack*. When the wind is from astern, look at the mainsail: mainsail to port means starboard tack (more in [the glossary](#)).

“Keeping clear” means the right-of-way boat has no need to take avoiding action. If Yellow had to alter course, Blue has already broken the rule, even without contact.



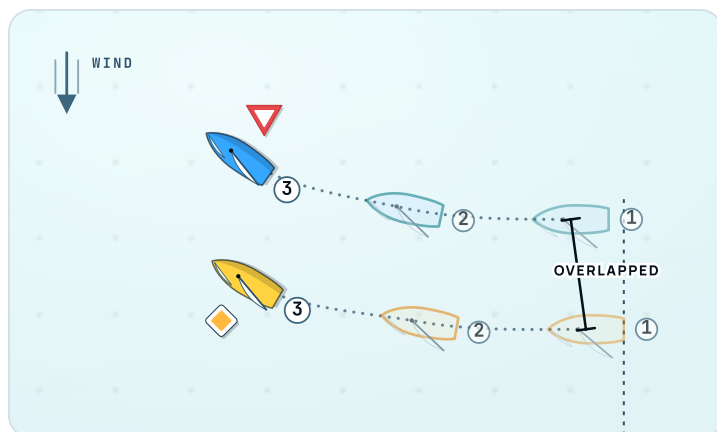
Common mistake. “I’m running, so I have to give way” — no. Your course relative to the wind doesn’t matter: on downwind courses port tack keeps clear of starboard just the same.

See also: 14, 16.2, 13

11

On the Same Tack, Overlapped

Windward keeps clear of leeward.



- 1 Both on starboard tack and overlapped: neither is clear astern of the other.
- 2 Yellow is to leeward. She luffs, and that is her right.
- 3 Blue, the windward boat, luffs too and keeps her distance — she is keeping clear.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 11 · p. 16

When boats are on the same *tack* and *overlapped* ①, a *windward* boat shall *keep clear* of a *leeward* boat ③.



Blue — windward: stays where Yellow can sail her course and change it in both directions without touching her.



Yellow — leeward: has right of way, but changes course smoothly, giving Blue room (16.1).

She's below me. So if she luffs, I head up.

BLUE, WINDWARD

I can luff, but only so that she has time to get out of the way.

YELLOW, LEEWARD

Overlapped — when neither boat is *clear astern* of the other. Draw a line abeam through the aftermost point of a boat's hull: if any part of the other boat is ahead of that line, they are overlapped.

Windward — the boat closer to the wind; higher up in the diagrams.



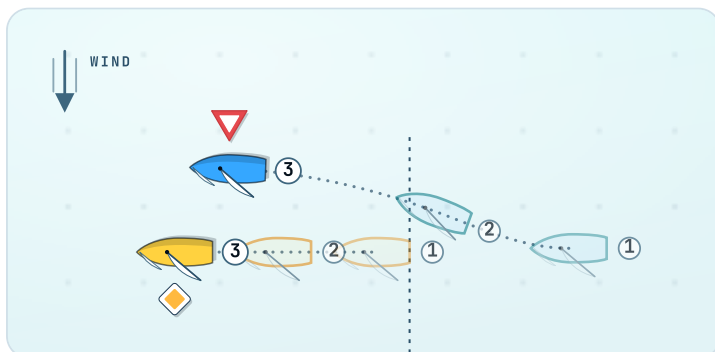
Common mistake. Thinking the leeward boat may luff however she likes. When changing course she must give room (16.1); and if she came up from clear astern within two hull lengths to leeward, she also may not sail above her *proper course* (17).

See also: 12, 15, 16.1, 17

12

On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped

The boat astern keeps clear of the boat ahead.



- 1 Both on starboard tack. Blue is faster, but she is **clear astern**: entirely behind the line abeam from Yellow's stern.
- 2 Blue chooses where to pass and steers her bow aside early – here, to windward.
- 3 Blue's bow has crossed the line from Yellow's stern – now they are overlapped, and Blue keeps clear as the windward boat.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 12 · p. 16

When boats are on the same tack and not overlapped (1), a boat clear astern shall keep clear of a boat clear ahead (2).

**Blue** – clear astern: chooses where to pass and is responsible for not touching.**Yellow** – clear ahead: sails her course.

The view is better from behind: the overtaking boat sees both boats and decides which side to pass on.

As soon as Blue's bow crosses the line from Yellow's stern, the boats are *overlapped* and 11 takes over. Passing to windward – she still keeps clear. Passing to leeward – she gets right of way, but with the limits of 15 and 17.



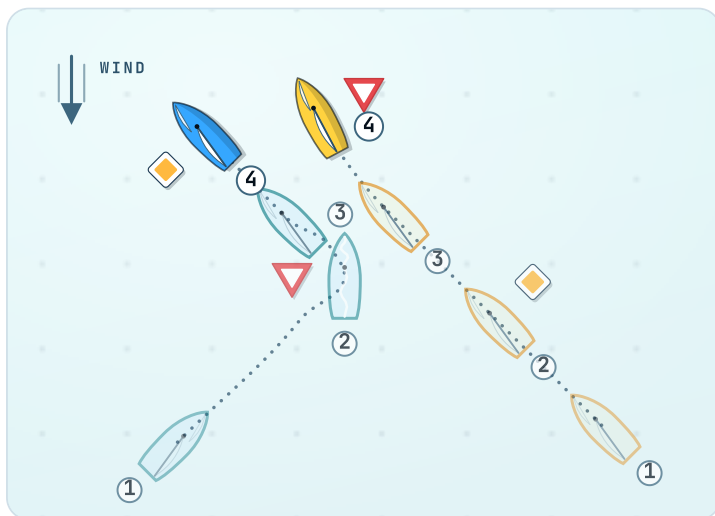
Common mistake. Overtaking close to leeward and luffing at once. Having acquired right of way from clear astern, Blue must give Yellow time to get clear (15), and if she came within two hull lengths, she may not sail above her *proper course* (17).

See also: 11, 15, 17

13

While Tacking

A boat past head to wind and not yet close-hauled keeps clear of everyone.



- 1 Blue on port tack, Yellow on starboard. So far it's simple: Blue keeps clear under rule 10.
- 2 Blue tacks. Her bow has passed head to wind – from this moment until she is close-hauled, Blue keeps clear of everyone.
- 3 Blue is close-hauled, now on starboard tack. She is leeward and overlapped with Yellow – now Yellow keeps clear. But Blue must give her time and room to get away.
- 4 Yellow luffs gently and stays above. All by the rules.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 13 · p. 16

After a boat passes head to wind, she shall keep clear of other boats until she is on a close-hauled course (2). During that time rules 10, 11 and 12 do not apply (2). If two boats are subject to this rule at the same time, the one on the other's port side or the one astern shall keep clear.



Blue – while tacking: from head to wind until close-hauled she keeps clear of everyone; rules 10–12 do not apply to her.



Blue – after the tack: leeward boat on starboard tack, right of way – but must give Yellow time to get clear (15).

I tack under her, but not too close – so she has time to react.

BLUE

While Blue is tacking, she keeps clear. Once she's on course, I keep clear – and I need room.

YELLOW

Rule 13 applies from the moment the bow passes head to wind until the boat is on a close-hauled course. What counts is the **course**, not whether the sheets are trimmed in.

If both are tacking at the same time, the one on the other's port side, or the one astern, keeps clear.



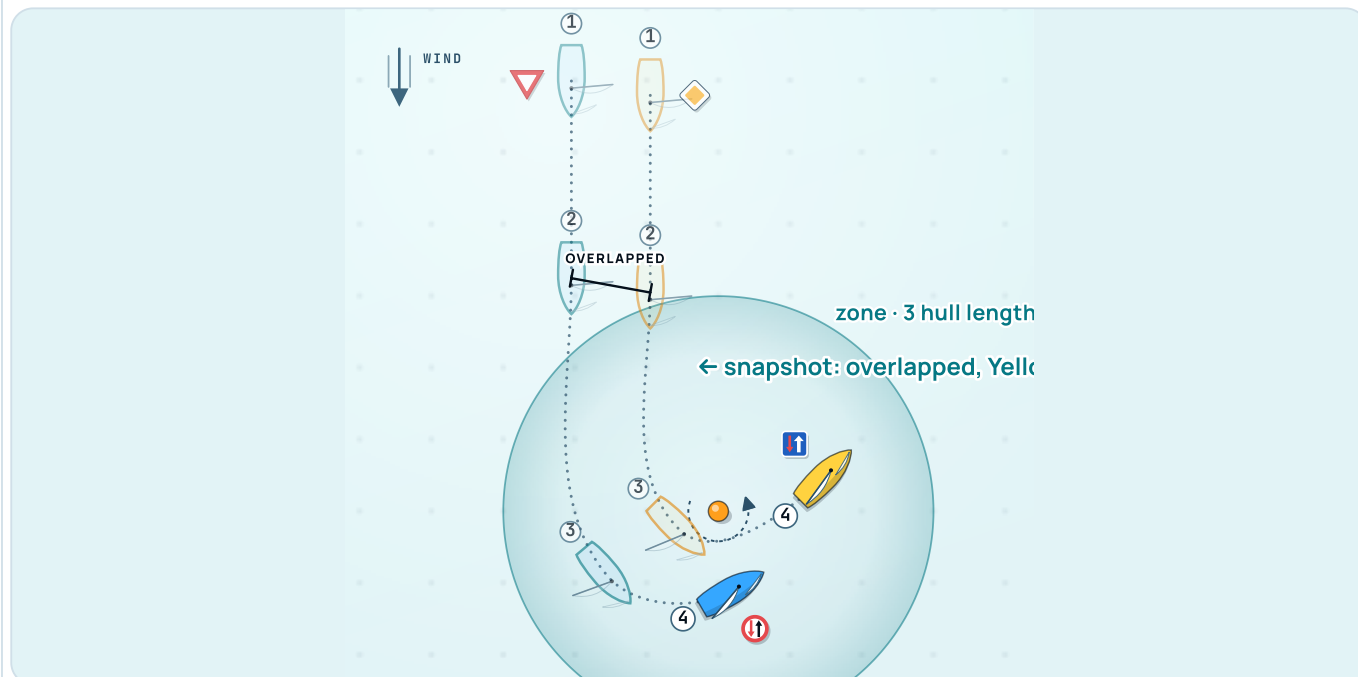
Common mistake. Tacking right under the bow of a starboard-tack boat. Once the tack is complete you have right of way, but 15 requires you to give the other boat time and room to get clear. If she can't make it, you are the one who broke a rule.

See also: 15, 10, 11

18.2(a)

At the mark: the zone-entry “snapshot” decides 2025

How the boats stood when the first of them reached the zone is how it stays until the rounding is over.



- ① Both are sailing to a mark to be left to port. Yellow is closer to the mark; the boats are overlapped.
- ② Yellow reaches the zone first. This is the “snapshot”: at this moment they are overlapped, and Yellow is the inside boat.
- ③ Blue, the outside boat, gives Yellow room to sail to the mark and round it.
- ④ Yellow has rounded the mark and is leaving it. Blue rounds behind her.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 18.2(a) · p. 18

(a) When the first of two boats reaches the zone ②,

- (1) if the boats are overlapped, the outside boat at that moment shall give the inside boat mark-room ③;
- (2) if the boats are not overlapped, the boat that has not reached the zone at that moment shall give the other boat mark-room.

When a boat is required to give *mark-room* by this rule, she shall continue to do so for as long as this rule applies, even if later an *overlap* is broken or a new *overlap* begins.

[...] 18.2(b)–(e) – see the cards of the “At marks and obstructions” chapter



Yellow – inside at the snapshot: entitled to *mark-room* – to sail to the mark, round it and leave it astern.



Blue – outside: gives that room, even if the overlap is later broken.

The *zone* is a circle around the mark with a radius of three hull lengths. At the moment the **first** of two boats reaches the zone: if they are overlapped, the outside boat gives the inside boat room; if not, the boat still outside gives room to the one already inside.

The snapshot holds until the rounding is over — even if the overlap is later broken or a new one begins. It ends when the boat entitled to room passes head to wind or leaves the zone (**18.2(b)**).

Mark-room is room to sail to the mark, round it and leave it astern. It is **not right of way**: the inside boat may use only that room.



Common mistake. Thinking rule 18 always applies. It does not apply between boats on opposite tacks on a beat to windward — there **10** decides (more in **18.1**).



Change in 2025. Rule 18.2 has been restructured: the “snapshot” now comes first, as 18.2(a). The definition of *mark-room* now includes “to leave it astern”, and the old proviso about tacking has been removed from it.

See also: **18.1**, **18.2**, **18.3**, **18.4**

Who has right of way? Four questions in order

When boats meet, ask four questions from top to bottom. The first “yes” is the answer. Then check the limitations — they sit on top of any answer.

- 1 Is anyone returning to start after the signal, taking a penalty, or moving astern by backing a sail?

YES

She keeps clear of those who are not

21

no ↓

- 2 Is anyone tacking — past head to wind but not yet on a close-hauled course?

