



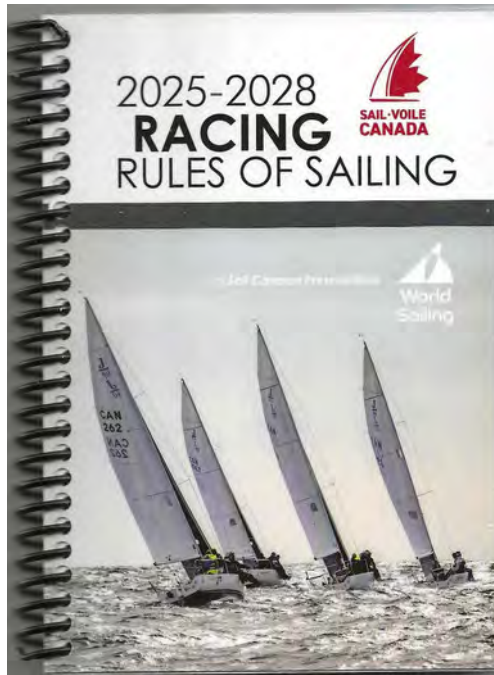
Racing Rules of Sailing (Illustrated)



"In Hot Pursuit"

2025 - 2028 Rules

The Sailor's Rosetta Stone



The Book is updated by World Sailing on January 1st the year after the Olympics and good for four years.

The RRS is comprised of 183 pages! The intent in this manual is to cover what are some of the key rules and illustrate them where possible.

The front cover " Hot Pursuit" was taken by Rudy Enzmann during an Okanagan Race. In the lead is 'Shadowfax' skipper Danny Foster and in pursuit is 'Animal' skipper Tom Naylor.

Sailing should be; Fun, Fair & Safe

Contents

- Key definitions used in the RRS
- Part 1 Fundamental Rules
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- Appendix A Key abbreviations
- The Race Start Sequence and Flags
- Appendix J Sailing Instructions & Notice of Race
- A few Examples on the Racing Rules of Sailing
- Points of Sail & Sailboat terminology
- KYC Race Course and Marks

Definitions

Some of the key definitions in the RRS are;

Start – A boat starts when; her *hull* having been entirely on the pre-start side of the starting line at or after her starting signal

Finish – A boat finishes when; after starting, any part of her *hull* crosses the finishing line from the course side. However, she has not finished if after crossing the finish line she takes a penalty under rule 44.2.

Proper course – 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.

Mark-Room - 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.

Fetching – 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.

Definitions (continued)

Clear Astern and Clear Ahead – 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's boat hull and equipment in normal position. The other boat is clear ahead.

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

Racing – A boat is racing from her preparatory signal until she finishes....

Sail the Course - A boat sails the course when

(a) she starts;

(b) a string representing her track until she finishes, when drawn taut,

(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.

Part 1 Fundamental Rules -Safety

RRS 1.1 Helping those in Danger - A boat, competitor or support person shall give all possible help to any person or vessel in danger.

RRS 1.2 Life- Saving Equipment PFDs – Must have PFDs for all persons on board!

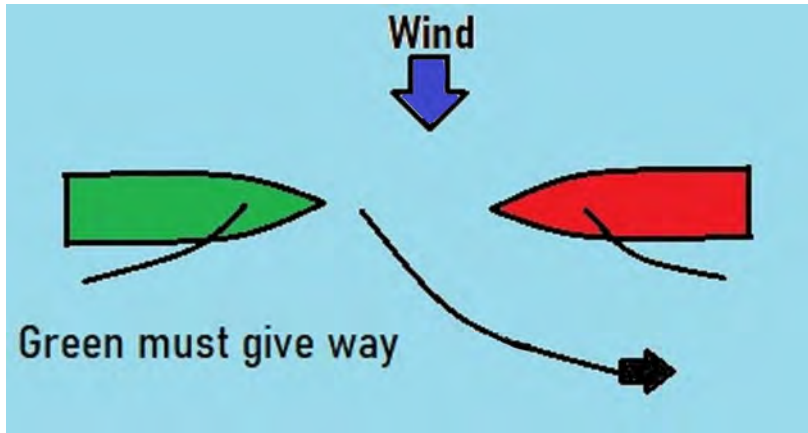
RRS 2 Fair Sailing – A boat and her owner shall compete in compliance with recognized principles of sportsmanship and fair play.....Penalty shall be disqualification.

RRS 3 Decision to Race – The responsibility for a boat's decision to participate in a race or to continue racing is hers alone.

