



Principles

Sportsmanship, fair sailing and misconduct

A fundamental principle of sportsmanship is that when you break a rule you will promptly take a penalty, which may be to retire. You must play fairly. If you do not, or if you bring the sport into disrepute, you may be penalized severely.

Helping those in danger

You must give all possible to any person or vessel in danger.

Decision to race

Deciding whether it is safe for you to start or continue racing is for you alone, not for the people running the race.



When boats meet

A boat is on the tack, starboard or port, corresponding to her windward side. A boat's windward side is the side that is towards the wind (except when running by the lee).

On opposite tacks
The port-tack boat must keep clear.

On the same tack
The boat to windward (if overlapped) or clear astern (if not overlapped) must keep clear.

Tacking

After a boat passes head to wind, she must keep clear of other boats until she is on a close-hauled course.

Avoiding contact

A boat must avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible.

Acquiring right of way

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

Changing course

When a right-of-way boat changes course, she must give the other boat room to keep clear.

Proper course

Normally, a boat can sail any course she chooses as long as she keeps clear of other boats or gives them room when she must do so. Occasionally, the course she is allowed to sail after her starting signal is restricted by her proper course, which is a course she would sail to finish as soon as possible in the absence of the other boat.

If she obtains a leeward overlap from clear astern and within 2 lengths of another boat, she must not sail to windward of her proper course while the overlap exists.

At a mark when her proper course to the next mark is to gybe, if she has a boat overlapped outside her, she must sail that course and gybe.

Mark-Room

When the first of two boats comes within three lengths of the mark (the zone), the boat clear astern or overlapped outside at that time must give the other boat room to sail to the mark and then to round it on her proper course (mark-room).

In other cases, when boats are overlapped and one of them is in the zone, the outside boat must give the inside boat mark-room.

At a leeward mark, this rule also applies when boats are overlapped and on opposite tacks.

On opposite tacks at a windward mark

When boats are on opposite tacks, the basic rule applies and the port tack boat must keep clear. When a boat completes a tack inside the zone, and the other boat is fetching the mark, the boat that tacked must not cause the other boat either to bear away and miss the mark or to sail above close-hauled to avoid her; if the other boat gets an inside overlap, the boat that tacked must give her mark-room.

Room at an obstruction

Part 2 rule 19.2

Inside give-way boat must keep clear

Give-way boat must keep clear

Outside right-of-way boat must give room

Right-of-way boat chooses which side to pass next obstruction

Outside right-of-way boat must give room

Boat clear astern has no rights if she becomes overlapped in the gap

If boats are passing a continuing obstruction, such as a river bank, a boat clear astern may not sail between the boat ahead and the obstruction unless the gap is wide enough for her to sail between them.

When boats are overlapped, an outside boat must give an inside boat room between her and the obstruction. Another boat may also be an obstruction. If the obstruction can be passed on either side, the right-of-way leeward boat may choose which side to go and she must then allow the windward boat to pass it on the same side.

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Room to tack at an obstruction

When you are close-hauled and want to tack to avoid an obstruction, but cannot, you may hail for room. Before tacking, you must give the hailed boat time to respond. The hailed boat must either tack as soon as possible, in which case you must also tack as soon as possible, or she must reply 'You tack', in which case you must tack as soon as possible and she must give room. This rule does not apply at a starting mark surrounded by navigable water when boats are starting.

Hails "Room to tack"

Must respond either by tacking, or by hailing "You tack" and then giving room

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Turns penalties

Part 4 rule 44.2

When you break a 'when boats meet' rule (Part 2), you may exonerate yourself by sailing well clear of other boats as soon as possible and making two turns, including two tacks and two gybes. When you take the penalty at or near the finishing line, you must sail completely to the course side of the line before finishing.

When you touch a mark, you may similarly exonerate yourself by making one turn as soon as possible.

Sails well clear of other boats

Port-tack boat broke rule 10

Two turns

Boat hits a mark

One turn

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Propulsion

Part 4 rule 42

With some exceptions, you must use only the wind and water to increase, maintain or decrease your boat's speed. You may adjust the trim of the sails and the hull, and perform other acts of seamanship, but must not otherwise move your body to propel the boat.

Two of the exceptions are:

- you may move your body to exaggerate the rolling that helps the boat through a tack or a gybe provided that, immediately afterwards, your boat's speed is not greater than it would have been in the absence of the tack or gybe.
- Except on a boat to windward, when surfing (rapidly accelerating down the leeward side of a wave) or planing is possible, the boat's crew may pull the sheet and the guy of any sail in order to begin surfing or planing, but only once for each wave or gust of wind.

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Protesting and requesting redress

Part 5 rules 60, 61 and 62

If you are involved in an incident and think the other boat has broken a rule, you may protest. You must inform the other boat by shouting "Protest" at the first opportunity she can hear you. If your boat is 6 metres or longer, you must display a red flag at the first opportunity after the incident and leave it displayed for the remainder of the race. You will need to lodge the protest in writing, but you do not have to go ahead with the protest if you later change your mind.

If you feel your finishing position has been made significantly worse because the race committee (the people running the racing) has done something wrong, or because another boat broke a rule and this resulted in injury to you or your crew, or physical damage to your boat, you may be able to get redress (for example, by being given points for an estimated finishing position). You need to apply in writing to the protest committee.

Sometimes, the much simpler and quicker RYA advisory and arbitration procedures for resolving rules disputes are available.

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The race committee

Part 5 rules 25 and 26

The race committee publishes sailing instructions, runs the races and produces the results. The sailing instructions will include a description of the marks, the starting and finishing lines, and the course to be sailed.

The usual starting sequence is:

5 minutes before the start	Warning signal (the relevant class flag)
4 minutes before the start	Preparatory signal usually flag P (white square on a blue background)
1 minute before the start	Preparatory signal lowered
Start	Warning signal lowered

Each visual signal is accompanied by a sound signal.

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Recalls

Part 5 rules 28 and 29 and Definitions Finish

At the starting signal, your boat must be completely on the pre-start side of the starting line. If it is not, you must return and start correctly, keeping clear of boats that have started while you do so; otherwise you will lose your finishing place. If the race committee sees any part of a boat on the course side at the starting signal, it will display flag X (blue cross on a white background) and give a second sound signal.

If the race committee cannot identify all the boats that did not start properly, it may stop the race by displaying the "first substitute" flag (blue and yellow triangle) with two extra sound signals immediately after the starting signal.

Sailing the course

You must start, pass each mark on the required side in the correct order, and finish, so that a string representing your boat's track after starting and until finishing would, when drawn taut, lie on the required side of each mark and touch each rounding mark. You may correct any errors to comply with this rule, provided you have not already finished.

Finishing

You finish when any part of your boat, crew or equipment in the normal position, crosses the finishing line in the direction of the course from the last mark (after completing any penalties you need to take as a result of breaking rules near the finishing line).

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