YES

The tacking boat keeps clear

13

no ↓

- 3 Boats on **opposite tacks**?

YES

Port tack keeps clear of starboard

10

no, same tack ↓

- 4 Boats **overlapped**?

YES

Windward keeps clear of leeward

11

no ↓

- 5 One is **clear astern** of the other.

RESULT

Clear astern keeps clear of clear ahead

12

On top of any answer: 14 — avoid contact; 15 — when you acquire right of way, give the other boat time to get clear; 16 — when changing course, leave room; 17 — don't sail above your proper course. At a mark — 18; at an obstruction — 19 and 20.

Right of way is not a right to ram

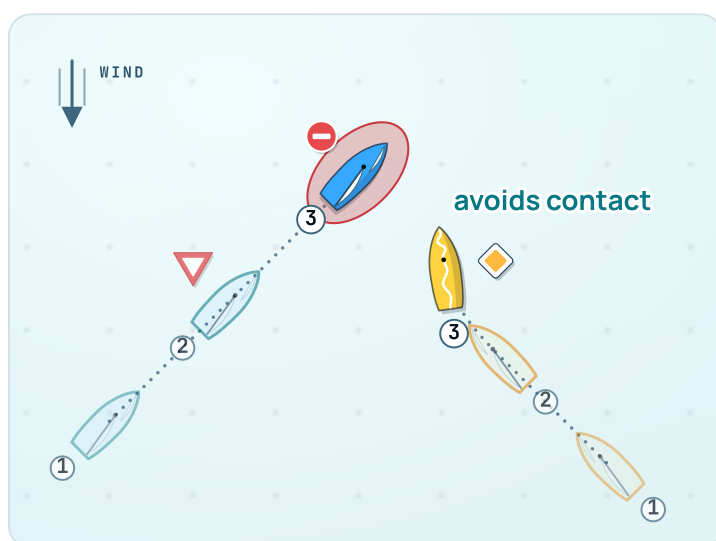
The right-of-way boat need not keep clear — but she is bound by rules too.

Four rules of Section B sit on top of any answer to “who has right of way”: avoid contact, give time to a boat that has just become the keep-clear boat, give room when changing course, and don’t carry a rival above your proper course.

14

Avoiding Contact 2025

Everyone must avoid contact — including the boat with right of way.



- ① Blue on port tack is crossing Yellow's path and apparently hasn't seen her.
- ② It becomes clear that Blue is not keeping clear. From this moment Yellow must do everything reasonable to avoid contact.
- ③ Yellow luffs sharply — no contact. Blue broke rule 10: Yellow had to take avoiding action.

RRS 2025-2028 • Rule 14 • p. 17

..... new in 2025

If reasonably possible, a boat shall

- (a) avoid contact with another boat,
- (b) not cause contact between boats, and
- (c) not cause contact between a boat and an object that should be avoided.

However, a right-of-way boat, or one sailing within the *room* or *mark-room* to which she is entitled, need not act to avoid contact until it is clear that the other boat is not *keeping clear* ② or giving *room* or *mark-room*.



Blue — did not keep clear — broke rule 10.



Yellow — right of way: holds her course until it is clear that Blue won't keep clear; once it is clear, must act to avoid contact.

If reasonably possible, a boat shall avoid contact with another boat, not cause contact between boats, and not cause contact between a boat and an object that should be avoided.

A right-of-way boat (or one sailing within the room she is entitled to) need not act in advance — but only until it **becomes clear** that the other boat is not keeping clear.

If contact does occur but causes no damage or injury, the right-of-way boat is not penalized for breaking rule 14 (43). If there was damage, both may be penalized.

 **Common mistake.** “I had right of way, so I held on to the end.” You did — but if you could have avoided the collision and didn’t, and it caused damage, you get penalized too.

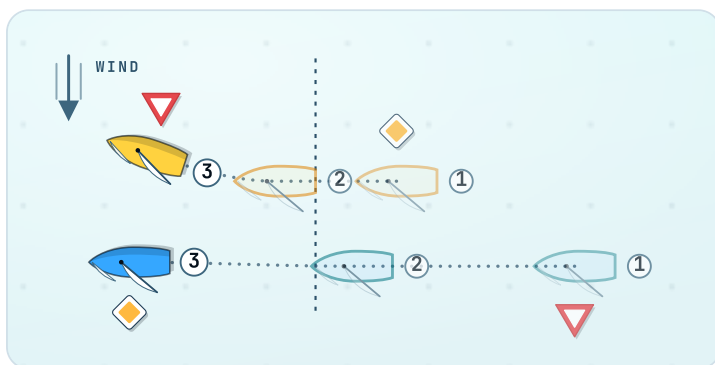
 **Change in 2025.** The rule is now split into three items: avoid contact; not cause contact between boats; not cause contact between a boat and an object that should be avoided.

See also: 43, 10, 16.1

15

Acquiring Right of Way

Got right of way by your own actions — give the other boat time to get clear.



- 1 Blue is catching Yellow, staying below her. While she is clear astern, Blue keeps clear.
- 2 Blue's bow has crossed the line from Yellow's stern: the boats are overlapped, and Blue is the leeward boat. Right of way has passed to her through her own actions.
- 3 So at first Blue gives Yellow room to get clear — she doesn't luff straight away. Yellow calmly heads up.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 15 · p. 17

When a boat acquires right of way, she shall initially give the other boat room to keep clear (2), unless she acquires right of way because of the other boat's actions.



Blue — acquired right of way herself (became overlapped to leeward): must initially give Yellow room to keep clear.



Yellow — became the windward boat: heads up as soon as she can.

“Room” is the space and time to manoeuvre properly, in a seamanlike way. The rules do not demand an instant reaction from the other boat.

The rule does not apply if a boat acquires right of way **because of the other boat's actions**: for example, the windward boat drops down into an overlap herself, or the other boat tacks in front of her.



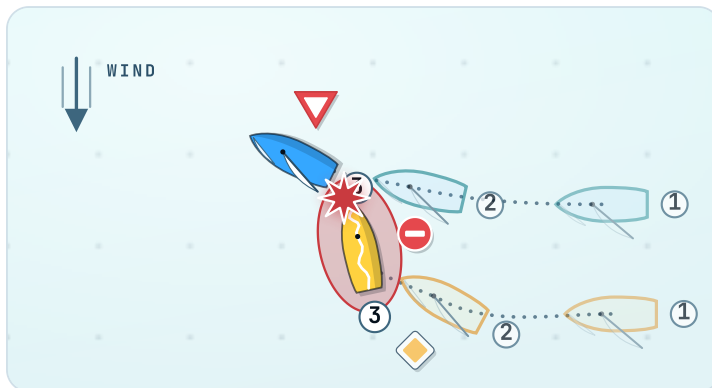
Common mistake. Tacking under the bow of a starboard-tack boat, or “shooting” up from clear astern to leeward and luffing at once. In both cases you acquired right of way yourself – so first of all you give room.

See also: 13, 11, 17

16.1

Changing Course

When changing course, the right-of-way boat gives the other boat room to keep clear.



- ① Both on starboard tack, overlapped. Yellow is the leeward boat and has right of way.
- ② Yellow luffs sharply. Blue starts heading up, but she has not been given room.
- ③ Contact. Yellow broke the rule: when changing course she did not give Blue room to keep clear. Blue is exonerated.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 16.1 · p. 17

16.1 When a right-of-way boat changes course, she shall give the other boat *room to keep clear* ②.



Yellow — luffed too sharply — did not give room.



Blue — tried to get clear but couldn't in time; she is exonerated for the contact (43).

I luff — but so that Blue has time to respond. A sudden “hook” is already a breach.

YELLOW

If she luffs gently, my move is to head up. Right away, without waiting for contact.

BLUE

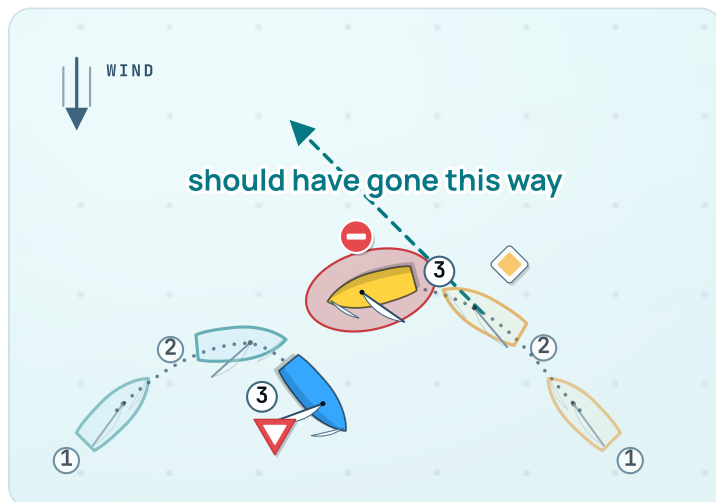
Rule 16.1 does not forbid changing course — it requires that after each change the other boat is still able to keep clear with a normal manoeuvre.

See also: 16.2, 11, 43

16.2

No “hunting” a boat ducking astern

On a beat, starboard tack does not bear away onto a boat that is already passing astern of her.



- ① A beat to windward. Blue on port tack bears away to pass astern of Yellow. All correct.
- ② Yellow bears away towards her – “hunting”. Blue has to bear away even further, immediately.
- ③ Not allowed: on a beat a starboard-tack boat shall not bear away if as a result the port-tack boat ducking astern must change course immediately.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 16.2 · p. 17

16.2 In addition, on a beat to windward when a *port-tack* boat is *keeping clear* by sailing to pass to leeward of a *starboard-tack* boat, the *starboard-tack* boat shall not bear away if as a result the *port-tack* boat must change course immediately ② to continue *keeping clear*.



Yellow — bore away onto Blue, who had to change course again immediately.



Blue — on port tack: ducked astern early — kept clear properly.

The rule applies **only on a beat to windward** (the upwind leg) and only when the port-tack boat is keeping clear by passing astern of the starboard-tack boat.

Yellow may hold her course or luff — subject to 16.1.

See also: 16.1, 10

17

On the Same Tack: Proper Course 2025

Came from clear astern within two hull lengths to leeward — no sailing above proper course.



- ① Blue is clear astern and below Yellow, sailing faster. Their tracks are less than two hull lengths apart.
- ② Blue has become overlapped with Yellow to leeward and acquired right of way. But since she came from clear astern and within two hull lengths, she may not sail above her *proper course*.
- ③ Blue sails straight for the next mark — her proper course. She cannot luff Yellow up.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 17 · p. 17

If a boat clear astern becomes overlapped within two of her hull lengths to leeward ② of a boat on the same tack, she shall not sail above her proper course ③ while they remain on the same tack and overlapped within that distance, unless in doing so she promptly sails astern of the other boat.



Blue — leeward with right of way, but sails no higher than her proper course while the boats are overlapped within two hull lengths.



Yellow — windward: keeps clear.

Proper course is the course a boat would sail to complete the course as soon as possible if the other boat were not there. **There is no proper course before the starting signal**, so rule 17 does not apply at the start.

Rule 17 does not apply if the leeward boat became overlapped from more than two hull lengths away, or did not come from clear astern. Then she may luff, even up to head to wind — giving room under **16.1**.

Exception: you may sail higher if in doing so you promptly pass astern of the other boat.



Change in 2025. The phrase about an overlap that begins while the windward boat must keep clear under rule 13 has been removed from the rule.

See also: **11, 15, 16.1**

At Marks and Obstructions

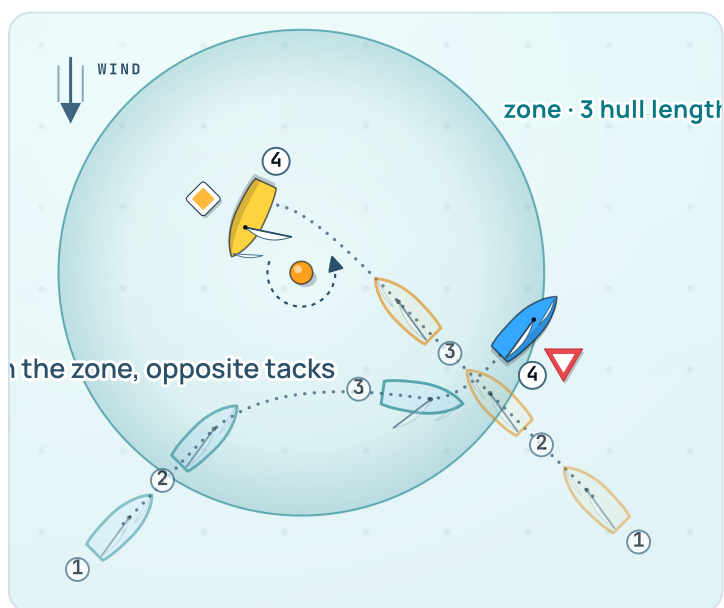
Boats crowd together most at a mark, so a rule of its own applies there — mark-room. Near a rock, a shore or another obstruction — room at an obstruction.

The key point: **room is not right of way**. It is only the space to pass safely.