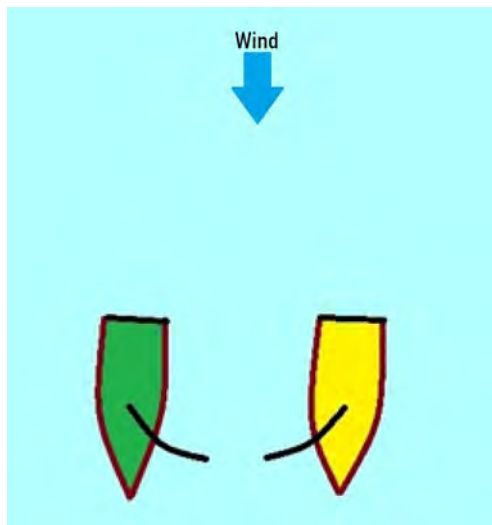
Part 2 When Boats Meet

Section A - Right of Way

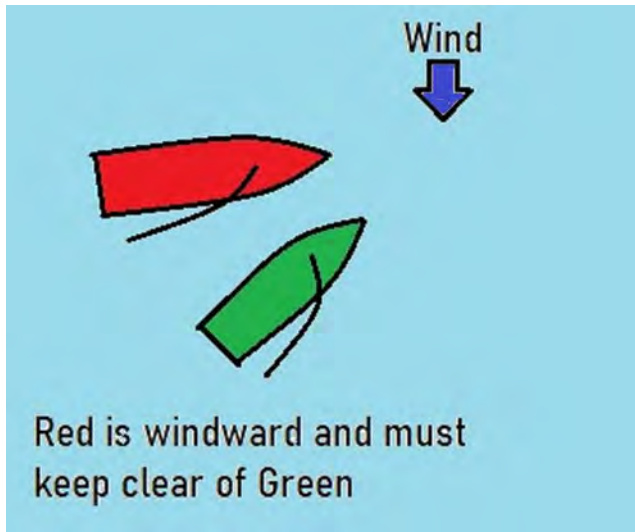
RRS10 - On Opposite Tacks – A port-tack boat shall keep clear of a starboard tack.



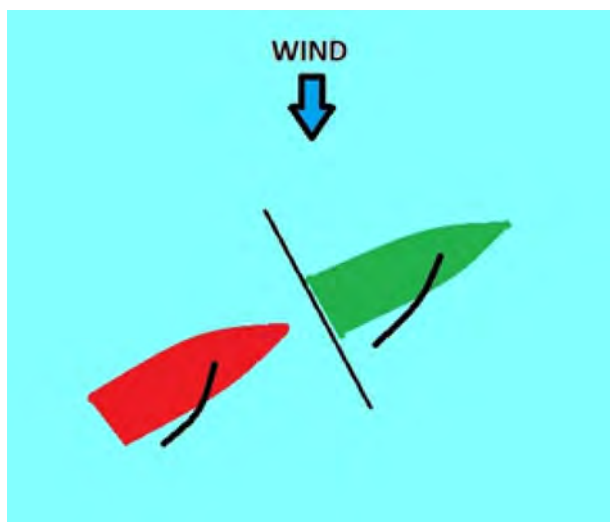
RRS10 On Opposite Tacks - Sailing by the Lee or directly downwind the side on which her mainsail lies is leeward. The green boat is starboard and has rights over yellow.



RRS11 – On Same Tacks – When overlapped a windward boat shall keep clear of a leeward boat.



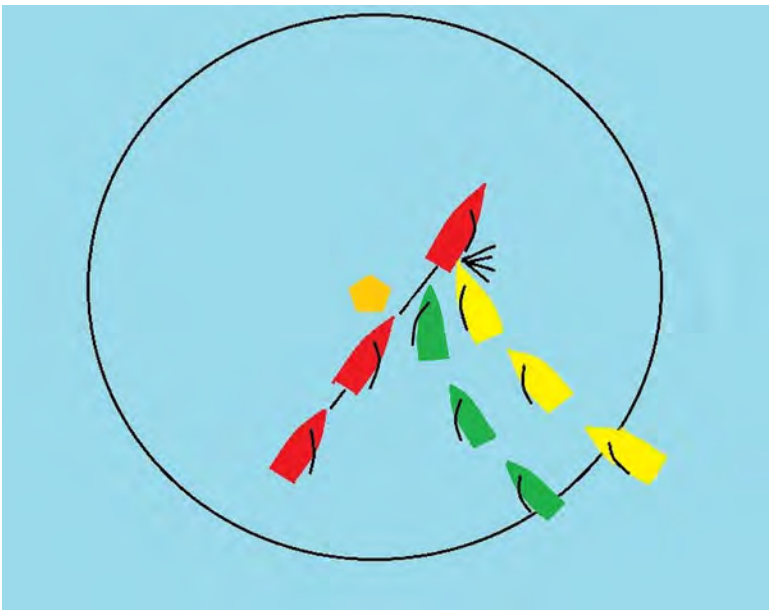
RRS12 – On the same tack, not overlapped – When boats are on the same tack and not overlapped, a boat clear astern shall keep clear of a boat clear ahead.



RRS 13 – While tacking – After a boat passes head to wind, she shall keep clear of other boats until she is on a close-hauled course.



RRS 14 - Causing Contact - Green has caused contact between Yellow and Red and broken rule 14



Part 2 When Boats Meet Section B – General Limitations

RRS 14 - Avoiding contact –

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 or giving room or mark-room.

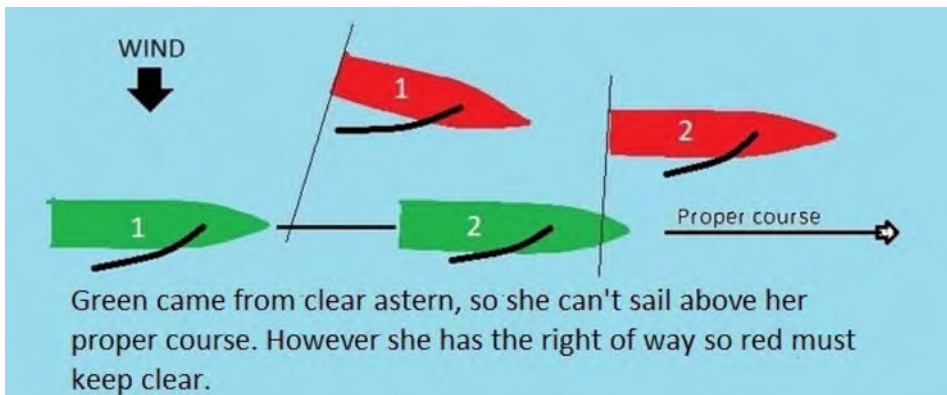
RRS 15 - Acquiring right of way – When a boat acquires right-of-way, she shall initially give the other boat room to keep clear, unless she acquires right of way because of the other boat's actions.

RRS 16.1 – Changing Course - When a right-of-way boat changes course, she shall give the other boat room to keep clear.

Part 2 When Boats Meet

Section B – General Limitations

RRS 17 – On the same tack: proper course – If a boat clear astern becomes overlapped within two of her hull lengths to leeward of a boat on the same tack, she shall not sail above her proper course while they remain on the same tack and overlapped within that distance, unless in doing so she promptly sails astern of the other boat.



Part 2 When Boats Meet

Section C - At Marks and Obstructions

Preamble – Section C rules 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.

RRS 18 Mark-Room

RRS 18.1 When Rule 18 Applies

(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) between boats on opposite tacks when the proper course at the mark is for one but not both of them 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.

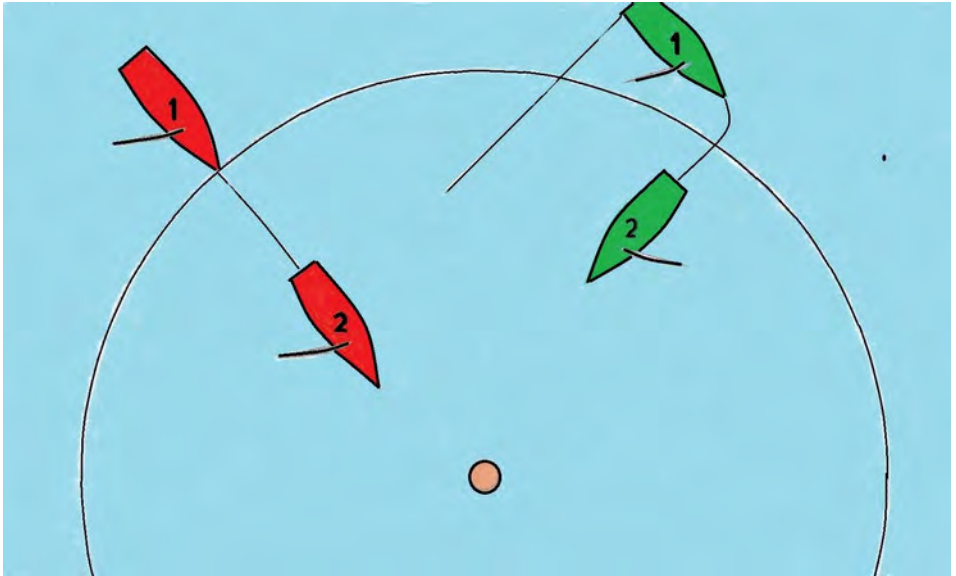
RRS 18.2 – Giving Mark-Room

- (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.

When a boat is required to give mark room she shall continue to do so even if later an overlap is broken or a new overlap begins.