18.1

When rule 18 applies and when it doesn't

Rule 18 applies between boats required to leave a mark on the same side when at least one of them is in the zone. But there are four exceptions.



- ① The mark is to be left to port. Yellow approaches it on starboard tack, Blue on port.
- ② Blue is already in the zone and wants to tack for the mark. But the boats are on opposite tacks on a beat to windward — rule 18 does not apply between them.
- ③ Rule 10 decides: Blue, on port tack, ducks astern of Yellow.
- ④ Yellow rounds the mark. Blue will tack when there is room.

RRS 2025-2028 • Rule 18.1 • p. 18

- (a) Rule 18 applies between boats when they are required to leave a *mark* on the same side and at least one of them is in the *zone*. However, it does not apply
- (1) between boats on opposite tacks on a beat to windward, (2)
 - (2) between boats on opposite tacks when the *proper course* at the mark for one but not both of them is to tack,
 - (3) between a boat approaching a *mark* and one leaving it, or
 - (4) if the *mark* is a *continuing obstruction*, in which case rule 19 applies.
- (b) Rule 18 no longer applies between boats when *mark-room* has been given.



Blue — on port tack: at the windward mark keeps clear of starboard tack, as on the whole beat.

 **Yellow** — on starboard tack: sails her course to the mark.

Rule 18 **does not apply**: (1) between boats on opposite tacks on a beat to windward; (2) between boats on opposite tacks when one of them, but not both, needs to tack to sail to the mark; (3) between a boat approaching a mark and one leaving it; (4) if the mark is a *continuing obstruction*, in which case **19** applies.

And one more: rule 18 no longer applies between two boats once *mark-room* has been given.

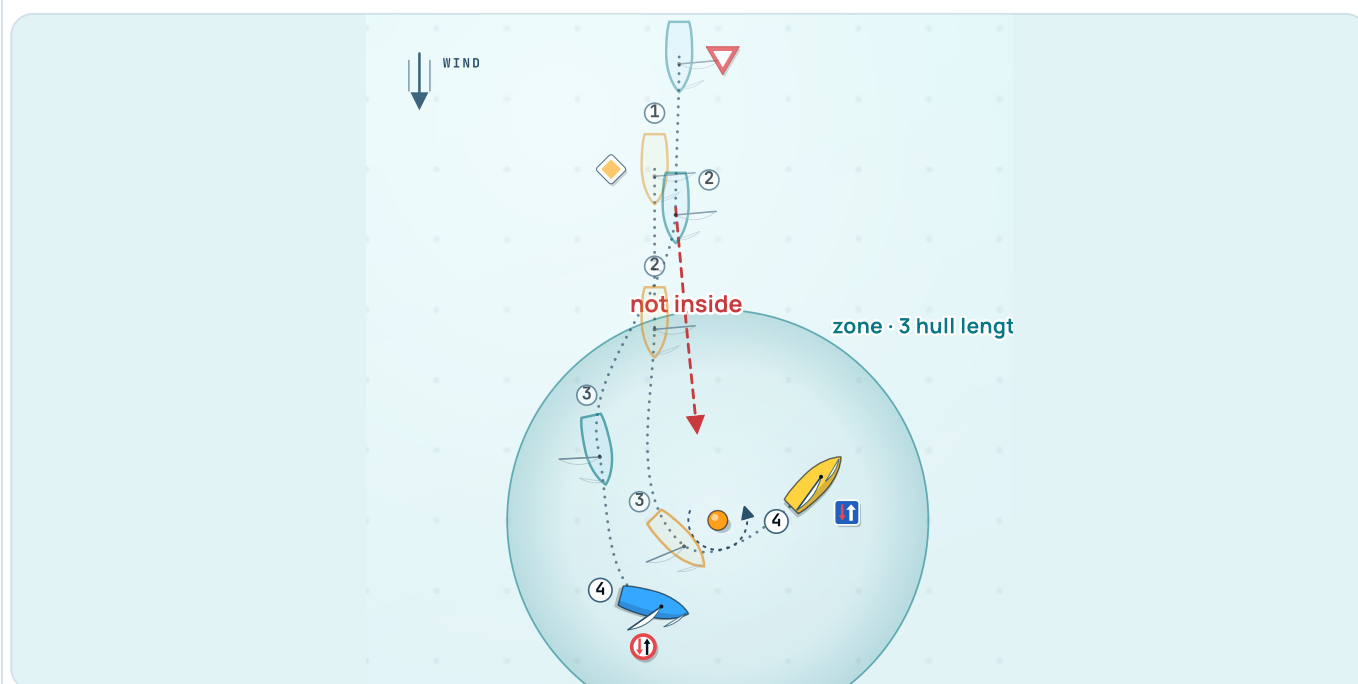
 **Common mistake.** Shouting “Mark-room!” on port tack against a starboard-tack boat at the windward mark. The hail changes nothing: **10** applies.

See also: **18.2(a)**, **10**, **19**

18.2

Snapshot: reached the zone clear ahead

Whoever was clear ahead on reaching the zone gets the room, however things turn out later.



- 1 Both sail to the mark. Blue is catching up, but so far she is clear astern of Yellow.
- 2 Yellow reaches the zone first, and they are **not overlapped**. Snapshot: mark-room goes to Yellow. Blue must give it.
- 3 Blue could poke her bow between Yellow and the mark — but the snapshot has already been taken. She has no right to room.
- 4 Yellow rounds the mark; Blue follows on the outside.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 18.2(a), (d), (e) · p. 18

(a) When the first of two boats reaches the *zone*,

- (1) if the boats are *overlapped*, the outside boat at that moment shall give the inside boat *mark-room*;
- (2) if the boats are not *overlapped*, the boat that has not reached the *zone* at that moment shall give the other boat *mark-room*. (2)

When a boat is required to give *mark-room* by this rule, she shall continue to do so for as long as this rule applies, even if later an *overlap* is broken or a new *overlap* begins.

- (d) If a boat obtained an inside *overlap* from *clear astern* (3) or by tacking to *windward* of the other boat and, from the time the *overlap* began, the outside boat has been unable to give *mark-room*, rules 18.2(a) and 18.2© do not apply between them.
- (e) If there is reasonable doubt that a boat obtained or broke an *overlap* in time, it shall be presumed that she did not.



Yellow – reached the zone first and not overlapped: mark-room is hers.



Blue – was outside the zone at the snapshot: gives room, even if she ends up inside later.

The obligation to give room lasts for as long as rule 18 applies, even if the overlap is later broken or a new one begins (18.2(a)).

18.2(d). If a boat obtained an inside overlap from clear astern (or by tacking to windward of the other boat) and, from that moment, the outside boat has been unable to give room, she is not entitled to mark-room at all.

18.2(e). If there is reasonable doubt that a boat obtained or broke an overlap in time, it is presumed that she did not.

See also: 18.2(a), 18.2(b), 12

18.2(b)

When mark-room ends

The entitlement to room disappears as soon as its holder passes head to wind or leaves the zone.

18.2(b). Rule 18.2(a) no longer applies once the boat entitled to mark-room passes head to wind or leaves the zone.

18.2©. When 18.2(a) does not apply and the boats are overlapped, the outside boat gives the inside boat mark-room – based on their positions at that moment.

Mark-room includes room to sail to the mark when her proper course is to sail close to it, to round or pass it on the required side, and to leave it astern.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 18.2(b), (c) · p. 18

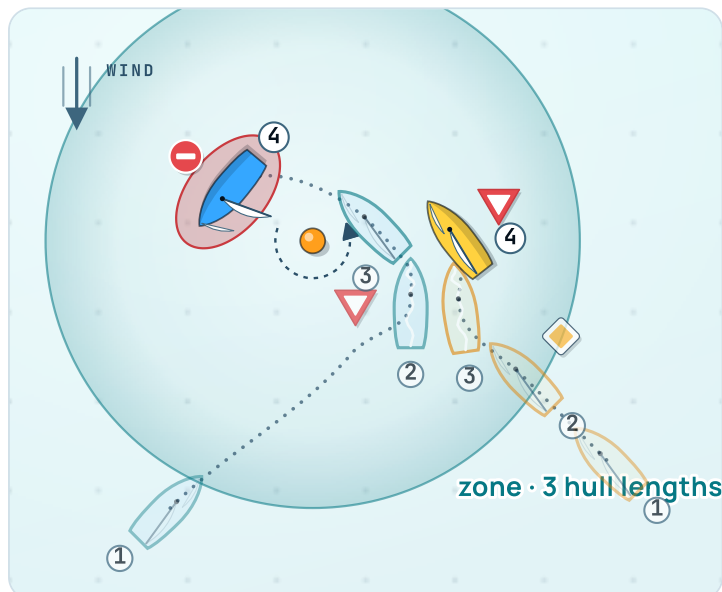
- (b) Rule 18.2(a) no longer applies if the boat entitled to *mark-room* passes head to wind or leaves the *zone*.
- (c) When rule 18.2(a) does not apply and the boats are *overlapped*, the outside boat shall give the inside boat *mark-room*.

See also: 18.2(a), 18.3

18.3

Tacking in the Zone 2025

Tacked from port to starboard in the zone – you may not make a starboard-tack boat sail above close-hauled.



- ① The mark is to be left to port. Yellow has been on starboard tack towards it since entering the zone. Blue is on port.
- ② Blue tacks right in the zone, onto Yellow's line.
- ③ Yellow has to luff above close-hauled to avoid hitting Blue's stern. That is exactly what is prohibited: Blue broke the rule.
- ④ The right thing would have been to tack so that Yellow could sail her course to the mark.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 18.3 · p. 19

If a boat passes head to wind from port to starboard tack in the zone of a mark ② to be left to port, rule 18.2 does not apply between her and another boat on *starboard tack* that is *fetching* the mark. If the other boat has been on *starboard tack* since entering the *zone*, the boat that passed head to wind

- (a) shall not cause the other boat to sail above close-hauled to avoid contact ③, and
- (b) shall give *mark-room* if the other boat becomes *overlapped* inside her.



Blue – tacked in the zone so that Yellow had to sail above close-hauled.



Yellow – has been on starboard tack since entering the zone – rule 18.3 protects her.

Between a boat that tacked in the zone and a starboard-tack boat that is *fetching* the mark, **rule 18.2 does not apply**. The rule works at a mark to be left **to port**, when a boat passes head to wind **from port to starboard tack** in the zone and the other boat is on starboard tack and *fetching* the mark (can pass it without changing tack).

If Yellow has been on starboard tack since entering the zone, the boat that tacked: (a) shall not cause her to sail above close-hauled to avoid contact; (b) shall give her mark-room if Yellow becomes overlapped inside her.

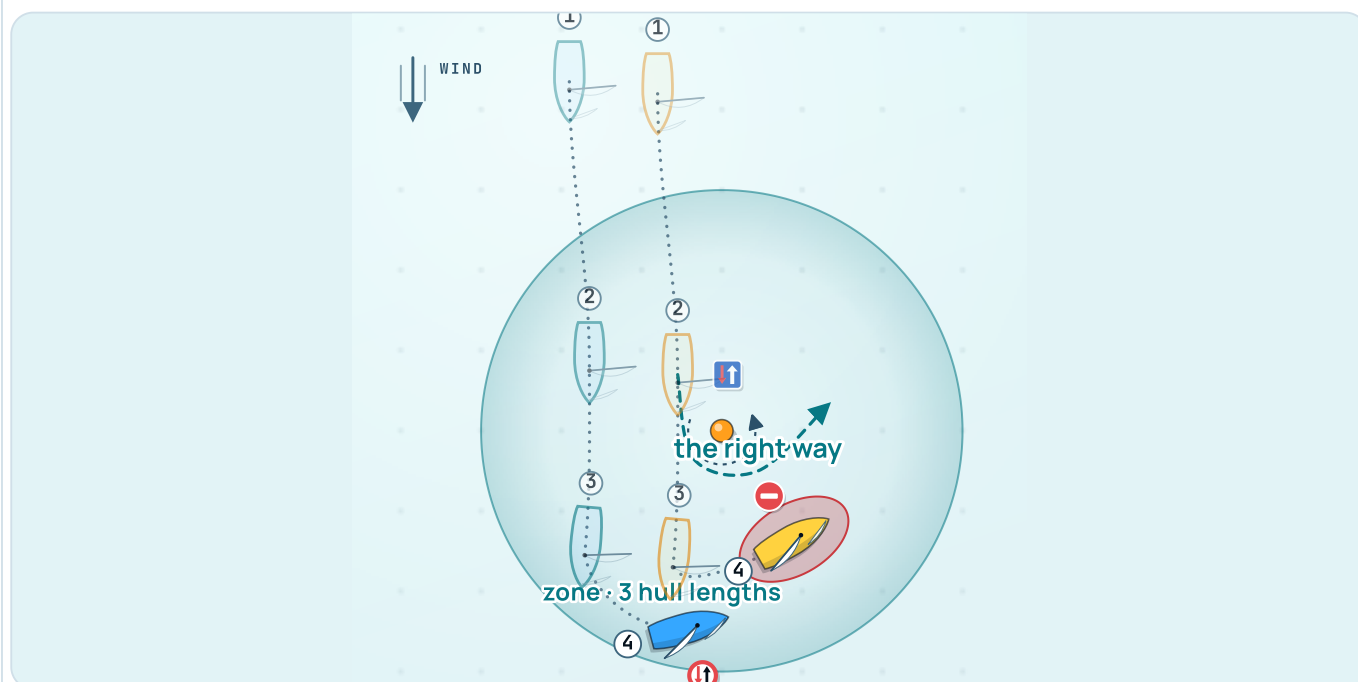
 **Change in 2025.** The rule has been narrowed and clarified: it is now explicitly about a mark to be left to port and a tack specifically from port to starboard.