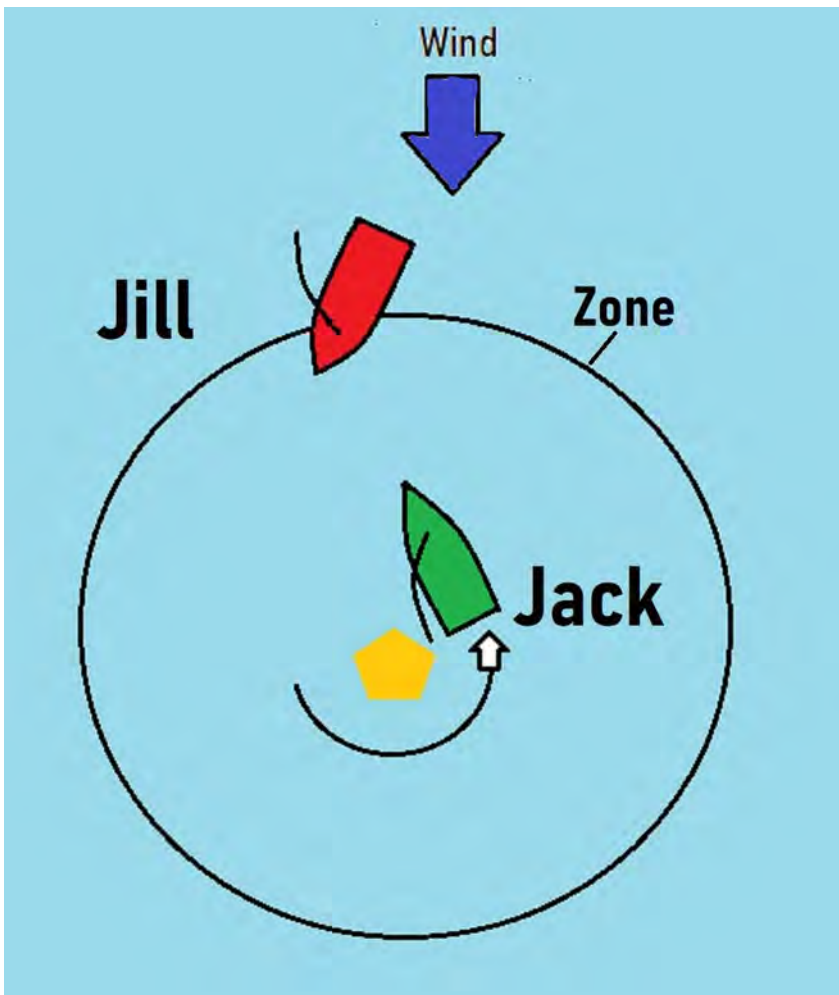
- (b) Rule 18.2 no longer applies if a boat entitled to mark-room passes head to wind or leaves the zone.
- (c) When rule 18.2(a) does not apply and the boats are overlapped, the outside boat shall give the inside boat mark room.
- (d) If a boat obtained an inside overlap from clear astern or by tacking 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(c) 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 she did not.

Mark-Room – Example 1



Under rule 18.2(a)2 green has not reached the zone therefore red has the right of way and green must give red mark-room.

Mark-Room – Example 2

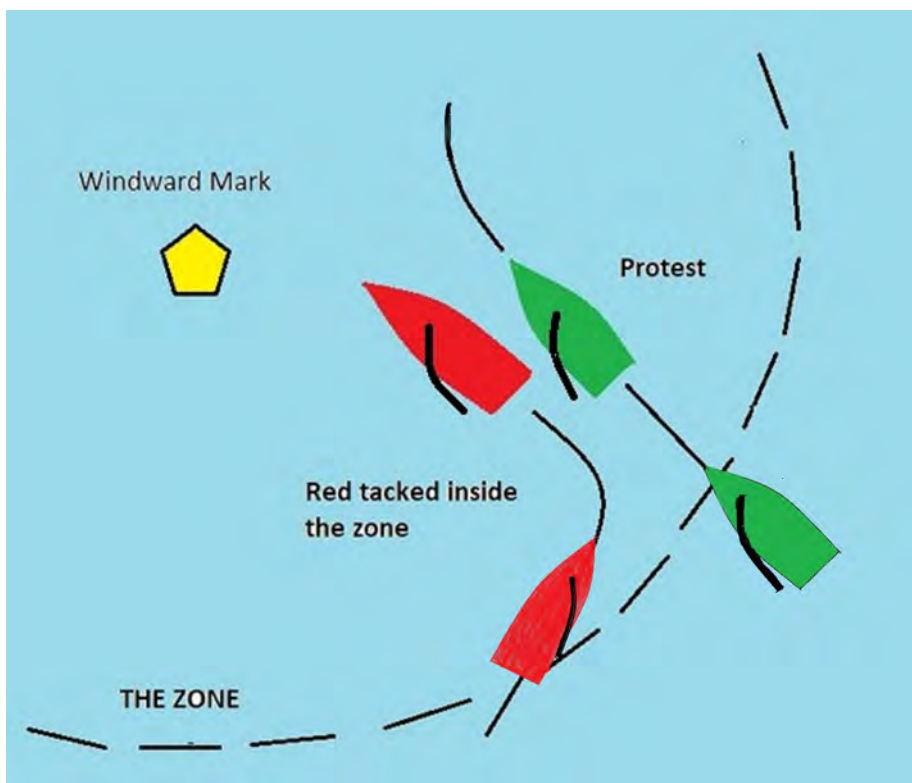


Rule 18 does not apply because Jill is approaching the mark and Jack is leaving it. Jack acquired right of way under Rule 10 when he tacked around the mark onto starboard. Jack is required by Rule 15 to initially give Jill room to keep clear.