See also: 13, 15, 18.1

18.4

Gybing in the Zone 2025

An inside right-of-way boat must gybe at the mark — until she gybes she sails no farther from the mark than needed.



- ① Both are running to the mark, overlapped. Yellow is inside and leeward: she has both right of way and mark-room.
- ② To sail on, Yellow needs to gybe at the mark.
- ③ Instead she sails farther from the mark than needed and takes Blue with her. Not allowed.
- ④ The right way is to gybe right at the mark (dashed line), not afterwards.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 18.4 · p. 19

When an inside *overlapped* right-of-way boat must gybe at a *mark* to sail her *proper course*, until she gybes she shall sail no farther from the mark than needed to sail that course ③. Rule 18.4 does not apply at a gate *mark*.

 **Yellow** — sailed past the mark, carrying Blue along, instead of gybing at the mark.

 **Blue** — outside: gives mark-room.

The rule stops an inside right-of-way boat from “carrying” the outside boat wide. Until she gybes, her course is no farther from the mark than her proper course requires.

At a **gate** (two marks to pass between) rule 18.4 does not apply.

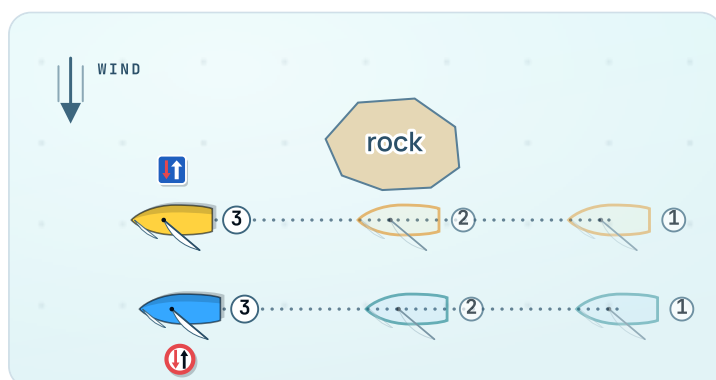
 **Change in 2025.** “In the zone” added to the heading.

See also: 18.2(a), 17

19

Room to Pass an Obstruction 2025

At an obstruction the outside boat gives the inside boat room to pass between her and the obstruction.



- 1 Both are heading for a rock and will pass it on the same side. The boats are overlapped: Yellow is inside, closer to the rock.
- 2 Blue has right of way — she is the leeward boat. But she is outside, and she leaves Yellow enough room to pass between her and the rock.
- 3 Both are past. There was enough room — nobody was squeezed onto the rock.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rules 19.1, 19.2(a), (b) · p. 19

..... new in 2025

Rule 19 applies between two boats at an *obstruction* except when rule 18 applies between them and

- (a) the *obstruction* is the *mark*, or
- (b) the *obstruction* is another boat *overlapped* with each of them.

However, at a *continuing obstruction*, rule 19 always applies and rule 18 does not.

- (a) A right-of-way boat may choose to pass an *obstruction* on her port or starboard side. If a right-of-way boat changes course when choosing on which side to pass the *obstruction*, she shall give the other boat *room to keep clear*.
- (b) When the boats are *overlapped*, the outside boat shall give the inside boat *room between her and the obstruction* 2, unless she has been unable to do so from the time the *overlap* began.



Yellow — inside and windward: keeps clear of Blue (11), but is entitled to room between her and the rock.



Blue — outside: gives that room.

An *obstruction* is an object a boat could not pass without changing course substantially if she were sailing directly towards it one hull length away; or an object that can be safely passed on only one side. A rock, a shoal, the shore, an anchored vessel, a boat that others must keep clear of.

19.2(a). The right-of-way boat chooses which side to pass the obstruction on. If she changes course to do so, she gives the other boat room to keep clear.

19.2(b). When the boats are overlapped, the outside boat gives the inside boat room between her and the obstruction, unless she has been unable to do so from the time the overlap began.

Rule 19 does not apply when rule 18 already applies between the boats and the obstruction is the mark, or when the obstruction is a third boat overlapped with both of them. At a *continuing obstruction* 19 always applies, not 18.



Change in 2025. 19.2(a) now clarifies: when choosing on which side to pass the obstruction and changing course to do so, the right-of-way boat shall give the other boat room to keep clear.

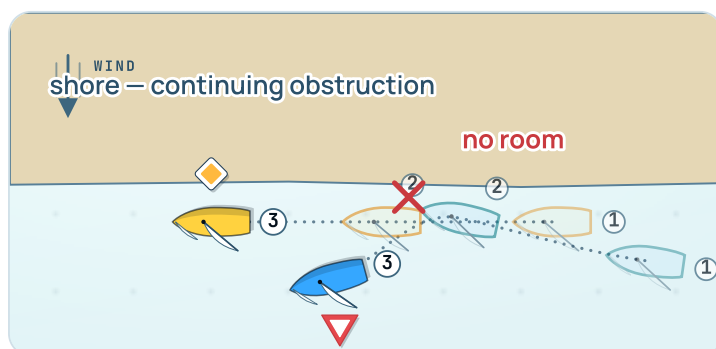
See also: [19.2\(c\)](#), [20](#), [18.1](#)

19.2(c)

Along the shore: no squeezing in

2025

At a continuing obstruction a boat from clear astern gets no room if there was no room when the overlap began.



- 1 Yellow is sailing along the shore. Blue is catching up from astern.
- 2 It's tight between Yellow and the shore: at the moment Blue would become overlapped inside, there is no room there.
- 3 So Blue is not entitled to room — she must keep clear and stays outside or astern.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 19.2(c) · p. 20

(c) While boats are passing a *continuing obstruction*, if a boat that was *clear astern* and required to *keep clear* becomes *overlapped* between the other boat and the *obstruction* and, at the moment the overlap begins, there is not room for her to pass between them (2),

(1) she is not entitled to *room* under rule 19.2(b), and

- (2) while the boats remain overlapped, she shall keep clear and rules 10 and 11 do not apply (3).



Blue — clear astern — keeps clear (rule 12). Had she wedged herself inside without room, she would still have to keep clear, and rules 10 and 11 would not apply while the boats remain overlapped.



Yellow — sails her course along the shore.

A *continuing obstruction* is one that the boat with the shortest hull will pass alongside for at least three of her hull lengths: a shore, a shoal, a breakwater. A vessel under way, a boat racing, or a race committee vessel that is also a mark is never a continuing obstruction.

While the boats remain overlapped, Blue must keep clear, and rules 10 and 11 do not apply between them.



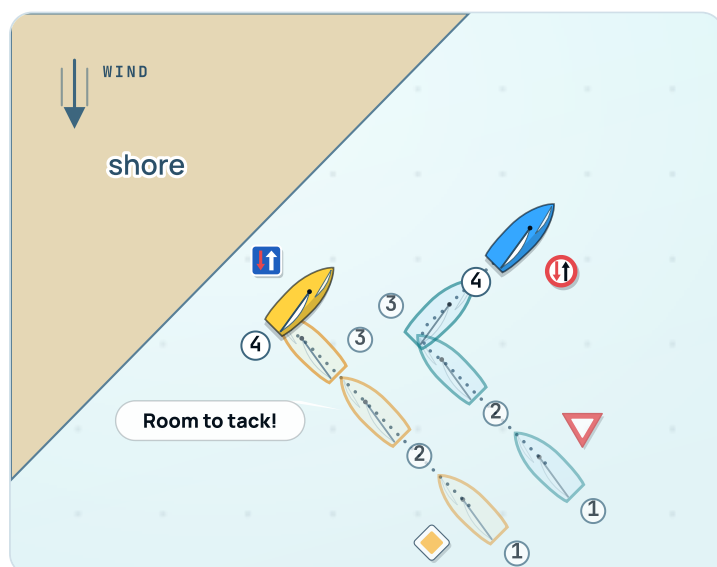
Change in 2025. “Continuing obstruction” now has its own definition: the three hull lengths are measured by the boat with the shortest hull.

See also: 19, 12

20

Room to Tack at an Obstruction 2025

Running into an obstruction and can't tack because of the boat beside you — hail “Room to tack!”



- 1 Both are on starboard tack heading for the shore, overlapped. Yellow is the leeward boat and will reach the shoal first.
- 2 Yellow will soon have to change course sharply, and she hails: “Room to tack!”
- 3 Blue responds by acting: she tacks at once (or replies “You tack!” and gives Yellow room).
- 4 As soon as Blue has responded, Yellow tacks — also at once.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rules 20.1, 20.2 · p. 20

A boat may hail for *room* to tack and avoid a boat on the same *tack* by hailing ‘Room to tack’ (2). However, she shall not hail unless

- (a) she is approaching an *obstruction* and will soon need to make a substantial course change to avoid it safely, and
- (b) she is sailing close-hauled or above.

In addition, she shall not hail if the *obstruction* is a *mark* and a boat that is *fetching* it would be required to change course as a result of the hail.

- (a) After a boat hails, she shall give a hailed boat time to respond.
- (b) A hailed boat shall respond even if the hail breaks rule 20.1.
- (c) A hailed boat shall respond either by tacking as soon as possible, or by immediately replying 'You tack' (3) and then giving the hailing boat *room* to tack and avoid her.
- (d) When a hailed boat responds, the hailing boat shall tack as soon as possible (4).
- (e) From the time a boat hails until she has tacked and avoided a hailed boat, rule 18.2 does not apply between them.

[...] 20.3 and 20.4 – paraphrased in the card text



Yellow – hailed: she needs room to tack and avoid Blue.



Blue – hailed boat: must respond – tack at once, or reply “You tack!” and give room.

“Room to tack!” – loud and early, while there’s still time.

YELLOW

“You tack!” – or I just tack myself. I’ll argue about it ashore.

BLUE

When you may hail: the boat is approaching an obstruction and will soon need to make a substantial course change to avoid it safely – and she is sailing close-hauled or above. You may not hail if the obstruction is a mark and the hailed boat that is *fetching* it would have to change course as a result of the hail.

A response is mandatory, even if the hail broke the rule: respond first, then protest if need be (rule 20.2(b)). The hailing boat must allow time to respond, and once she gets the response, she tacks at once.

A hailed boat that intends to respond by tacking may pass the same hail on to another boat on the same tack (rule 20.3). If the hail may not be heard, a clear signal is also needed (usually a gesture).



Change in 2025. The wording of the hail is now fixed in the rule: “Room to tack”.

See also: 19, 11

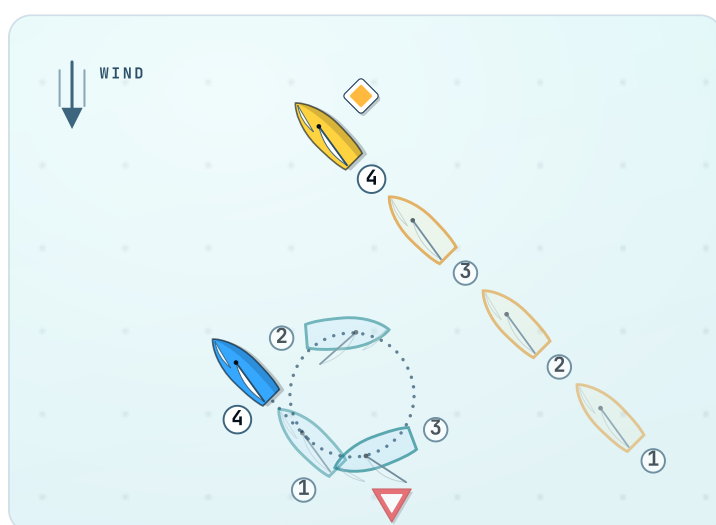
Special cases

There are situations in which a boat loses all her Section A rights: she is returning to start, taking penalty turns or backing up. Then she keeps clear of everyone who isn't doing so — even boats that would normally have to keep clear of her.

21

Starting errors, penalty turns, moving astern

A boat returning to start, taking a penalty or moving astern by backing a sail keeps clear of everyone who isn't.



- 1 After the incident Blue has moved aside and begins her penalty turn.
- 2 A tack... While Blue is taking her penalty she keeps clear of everyone who isn't — even on starboard tack.
- 3 ...and a gybe. Yellow sails her course: Blue must stay out of her way.
- 4 The turn is complete — Blue is an ordinary racing boat again.

RRS 2025-2028 • Rule 21 and Section D preamble • p. 21

When rule 21 or 22 applies between two boats, Section A rules do not.

21.1 A boat sailing towards the pre-start side of the starting line or one of its extensions after her starting signal to *start* or to comply with rule 30.1 shall *keep clear* of a boat not doing so until her hull is completely on the pre-start side.

21.2 A boat taking a penalty shall *keep clear* of one that is not (2).

21.3 A boat moving astern, or sideways to windward, through the water by backing a sail shall *keep clear* of one that is not.



Blue — taking a penalty: keeps clear of everyone who isn't.



Yellow — sails her course.

21.1. After her starting signal, a boat sailing towards the pre-start side of the line or one of its extensions to start again or to comply with rule 30.1 keeps clear of everyone until her hull is completely on the pre-start side (diagram in the “Start” chapter).

21.2. A boat taking a penalty keeps clear of boats that are not.

21.3. A boat moving astern, or sideways to windward, because she is backing a sail keeps clear of the others.

While rule 21 or 22 applies between two boats, the Section A rules (10–13) do not apply between them.

See also: [44](#), [29.1](#), [23](#)

22

Capsized, anchored or aground; rescuing

A boat that is capsized, anchored or aground, or is helping someone in danger, is avoided if possible.

If possible, a boat avoids another that is capsized or has not regained control after capsizing, is anchored or aground, or is trying to help a person or vessel in danger.

A boat is capsized when her masthead is in the water.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 22 · p. 21

If possible, a boat shall avoid a boat that is capsized or has not regained control after capsizing, is anchored or aground, or is trying to help a person or vessel in danger. A boat is capsized when her masthead is in the water.

See also: [21](#), [1](#)

23

Don't interfere with others

A boat not racing does not interfere with those racing. A boat racing does not interfere with those taking a penalty, sailing on another leg or returning to start.

23.1. If reasonably possible, a boat not racing does not interfere with a boat that is racing.

23.2. If reasonably possible, a boat does not interfere with a boat that is taking a penalty, sailing on another leg or returning to start under rule 21.1. After the starting signal this does not apply when the boat is sailing her proper course.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 23 · p. 22

23.1 If reasonably possible, a boat not *racing* shall not interfere with a boat that is *racing*.

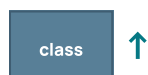
23.2 If reasonably possible, a boat shall not interfere with a boat that is taking a penalty, sailing on another leg or subject to rule 21.1. However, after the starting signal this rule does not apply when the boat is sailing her *proper course*.

See also: [21](#)

Start

The start is the most crowded minutes of a race. It has its own signals, its own flags and its own traps: being over early, the forbidden triangle, “barging” at the committee boat. And one key point: **before the starting signal there is no proper course** – rule 17 is not yet in effect.

Starting sequence: 5 – 4 – 1 – 0



Warning

sound: one

Class flag displayed



Preparatory

sound: one

P, I, Z, Z with I, U or black – the flag displayed sets the starting rules



One minute

sound: long

Preparatory flag removed



Start

sound: one

Class flag removed

Times are taken **from the flags**. A late or missing sound signal does not change the time of the signal (26).

The preparatory signal flag (at 4 minutes) tells you which starting rules apply:



P

Ordinary start, no special rules.

↑ one · ↓ Long



I – rule 30.1

Over the line in the last minute – come back across an extension of the line.

↑ one · ↓ Long

Z – rule 30.2

In the triangle in the last minute – 20% Scoring Penalty without a hearing (calculated as in rule 44.3©).

↑ one · ↓ Long

U – rule 30.3

In the triangle in the last minute – disqualification. Cancelled if the race is restarted.

↑ one · ↓ Long

Black – rule 30.4

In the triangle – disqualification, and no sailing in the restart of that race.

↑ one · ↓ Long

Start**When a boat has started**

Hull entirely below the line at or after the signal – and then any part of the hull crosses the line.

A boat *starts* when any part of her hull crosses the starting line from the pre-start side to the course side – provided that at or after her starting signal her hull was entirely on the pre-start side, and that she has complied with rule 30.1 if it applies.

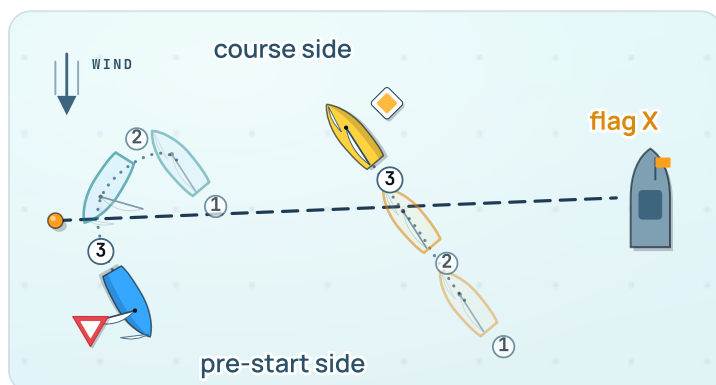
If even a sliver of the hull was over the line at the signal, the boat has not yet started: she must return.

RRS 2025-2028 · Definitions: Start · p. 11

A boat *starts* when, her hull having been entirely on the pre-start side of the starting line at or after her starting signal, and having complied with rule 30.1 if it applies, any part of her hull crosses the starting line from the pre-start side to the course side.

29.1**Individual recall**

Flag X: anyone over the line at the start returns, keeping clear of everyone who is not returning.



- 1 Starting signal. Blue is already over the line – on the course side. The committee displays flag X: individual recall.
- 2 Blue returns. Until her hull is completely on the pre-start side, she keeps clear of everyone who is not returning.
- 3 Blue is entirely below the line – now she can start properly.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 29.1 · p. 24

When at a boat's starting signal any part of her hull is on the course side of the starting line or she must comply with rule 30.1, the race committee shall promptly display flag X with one sound (1). The flag shall be displayed until the hull of each such boat has been completely on the pre-start side of the starting line or one of its extensions, and until all such boats have complied with rule 30.1 if it applies, but no later than four minutes after the starting signal or one minute before any later starting signal, whichever is earlier. If rule 29.2, 30.3 or 30.4 applies this rule does not.



Blue — returning to the pre-start side: keeps clear of everyone under rule 21.1.



Yellow — started correctly.

The committee displays flag X with one sound promptly after the start and keeps it up until all such boats have returned — but no longer than 4 minutes after the start or 1 minute before the next start.

Didn't hear the sound? That's on you: times are taken from the flags.

See also: [21](#), [29.2](#), [30.1](#)

29.2

General recall

First Substitute: the start is cancelled for the whole class.

If the committee cannot identify the boats that were over the line, or there was an error in the procedure, it signals a general recall: First Substitute with two sounds.

A new warning signal for the recalled class is made 1 minute after the flag is removed (with one sound).

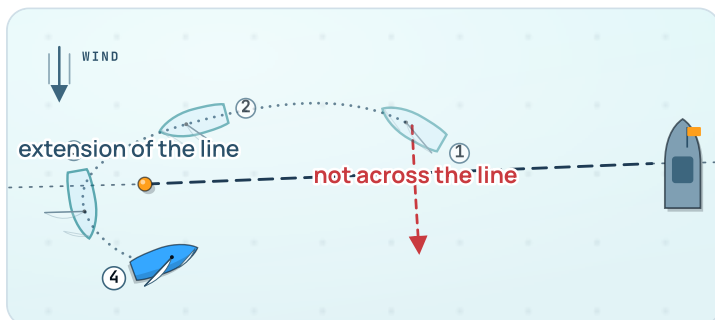
RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 29.2 · p. 24

When at the starting signal the race committee is unable to identify boats that are on the course side of the starting line or to which rule 30 applies, or there has been an error in the starting procedure, the race committee may signal a general recall (display the First Substitute with two sounds). The warning signal for a new start for the recalled class shall be made one minute after the First Substitute is removed (one sound), and the starts for any succeeding classes shall follow the new start.

See also: [29.1](#), [30.2](#)

30.1**Flag I: return across an extension of the line**

Over the line in the last minute? Come back only the long way – across an extension of the line.



- ① Flag I is displayed. A minute before the start, Blue finds herself on the course side.
- ② She may not dip back across the line itself: the only way back is across one of its extensions – here, beyond the pin.
- ③ Blue has gone around the pin and returned to the pre-start side across the extension of the line.
- ④ Now she can start.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 30.1 · p. 25

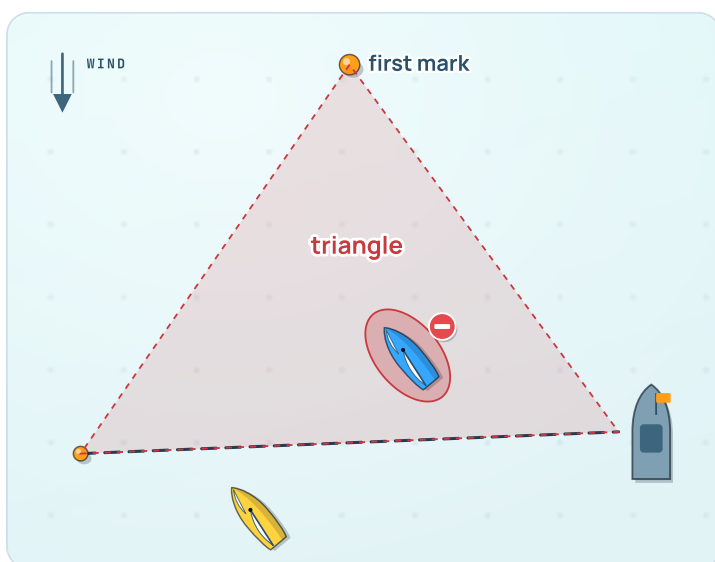
If flag I has been displayed, and any part of a boat's hull is on the course side of the starting line or one of its extensions during the last minute before her starting signal, she shall sail across an extension so that her hull is completely on the pre-start side ② before she starts.

This is not a scoring penalty but a route: until the boat has gone around an end of the line and is entirely on the pre-start side, she has not started.

See also: **29.1, 21**

30.2**Flags Z, U and black: the forbidden triangle**

In the last minute – no part of the hull inside the triangle “ends of the line – first mark”.



Flags Z, U and black forbid any part of the hull being in the triangle “ends of the starting line – first mark” during the last minute before the start. Yellow is below the line – fine. Blue is inside the triangle – a breach.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rules 30.2-30.4 · p. 25

If flag Z has been displayed, no part of a boat's hull shall be in the triangle formed by the ends of the starting line and the first *mark* during the last minute before her starting signal. If a boat breaks this rule and is identified, she shall receive, without a hearing, a 20% Scoring Penalty calculated as stated in rule 44.3©. She shall be penalized even if the race is restarted or resailed, but not if it is *postponed* or *abandoned* before the starting signal. If she is similarly identified during a subsequent attempt to start the same race, she shall receive an additional 20% Scoring Penalty.

If flag U has been displayed, no part of a boat's hull shall be in the triangle formed by the ends of the starting line and the first *mark* during the last minute before her starting signal. If a boat breaks this rule and is identified, she shall be disqualified without a hearing, but not if the race is restarted or resailed.

If a black flag has been displayed, no part of a boat's hull shall be in the triangle formed by the ends of the starting line and the first *mark* during the last minute before her starting signal. If a boat breaks this rule and is identified, she shall be disqualified without a hearing, even if the race is restarted or resailed, but not if it is *postponed* or *abandoned* before the starting signal. If a general recall is signalled or the race is *abandoned* after the starting signal, the race committee shall display her sail number before the next warning signal for that race, and if the race is restarted or resailed she shall not sail in it. If she does so, her disqualification shall not be excluded in calculating her series score.



Blue – in the triangle in the last minute – penalty without a hearing.

See also: 30.1, 29.2

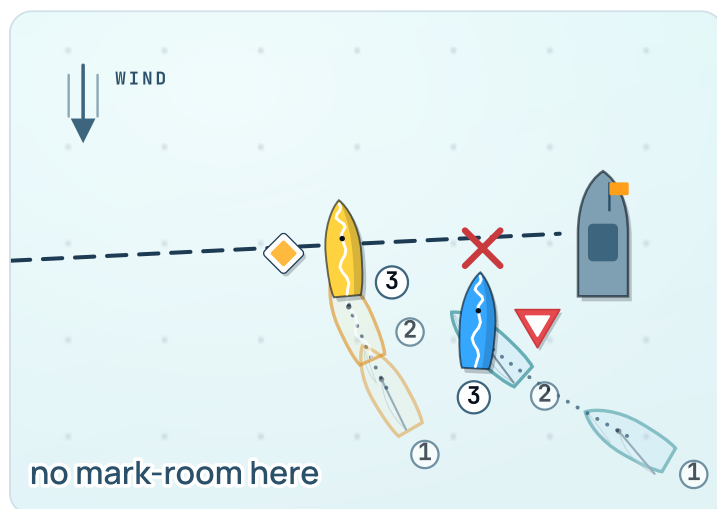
The triangle is the same — the consequences differ.