RRS 18.3 – Tacking in the Zone

If a boat passes head to wind from port to starboard tack in the zone of a mark 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, and (b) shall give mark-room if the other boat becomes overlapped inside her.

Mark Room Example 3



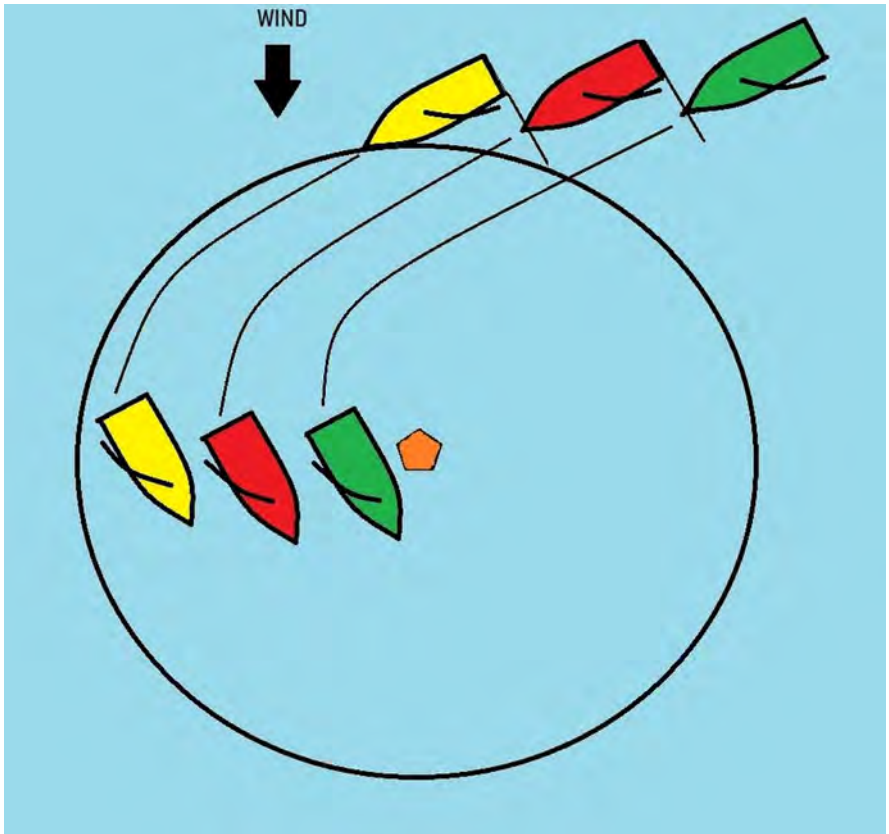
RRS 18.4 When an inside overlapped right-of-way boat must Gybe at a mark, she shall sail no further from the mark than needed to sail her course.

Mark-Room - Example 4



Adam is required by Rule 18.2(a) to give Eve *mark-room*. Adam is required by Rule 11 to *keep clear* of Eve. As a result, Eve is entitled to make a tactical approach and rounding of the *mark*. Under Rule 18.4 Eve, until she Gybes shall sail no further from the mark than needed to sail her proper course.

Mark-Room - Example 5



Yellow protests green. Is Yellow's protest valid?

No - Yellow's protest was disallowed by the Protest Committee.

Boats are overlapped when a boat between them overlaps both. Green was overlapped with Red, and Red was overlapped with Yellow. Therefore Yellow is required to give both Red and Green mark room under RRS 18.2(a)(1).

RRS 20 - Room to Tack at an Obstruction

RRS 20.1 Hailing

A boat may hail for room to tack and avoid a boat on the same tack by hailing "Room to tack". However, she shall not hail unless