	Z (30.2)	U (30.3)	BLACK (30.4)
Penalty	20% penalty under rule 44.3©, without a hearing	disqualification (UFD), without a hearing	disqualification (BFD), without a hearing
If the race is restarted or resailed	penalty stands	penalty is cancelled	penalty stands , and the boat may not sail in the restart of that race
If the race is postponed or abandoned before the starting signal	not applied	not applied	not applied
Caught again in the same race	another 20%	—	—

11

Barging at the committee boat

There is no mark-room at a starting mark: the leeward boat may close the gap.



- 1 Before the start, Blue comes in from above, to windward, straight into the gap between Yellow and the committee boat.
- 2 Yellow is the leeward boat and has right of way. The committee boat is a starting mark, and nobody gets mark-room at it.
- 3 Yellow luffs and closes the gap — she may, as long as Blue has room to keep clear. All Blue can do is go head to wind and wait.

RRS 2025-2028 · Section C preamble
· p. 18

Section C rules do not apply between boats when the *mark* or *obstruction* referred to in those rules is a starting *mark* surrounded by navigable water (2) or its anchor line, from the time the boats are approaching it to *start* until they have left it astern.



Blue — windward: she has no right to force into the gap.



Yellow — leeward: may luff and close the gap, giving Blue room to keep clear (16.1).

The mark-room rules (Section C) do not apply at a starting mark surrounded by navigable water — from the time the boats are approaching it to start until they have left it astern.

Before the starting signal Yellow has no *proper course*, so the 17 limit does not apply to her: she may luff all the way to head to wind.



Common mistake. “Room at the mark!” at the start. At a committee boat that is a starting mark there is no mark-room. Rules 11 and 16.1 decide.

See also: 11, 16.1, 17

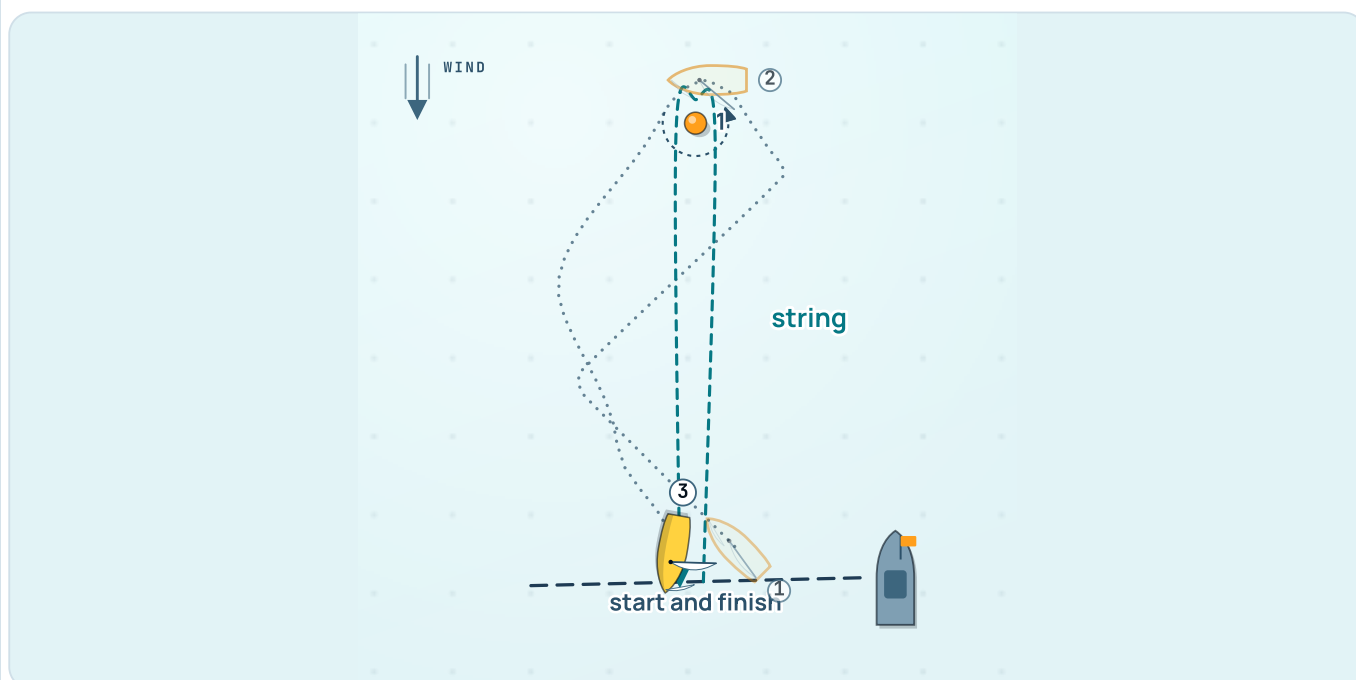
On the course

Sail the course, don't touch a mark, finish correctly and understand what the committee boat is signalling – that's all you need between the start and the finish.

28

Sailing the course: the string rule 2025

Pull an imaginary string taut along the boat's track: it must pass each mark on the required side and in the correct order.



- ① Start. The course: to mark 1, leave it to port, and back to the finish.
- ② The beat – zigzag as you like. The mark is rounded anticlockwise: it is to port of the boat.
- ③ Finish. Pull the string taut along the track: if it passes each mark on the required side and in the correct order, the course has been sailed.

RRS 2025-2028 • Rule 28 and Definitions: Sail the Course • p. 24

28.1 A boat shall *sail the course*.

28.2 A boat may correct any errors in *sailing the course*, provided she has not *finished*.

A boat *sails the course* when

- (a) she *starts*;
- (b) a string representing her track until she finishes, when drawn taut ③,
 - (1) passes each *mark* of the course for the race on the required side and in the correct order (including the starting *marks*),
 - (2) touches each *mark* designated in the sailing instructions to be a rounding *mark*, and
 - (3) passes between the *marks* of a gate from the direction of the course from the previous *mark*; and then

(c) she *finishes*.

A *mark* that does not begin, bound or end the leg the boat is sailing does not have a required side.

A boat *sails the course* when she starts; a string representing her track until she finishes, when drawn taut, passes each mark on the required side and in the correct order (including the starting marks), touches each mark designated in the sailing instructions as a rounding mark, and passes between the marks of a gate from the direction of the previous mark; and then she finishes.

A mark that does not begin, bound or end the leg you are sailing may be left on either side.

An error in sailing the course can be corrected until the boat has finished: go back and “unwind” the string.



Change in 2025. Rule 28 has shrunk to a single sentence, “A boat shall sail the course” — all the substance has moved into the definition “Sail the Course”.

See also: 31, *finish*

Finish

When a boat has finished 2025

As soon as any part of the hull crosses the finishing line from the course side.



- 1 Yellow approaches the finish from the course side.
- 2 The bow touches the line — that's it, Yellow has finished.
- 3 She can peel away at once: crossing the line completely is not required. The main thing is not to interfere with boats still racing.

RRS 2025-2028 · Definitions: Finish · p. 8

..... new in 2025

A boat *finishes* when, after her starting signal, any part of her hull crosses the finishing line from the course side (2). However, she has not *finished* if after crossing the finishing line she

- (a) takes a penalty under rule 44.2,
- (b) corrects an error in *sailing the course* made at the line, or
- (c) continues to *sail the course*.

After *finishing* she need not cross the finishing line completely. (3) The sailing instructions may change the direction in which boats are required to cross the finishing line to *finish*.

After finishing, the boat need not cross the line completely. But she has not finished if, after crossing the line, she takes a penalty under rule 44.2, corrects an error in sailing the course made at the finishing line, or continues to sail the course.

The sailing instructions may change the direction in which the finishing line must be crossed.

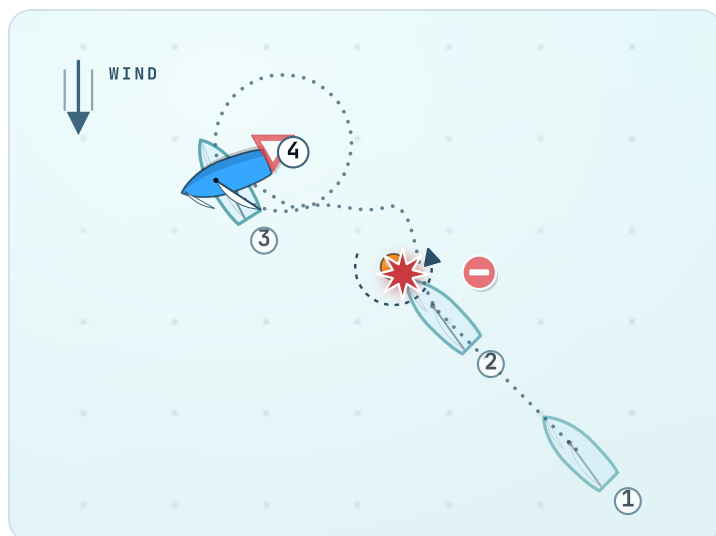
 **Change in 2025.** Finishing now counts after the boat's **starting signal** (rather than after she starts), and it is stated explicitly: she need not cross the line completely.

See also: 28, 44

31

Touching a mark

Touched a mark – one penalty turn.



- 1 Blue approaches the mark on starboard tack, too close.
- 2 She touches the mark.
- 3 Blue gets clear of other boats and makes one turn: a tack and a gybe.
- 4 Penalty taken – Blue carries on racing.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 31 · p. 26

While *racing*, a boat shall not touch ② a starting mark before *starting*, a mark that begins, bounds or ends the leg of the course on which she is sailing, or a finishing mark after *finishing*.



Blue – while making the turn, keeps clear of everyone not doing so (21).

You may not touch a starting mark before starting, a mark that begins, bounds or ends the leg you are sailing, or a finishing mark after finishing.

The penalty is a One-Turn Penalty (44): one tack and one gybe. If a Part 2 rule was also broken in the same incident, no separate turn is needed for touching the mark.

See also: 44, 28

Signals on the course

S – course shortened

Finish at a rounding mark: between it and the staff displaying flag S; at a gate: between the gate marks. Rule 32.

two sounds



C – next leg changed

The next mark has been moved. A bearing or one of the flags below is shown with it. Rule 33.

repetitive



**Green triangle**

With C: the next leg has been changed to starboard.

**Red rectangle**

With C: the next leg has been changed to port.



«-»

With C: the leg has been shortened.



«+»

With C: the leg has been lengthened.

**M – replacement mark**

The object displaying this flag replaces a missing mark. Rule 34. repetitive

**Blue flag**

The staff or vessel displaying it is one end of the finishing line.

**Orange flag**

The staff or vessel displaying it is one end of the starting line.

Postponement and abandonment

**AP – races postponed**

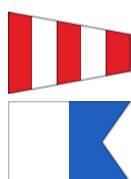
Races not yet started are postponed. The warning signal will be made 1 minute after AP is removed.

↑ two · ↓ one

**AP over H**

Postponed; further signals ashore.

↑ two

**AP over A**

Postponed. No more racing today.

↑ two

**N – races abandoned**

All races in progress are abandoned: return to the starting area. Rules 27.3 and 32.

↑ three · ↓ one

**N over H**

Abandoned; further signals ashore.

↑ three

**N over A**

Abandoned. No more racing today.

↑ three

L

Ashore: a notice to competitors has been posted. Afloat: come within hail or follow this vessel.

↑ one

Y – life jackets

Wear personal flotation devices. Rule 40.

↑ one

V – safety

Monitor the committee communication channel: search and rescue instructions to follow. Rule 37.

↑ long

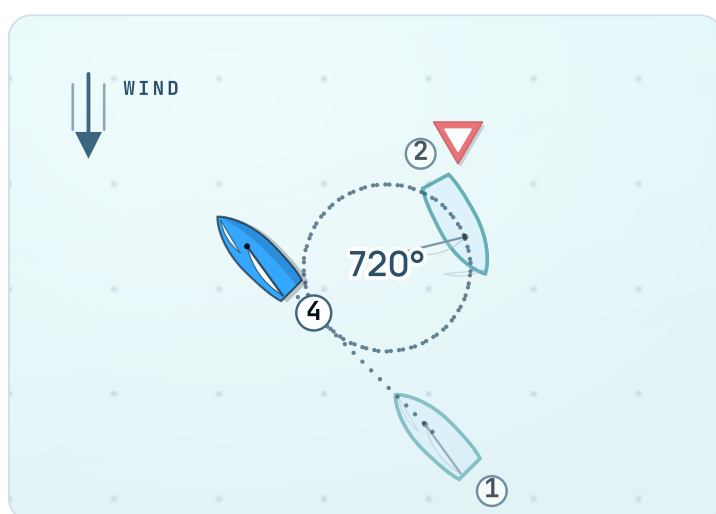
Penalties and fair play

Broke a rule? No disaster: the rules let you pay for it right there on the water, with penalty turns. The key is to do it at once and do it right. Alongside are the rules without which racing stops being a sport: safety, fair sailing and the ban on “rowing with the sail”.

44

Turns penalties

Broke a Part 2 rule — two turns. Touched a mark — one. Right after the incident, in the same direction.



- 1 Right after the incident, Blue gets well clear of other boats.
- 2 First turn: a tack, then a gybe.
- 3 Second turn — in the same direction, without a pause.
- 4 Two turns done — penalty taken, Blue carries on racing.

RRS 2025-2028 • Rules 44.1, 44.2 • p. 31

A boat may take a Two-Turns Penalty when she may have broken one or more rules of Part 2 in an incident while *racing*. She may take a One-Turn Penalty when she may have broken rule 31. Alternatively, the notice of race or sailing instructions may specify the use of the Scoring Penalty or some other penalty, in which case the specified penalty shall replace the One-Turn and the Two-Turns Penalty. However,

- (a) when a boat may have broken a rule of Part 2 and rule 31 in the same incident she need not take the penalty for breaking rule 31;
- (b) if the boat caused injury or serious damage or, despite taking a penalty, gained a significant advantage in the race or series by her breach her penalty shall be to retire.

After getting well clear of other boats as soon after the incident as possible, a boat takes a One-Turn or Two-Turns Penalty by promptly making the required number of turns in the same direction (3), each turn including one tack and one gybe (2). When a boat takes the penalty at or near the finishing line, her hull shall be completely on the course side of the line before she *finishes*.



Blue — while taking a penalty, keeps clear of everyone not taking one (21).

How to do it (44.2): as soon as possible after the incident, get well clear of other boats and promptly make the required number of turns in the same direction. Each turn is one tack and one gybe.

If the penalty is taken at or near the finishing line, the hull must be completely back on the course side before the boat finishes.

The notice of race or sailing instructions may replace the turns with a Scoring Penalty or some other penalty.

See also: 43, 31, 21

Who takes turns, and when

WHAT HAPPENED	WHAT TO DO	RULE
May have broken a Part 2 rule	Two-Turns Penalty	44.1
May have touched a mark (rule 31)	One-Turn Penalty	44.1
Both Part 2 and touching a mark in one incident	only for Part 2 — two turns	44.1(a)
Caused injury or serious damage	turns won't do — retire	44.1(b)
Gained a significant advantage despite the turns	retire	44.1(b)
You are exonerated under rule 43	nothing: no penalty needed	43.2

44.3

Scoring Penalty — yellow flag 2025

Only if specified in the notice of race or sailing instructions: display a yellow flag instead of turns.

A boat takes the penalty by displaying a yellow flag at the first reasonable opportunity after the incident, keeps it displayed until finishing, and at the finish calls the committee's attention to it, saying who was involved in the incident.

If the amount is not stated, the penalty is 20% of the DNF score, rounded to the nearest tenth (0.05 rounds up). It cannot be worse than the DNF score. Other boats' scores do not change.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 44.3 · p. 31

..... new in 2025

- (a) If specified in the notice of race or sailing instructions, a boat takes a Scoring Penalty by displaying a yellow flag at the first reasonable opportunity after the incident.
- (b) When a boat has taken a Scoring Penalty, she shall keep the yellow flag displayed until *finishing* and call the race committee's attention to it at the finishing line. At that time she shall also inform the race committee of the identity of the other boat involved in the incident. If this is impracticable, she shall do so at the first reasonable opportunity and within the protest time limit.
- (c) The race score for a boat that takes a Scoring Penalty shall be the score she would have received without that penalty, made worse by the number of points stated in the notice of race or sailing instructions. When the number of points is not stated, the penalty shall be 20% of the score for Did Not *Finish*, rounded to the nearest tenth of a point (0.05 rounded upward). The scores of other boats shall not be changed; therefore, two boats may receive the same score. However, the penalty shall not cause the boat's score to be worse than the score for Did Not *Finish*.



Change in 2025. The penalty is counted in **points**, not places, and rounded to a **tenth** of a point. And it is stated explicitly: this penalty is available only when specified in the notice of race or sailing instructions.

43

Exoneration

If you were compelled to break a rule, you are exonerated and need not take turns.

- (a) A boat compelled to break a rule by another boat's breach is exonerated.
- (b) A boat sailing within the room or mark-room she is entitled to is exonerated for breaking Section A, rule 15, 16 or 31, if it happened because of the boat required to give her that room.
- © A right-of-way boat (or one sailing within the room she is entitled to) is exonerated for breaking rule 14 if the contact caused no damage or injury.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 43 · p. 30

43.1

- (a) When as a consequence of breaking a *rule* a boat has compelled another boat to break a *rule*, the other boat is exonerated for her breach.
- (b) When a boat is sailing within the *room* or *mark-room* to which she is entitled and, as a consequence of an incident with a boat required to give her that *room* or *mark-room*, she breaks a rule of Section A of Part 2, rule 15, 16, or 31, she is exonerated for her breach.
- (c) A right-of-way boat, or one sailing within the *room* or *mark-room* to which she is entitled, is exonerated for breaking rule 14 if the contact does not cause damage or injury.

43.2 A boat exonerated for breaking a *rule* need not take a penalty and shall not be penalized for breaking that *rule*.

See also: 14, 16.1, 44

Rule 42: only wind and water

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 42.1 · p. 29

Except when permitted in rule 42.3 or 45, a boat shall compete by using only the wind and water to increase, maintain or decrease her speed. Her crew may adjust the trim of sails and hull, and perform other acts of seamanship, but shall not otherwise move their bodies to propel the boat.

[...] 42.2 and 42.3 – in the table below

A boat increases, maintains and decreases her speed **using only the wind and water**. The crew may trim the sails and hull and perform other acts of seamanship, but may not “row” with their bodies. The list of prohibitions is not exhaustive: even what it does not name may break the basic rule 42.1.

What is allowed and what is not

ACTION	ALLOWED?	RULE
Pumping – repeated fanning of a sail by pulling in and releasing it, or by body movement	no	42.2(a)
Rocking – repeated rolling of the boat from side to side	no	42.2(b)
Ooching – sudden forward body movement, stopped abruptly	no	42.2©
Sculling – repeated forceful movement of the helm that propels the boat or prevents her from moving astern	no	42.2(d)
Repeated tacks or gybes unrelated to wind changes or tactics	no	42.2(e)
Rolling the boat to facilitate steering	yes	42.3(a)
Rolling with the body through a tack or gybe – if the speed afterwards is no greater than it would have been without it	yes	42.3(b)
To initiate surfing or planing – pulling in each sail once per wave or gust	yes	42.3©(1)
To initiate foiling – pulling in the sails any number of times	yes	42.3©(2)
Above close-hauled and nearly stopped – sculling to turn to a close-hauled course	yes	42.3(d)
Pumping to flip an inverted batten back (unless it clearly propels the boat)	yes	42.3(e)
Slowing down by repeatedly moving the helm	yes	42.3(f)
Any means – to help a person or vessel in danger	yes	42.3(g)
Getting clear after grounding or a collision – by crew force and any equipment, but not an engine (unless the sailing instructions permit it)	yes	42.3(h), (i)

P

Appendix P: on-the-water penalties for rule 42

If Appendix P applies, the on-the-water judge penalizes at once: a sound, a yellow flag, a hail.

The appendix applies only if the notice of race or sailing instructions say so. An observer who decides a boat has broken rule 42 makes a sound signal, points a yellow flag at her and clearly identifies her by hailing.

If the class rules permit pumping, rocking and ooching in strong wind, the committee displays **flag O** (permitted) or **flag R** (rule 42 applies again).

Appendix P: the penalty ladder

PENALTY DURING THE EVENT	WHAT THE BOAT MUST DO	IF SHE DOESN'T
First	Two-Turns Penalty	disqualification without a hearing
Second	retire promptly	disqualification, score not excluded
Third and subsequent	retire promptly – the score for it is still not excluded	disqualification from all races in the event with no score excluded; the protest committee considers a hearing under rule 69

O



The class rules on pumping, rocking and ooching in strong wind apply – they are permitted.
at a mark: repetitive

R



Rule 42 applies again – as usual.
at a mark: repetitive

Judge's yellow flag



With a sound and a hail: a rule 42 penalty under Appendix P.

Fundamental rules – Part 1

1

Safety

Help anyone in danger. Life-saving equipment on board, a life jacket on you when needed.

A boat, competitor or support person gives all possible help to any person or vessel in danger. On board: life-saving equipment for everyone, with one item ready for immediate use. Each competitor is individually responsible for wearing a personal flotation device adequate for the conditions.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 1 · p. 13

A boat, competitor or *support person* shall give all possible help to any person or vessel in danger.

A boat shall carry adequate life-saving equipment for all persons on board, including one item ready for immediate use, unless her class rules make some other provision. Each competitor is individually responsible for wearing a personal flotation device adequate for the conditions.

See also: [40](#), [22](#)

2**Fair Sailing**

Compete fairly and in a sportsmanlike way. Breaking this rule means a disqualification that cannot be excluded.

A boat may be penalized under this rule only if it is clearly established that the principles of fair play have been violated. The penalty is a disqualification that is not excludable.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 2 · p. 13

A boat and her owner shall compete in compliance with recognized principles of sportsmanship and fair play. A boat may be penalized under this rule only if it is clearly established that these principles have been violated. The penalty shall be a disqualification that is not excludable.

3**Decision to Race**

Whether to start a race and whether to continue racing is the boat's decision alone.

The committee may run a race in strong wind, but the responsibility for the decision to start and to stay in the race rests with the boat.

RRS 2025-2028 · Rule 3 · p. 14

The responsibility for a boat's decision to participate in a race or to continue *racing* is hers alone.

40**Personal flotation devices: flag Y** 2025

Flag Y displayed afloat means PFDs for that race; displayed ashore, for the whole day on the water.

PFDs are compulsory when flag Y is displayed afloat before or with the warning signal (for that race); when it is displayed ashore (at all times while afloat that day); or when the class rules, notice of race or sailing instructions require it.

A wet suit or dry suit is not a PFD. You may take it off briefly to change or adjust clothing or equipment.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 40 · p. 28

new in 2025

When rule 40.1 is made applicable by rule 40.2, each competitor shall wear a personal flotation device except briefly while changing or adjusting clothing or personal equipment. Wet suits and dry suits are not personal flotation devices.

Rule 40.1 applies if

- (a) flag Y was displayed afloat with one sound before or with the warning signal, while *racing* in that race;
- (b) flag Y was displayed ashore with one sound, at all times while afloat that day; or
- (c) a rule in the class rules, notice of race or sailing instructions states that it applies.



Change in 2025. Item © added: rule 40.1 also applies when the class rules, notice of race or sailing instructions say so.

41

Outside Help

No help from outside sources, with four exceptions.

Allowed: help for a crew member who is ill, injured or in danger; help from the crew of the other vessel to get clear after a collision; information freely available to all boats; unsolicited information from a disinterested source, which may be another boat in the same race.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 41 · p. 28

A boat shall not receive help from any outside source, except

- (a) help for a crew member who is ill, injured or in danger;
- (b) after a collision, help from the crew of the other vessel to get clear;
- (c) help in the form of information freely available to all boats;
- (d) unsolicited information from a disinterested source, which may be another boat in the same race.

47

Trash goes ashore

Do not intentionally put trash in the water – at all times while you are afloat.

The rule applies not only while racing but at all times while afloat, and covers both competitors and support persons. The penalty may be less than disqualification.

RRS 2025–2028 · Rule 47 · p. 32

Competitors and *support persons* shall not intentionally put trash in the water. This rule applies at all times while afloat. The penalty for a breach of this rule may be less than disqualification.

After the race: protest and scoring

If turns did not settle the incident, a protest is what remains. The procedure is simple but strict: miss one step on the water and the protest is ruled invalid. Plus, how scores are worked out when the notice of race has not invented its own system.

A protest in five steps

1 • on the water

Hail "Protest!"

At the first reasonable opportunity, so that the other boat can hear. Boats of any length. Rule 60.2(a)(1).

2 • on the water

Display a red flag

If the hull is longer than 6 m, conspicuously display a red flag at the first opportunity and keep it up while you are racing. Exactly 6 m: no flag needed.

3 • ashore

Write the protest

In writing: who is protesting, against whom, and what happened. A form is not required. Rule 60.3(a).

4 • time limit

Deliver within 2 hours

To the race office, within 2 hours after the last boat in the race finishes, unless the sailing instructions set a different time limit. Rule 60.3(b).

5 • hearing

Come and tell your side

Yourself, or a representative who was on board. The committee first checks whether the protest is valid, then hears the parties and witnesses.

afterwards**Disagree with the decision**

New evidence or a committee error: request a reopening (24 hours). A rule wrongly applied: appeal. The facts found cannot be appealed.

When neither hail nor flag is needed

If the other boat was out of hailing distance; if the incident was an error in sailing the course; if you did not see it in the racing area; if it is obvious that someone is in danger, or that injury or serious damage has resulted. Then it is enough to inform the other boat of your intention to protest at the first reasonable opportunity (in case of danger or damage, to attempt to inform her within the protest time limit). Rules 60.2(b) and 60.2©.

The numbers have changed

Part 5 has been renumbered in RRS 2025–2028. Protest requirements are now rules **60.2 and 60.3** (formerly 61), redress is **61** (formerly 62), and rules 66–68 no longer exist. Older textbooks and websites cite the old numbers.