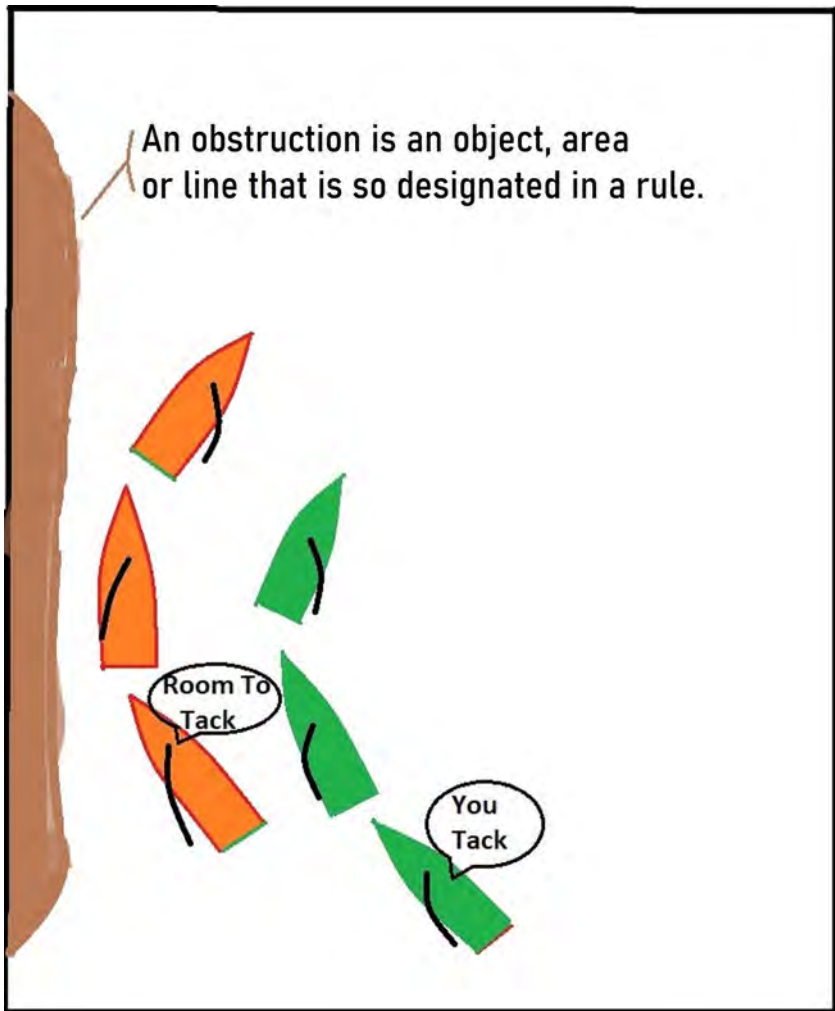
(a) she is approaching an obstruction and will soon need to make a substantial course change to avoid it safely, and

(b) she is sailing close-hauled or above.

RRS 20.2(c) Responding – A hailed boat shall respond either by tacking as soon as possible, or by immediately replying "You tack " and then giving the hailing boat room to tack and avoid her.

RRS 20.2 (d) – When a hailed boat responds, the hailing boat shall tack as soon as possible.

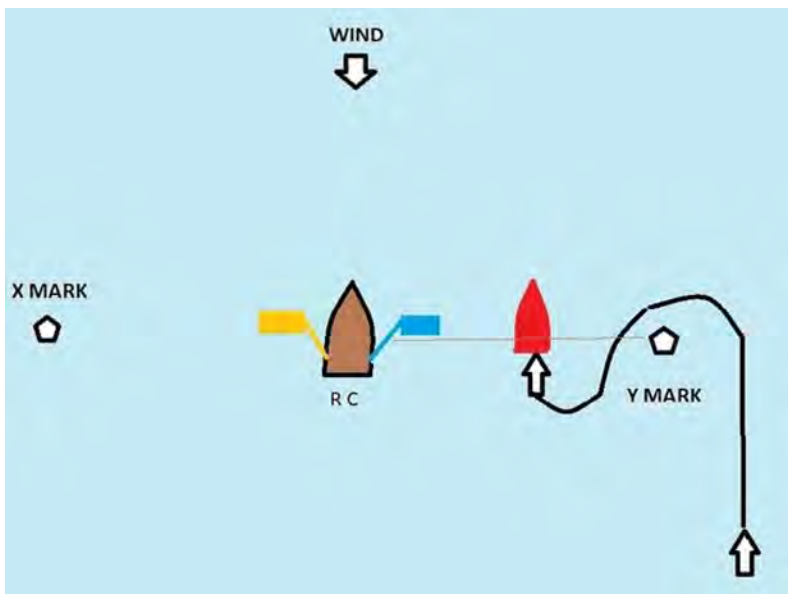
RRS 20 - Room to Tack at an Obstruction Example



- Red hails "room to tack"
- Green must tack immediately or reply "you tack"
- Red tacks as soon as possible
- Green avoids red then also tacks

Part 3 Conduct of a Race

RRS 28 Sailing the Course – Often called the “string rule” implies that an imaginary string that unreels in your wake as you sail the course must, when pulled taut, go through the start properly, touch each rounding mark on the correct side, go through gates correctly and finish through the finishing line.



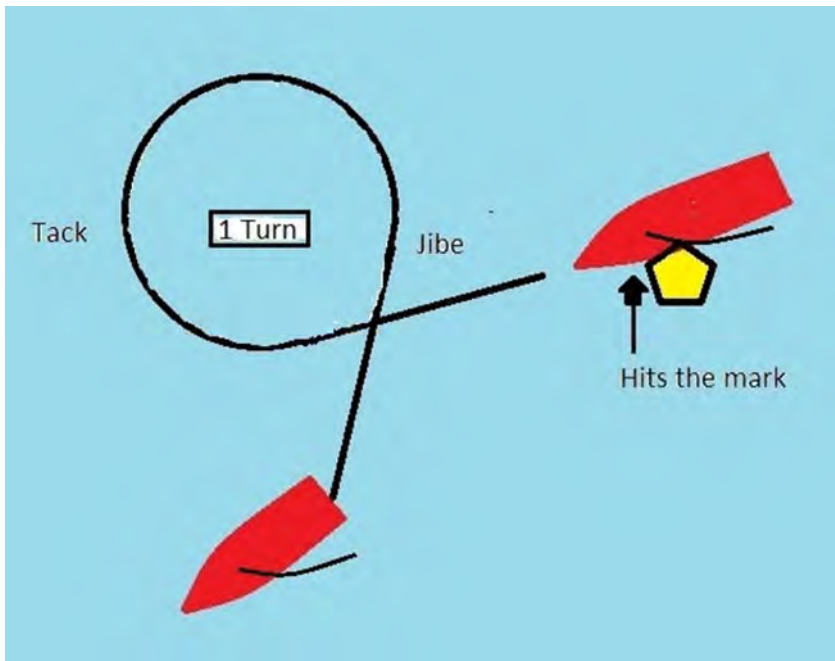
Red missed the finish line and decided to do a “dip” finish.

Did Red finish correctly?

Answer NO - Pull the string taut and it goes on the wrong side of the finish line.

RRS 31 Touching a Mark – While racing, a boat shall not touch 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.

She must take a One-Turn Penalty when she has broken rule RRS 31.

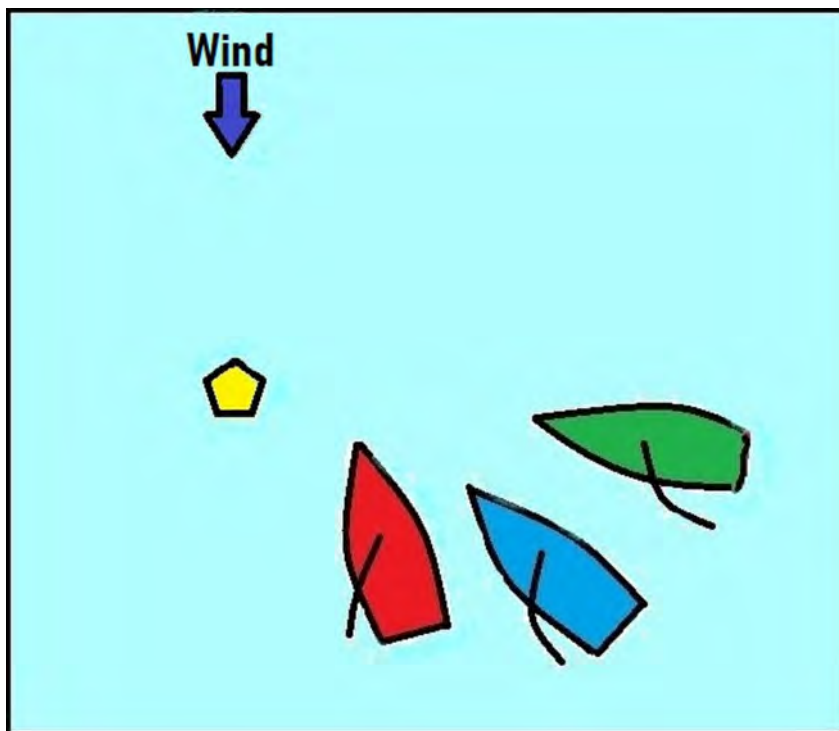


Part 4 - Other Requirements When Racing

RRS 43 Exoneration

RRS 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.