How scoring works – Appendix A

Unless the notice of race sets its own system, the **Low Point System** applies: finishing place = points. Fewer points is better.

Appendix A essentials		
WHAT HAPPENED	POINTS	RULE
1st, 2nd, 3rd place...	1, 2, 3... by place	A4
Did not start, did not finish, retired or disqualified (DNC, DNS, OCS, DNF, RET, DSQ, UFD, BFD, NSC)	number of boats entered in the series +1	A5.2
Two boats finish tied (for example, in 3rd place)	split evenly: $(3 + 4) / 2 = 3.5$ each; the next boat gets 5	A7
Series score	total of race scores excluding the worst one , unless the notice of race says otherwise	A2.1
Disqualification for unfair sailing, misconduct, sailing a restart after a black-flag DSQ, Appendix P	DNE – cannot be excluded	90.3(b), A10

Scoring abbreviations (A10)

CODE	MEANING
DNC	did not start; did not come to the starting area
DNS	did not start (came to the starting area)
OCS	on the course side at her starting signal and failed to start, or broke rule 30.1
ZFP · UFD · BFD	starting penalties under flags Z, U and black
SCP	Scoring Penalty imposed
NSC	did not sail the course
DNF · RET · DSQ	did not finish · retired · disqualified
DNE	disqualification that is not excludable
RDG · DPI	redress given · discretionary penalty imposed

Do not switch off the tracker – new rule 56.3

If the notice of race, sailing instructions or class rules require an AIS transponder or a tracking device on board, it **must not be turned off** or its effectiveness intentionally reduced. This applies to the phone running RegattaLens on board too: the race track is also a record of what happened on the water, and it may come in handy at a protest hearing.

What changed in 2025

The rules are reissued every four years. Here are the changes in RRS 2025–2028 that matter to a racer on the water. Tap a card to open the rule with its diagram.

18.2

The snapshot at the mark comes first

Rule 18.2 has been restructured: the moment the first boat enters the zone is now central. The tacking proviso has been removed from “mark-room”, and “to leave it astern” has been added.

18.3

Tacking in the zone: narrower

Now explicitly about a mark to be left to port and a boat passing from port to starboard tack.

14

Contact: three points

Avoid contact, do not cause contact between other boats, and do not cause a boat to hit an object.

17

No more rule 13 proviso

The sentence about an overlap that began while the windward boat was keeping clear under rule 13 has been deleted.

19

Obstruction: choice of side and room

When changing course to choose a side, the right-of-way boat gives the other room to keep clear. “Continuing obstruction” now has its own definition: three hull lengths of the shortest boat.

20

The hail is spelled out

The wording of the hail is fixed: “Room to tack”.

Finish**No need to cross the whole line**

A boat finishes after her starting signal, and it is now stated explicitly: she need not cross the finishing line completely.

28**Sail the course: now a definition**

Rule 28 has shrunk to a single sentence; its content has moved into the definition “Sail the Course”.

44.3**Scoring Penalty, to one decimal**

The Scoring Penalty is calculated in points, rounded to one decimal place, and is available only if the notice of race or sailing instructions say so.

40**PFDs under class rules**

Rule 40.1 also applies when the class rules, notice of race or sailing instructions say so.

56.3**Do not switch off the tracker**

If a rule requires an AIS transponder or a tracking device, it must not be turned off or its effectiveness intentionally reduced.

Part 5**Protests renumbered**

Protest requirements are rules 60.2 and 60.3; redress is rule 61. Rules 66–68 no longer exist.

Glossary

The rules speak their own language. A word in *italics* in the rule text is a term with a precise meaning from the Definitions. Here are the ones you cannot understand boat-on-boat situations without.

Tack, Starboard or Port

The tack is set by the windward side: wind on the starboard side means starboard tack.



Yellow and White are on starboard tack, Blue and Green on port. Downwind, the tack shows in the mainsail: it always lies on the leeward side.

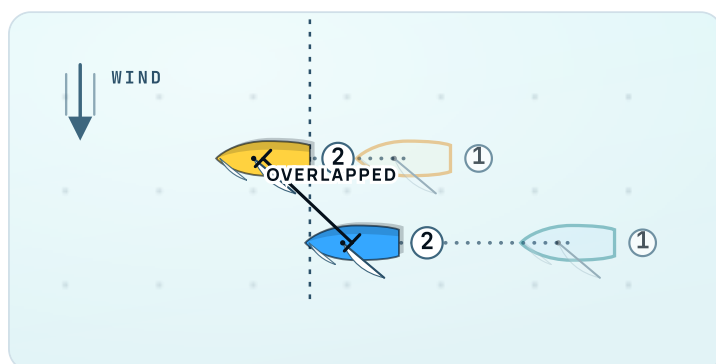
RRS 2025-2028 • Definitions: Tack, Starboard or Port • p. 12

A boat is on the *tack*, *starboard* or *port*, corresponding to her *windward* side.

Downwind, look at the mainsail: the windward side is the one opposite the mainsail. Mainsail to port means starboard tack.

Clear Astern and Clear Ahead; Overlap

Draw a line abeam through the aftermost point of a boat's hull and equipment.



1 Blue is entirely behind the line drawn abeam of Yellow through the aftermost point of her hull: Blue is **clear astern**, Yellow is **clear ahead**.

2 Blue's bow has crossed that line: the boats are **overlapped**. Which side does not matter.

RRS 2025-2028 • Definitions: Clear Astern and Clear Ahead; Overlap • p. 8

One boat is *clear astern* of another when her hull and equipment in normal position are behind a line abeam from the aftermost point of the other boat's hull ① and equipment in normal position. The other boat is *clear ahead*. They *overlap* when neither is *clear astern* ②. However, they also *overlap* when a boat between them *overlaps* both. These terms always apply to boats on the same *tack*. They apply to boats on opposite *tacks* only when rule 18 applies between them or when both boats are sailing more than ninety degrees from the true wind.

A boat is *clear astern* if all of her is behind that line of the other boat; the other is *clear ahead*. If neither is clear astern of the other, they *overlap*. They also overlap when a third boat between them overlaps both.

These terms always apply to boats on the same tack. On opposite tacks, only when rule 18 applies between them or both are sailing more than 90° from the true wind.

Leeward and Windward

The leeward side is the side away from the wind.

When sailing directly downwind or by the lee, the leeward side is the side on which the mainsail lies. Of two overlapped boats on the same tack, the leeward boat is the one on the leeward side of the other.

RRS 2025-2028 · Definitions: Leeward and Windward · p. 9

A boat's *leeward* side is the side that is or, when she is head to wind, was away from the wind. However, when sailing by the lee or directly downwind, her *leeward* side is the side on which her mainsail lies. The other side is her *windward* side. When two boats on the same *tack* *overlap*, the one on the *leeward* side of the other is the *leeward* boat. The other is the *windward* boat.

Keep Clear

The right-of-way boat can sail her course with no need to take avoiding action.

And when the boats are overlapped, she can also change course in both directions without immediately making contact.

RRS 2025-2028 · Definitions: Keep Clear · p. 9

A boat *keeps clear* of a right-of-way boat

- (a) if the right-of-way boat can sail her course with no need to take avoiding action and,
- (b) when the boats are *overlapped*, if the right-of-way boat can also change course in both directions without immediately making contact.

Zone

A circle of three hull lengths around the mark – measured by the boat nearer to it.

A boat is in the zone when any part of her hull is in the zone.

RRS 2025–2028 · Definitions: Zone · p. 12

The area around a *mark* within a distance of three hull lengths of the boat nearer to it. A boat is in the *zone* when any part of her hull is in the *zone*.

Room

The space a boat needs to manoeuvre promptly in a seamanlike way in the existing conditions.

It includes space to comply with her obligations under the rules of Part 2 and rule 31.

RRS 2025–2028 · Definitions: Room · p. 10

The space a boat needs in the existing conditions, including space to comply with her obligations under the rules of Part 2 and rule 31, while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way.

Mark-Room

Room to sail to the mark, to round or pass it on the required side, and to leave it astern.

To sail to it – when her proper course is to sail close to it.

RRS 2025–2028 · Definitions: Mark-Room · p. 9

..... new in 2025

Room for a boat

- (a) to sail to the *mark* when her *proper course* is to sail close to it,
- (b) to round or pass the *mark* on the required side, and
- (c) to leave it astern.

Proper Course

The course a boat would sail to complete the leg as soon as possible if the other boats were not there.

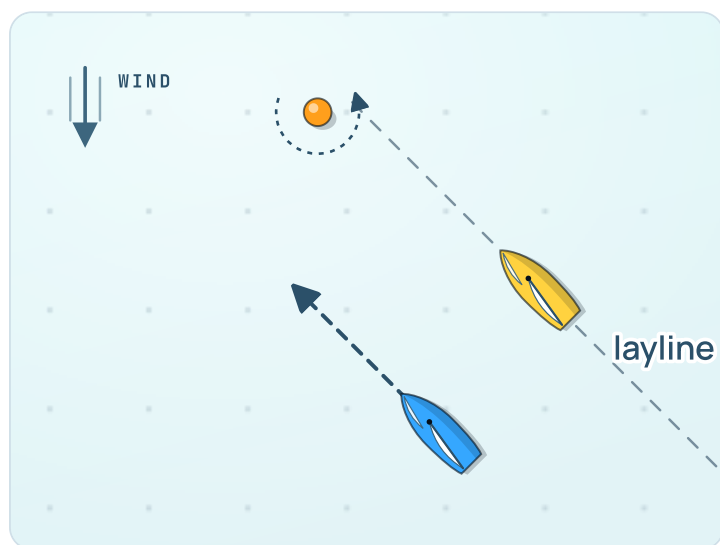
A boat has no proper course before her starting signal.

RRS 2025-2028 · Definitions: Proper Course (as changed by World Sailing, effective 1 January 2025) · p. 10

A course a boat would choose in order to *sail the course* as quickly as possible in the absence of the other boats referred to in the rule using the term. A boat has no *proper course* before her starting signal.

Fetching

A boat is fetching a mark when she can pass to windward of it and leave it on the required side without changing tack.



Yellow is *fetching* the mark: without changing tack she will pass to windward of it and leave it on the required side. Blue is below the layline – she still needs to tack.

RRS 2025-2028 · Definitions: Fetching · p. 8

A boat is *fetching* a mark when she is in a position to pass to windward of it and leave it on the required side without changing tack.

Obstruction

An object a boat could not pass without changing course substantially if she were sailing directly towards it one hull length away; or an object that can be safely passed on only one side.

Or an object, area or line so designated in a rule. A boat racing is an obstruction to others only if they must keep clear of her or, under rule 22, avoid her.

RRS 2025-2028 · Definitions: Obstruction (as changed by World Sailing, effective 1 January 2025) · p. 9

An *obstruction* is

- (a) an object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially, if she were sailing directly towards it and one of her hull lengths from it;
- (b) an object that can be safely passed on only one side; or
- (c) an object, area or line that is so designated in a *rule*.

However, a boat *racing* is not an *obstruction* to other boats unless they are required to *keep clear* of her or, if rule 22 applies, avoid her.

Continuing Obstruction

An obstruction the boat with the shortest hull will pass alongside for at least three of her hull lengths.

Never a continuing obstruction: a vessel under way, a boat racing, or a race committee vessel that is also a mark.

RRS 2025–2028 · Definitions: Continuing Obstruction · p. 8

An *obstruction* is a *continuing obstruction* when the boat with the shortest hull referred to in the rule using the term will pass alongside it for at least three of her hull lengths. However, the following are not a *continuing obstruction*: a vessel under way, a boat *racing*, or a race committee vessel that is also a *mark*.

Mark

An object the sailing instructions require a boat to leave on a specified side, and a race committee vessel surrounded by navigable water from which the starting or finishing line extends.

Plus any object intentionally attached to them. An anchor line is not part of the mark.

RRS 2025–2028 · Definitions: Mark · p. 9

An object the sailing instructions require a boat to leave on a specified side, a race committee vessel surrounded by navigable water from which the starting or finishing line extends, and an object intentionally attached to the object or vessel. However, an anchor line is not part of the *mark*.

Racing

From her preparatory signal until she finishes and clears the finishing line and marks — or until she retires, or the race is postponed, abandoned or generally recalled.

RRS 2025–2028 · Definitions: Racing · p. 10

A boat is *racing* from her preparatory signal until she *finishes* and clears the finishing line and *marks* or retires, or until the race committee signals a general recall, *postponement* or *abandonment*.

RegattaLens

Your club's races live on the map: a phone tracker on every boat, with starts, roundings and finishes detected automatically.

This is a plain-language retelling of the rules alongside their official text, not a World Sailing interpretation. The official text is the RRS 2025–2028 (World Sailing), with the page numbers of that edition. In a dispute, the text of the RRS 2025–2028, the notice of race, the sailing instructions and the World Sailing Case Book decide.

The diagrams were drawn for this guide. Comments and corrections — admin@regattalens.pro.