Exoneration Example



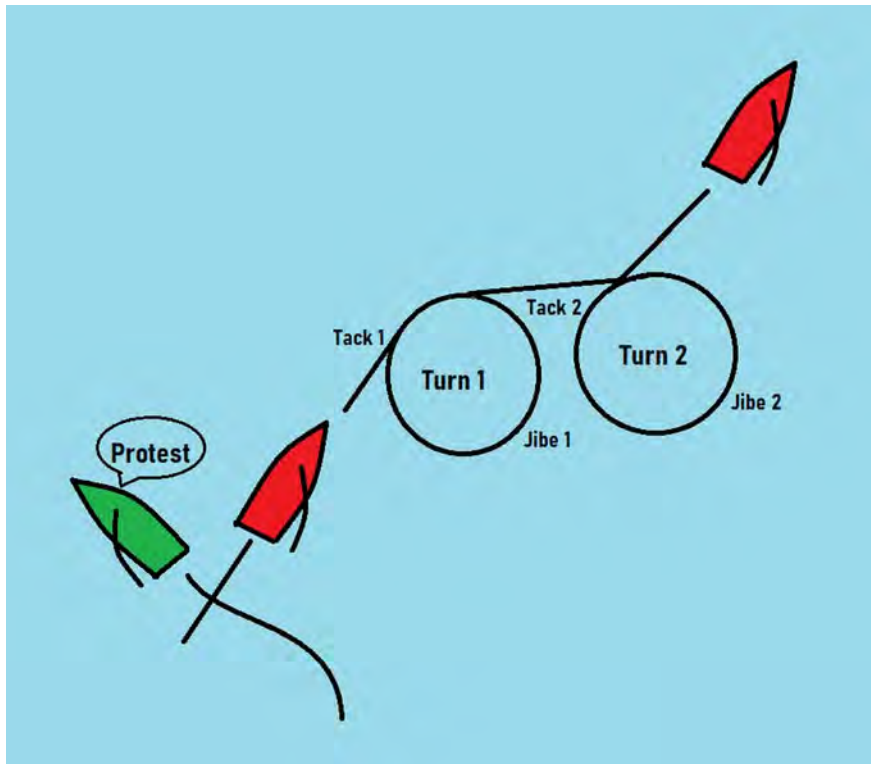
On approach to the windward mark Red has mark-room rights. However, Blue can't give her room as Green (a windward boat breaking rule 11) is boxing her in. Red hails protest to Blue. The Protest Committee found Red's Protest valid however exonerated Blue because Green caused her to break rule 18.2 giving mark-room.

RRS 44.1 Taking a penalty – 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.

(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.

RRS 44.2 One-Turn and Two-Turn Penalties – After getting well clear of other boats as ***soon after the incidents as possible***, a boat takes a One-Turn or Two-Turns Penalty by ***promptly*** making the required number of turns in the same direction, each turn including one tack and one gybe. When a boat takes the penalty at or near the finishing line, her hull shall be completely on the course side before she finishes

Taking a two turn penalty under RRS 44



Part 5 – Section A Protests...

RRS 60.1 Right to Protest

A boat or committee may protest a boat

RRS 60.2 -Intention to Protest

(a) If a protest concerns an incident observed by the protestor in the racing area;

- (1) If the protestor is a boat, she shall hail "Protest" and , if her hull length is longer than 6 meters, conspicuously display a red flag, at the first reasonable opportunity for each. She shall display the flag until she is no longer racing.

(b) However, if

- (1) the protestee is not within hailing distance at the time of the incident,
- (2) the incident was an error in sailing the course,

then the only requirement for the protestor is to inform the protestee of its intention to protest at the first resonable opportunity.

RRS 60.3 Delivering a Protest

(a) When delivered, a protest shall be in writing and identify the protestor, protestee and the incident.

(b) A protest shall be delivered to the race office within the time limit stated in the SIs.

Part 5 -Protests Section B Hearings and Decisions

**The following procedure
should be followed.**



- Introduction and identify any conflict of interest.
- Validity of the Protest.
- Protestor's story followed by Protestee's story.
- Protestee questions Protestor.
- Protestor questions Protestee.
- Protestors witnesses.
- Protestees witnesses.
- Questions by Protestee, Protestor and then by the Protest Committee.
- Final statements by Protestor and Protestee.
- All Parties are dismissed.
- Protest Committee deliberation on facts and rules.
- Parties are informed of the decision
- Statistician is notified.

Part 5 Misconduct – Section C

RRS 69.1 Obligation not to Commit Misconduct.

(a) A Competitor, boat owner or support person shall not commit an act of misconduct (on or off the water).

(b) Misconduct is: Conduct that is a breach of good manners, a breach of good sportsmanship, or unethical behavior...

Appendix A – Some key Scoring Abbreviations

- DNC – Did not compete
- DNS – Did not start
- OCS – On course side at start signal
- NSC – Did not sail course correctly
- DNF – Did not finish
- RET – Retired
- DSQ – Disqualification

Note; DNC and DNS have different scoring penalties.

See rule RRS - A5.3

Start Sequence

Class flags can be numeral pennants



Flag Signal



Warning Signal

5 minutes to start



P ↑



Preparatory up

4 minutes to start



P ↓



Preparatory down

1 minute to start



Start Signal

Race starts when
Class flag removed

Recall Signal

Flag
signal

Number of
sound signals



Individual Recall



General Recall



Individual recall - One or more boats did not start correctly and must return and do a proper start.

General recall - All boats are to return and then a new start sequence will begin. Used when there are unidentified boats over the line early.

Other things of note in the Start Sequence

- Often there is a one-minute alert (with five rapid horns) before the Warning Signal.
- In the Start Sequence the flags take precedent and the horns are a courtesy.
- No later than the Warning Signal, the RC will designate the course to be sailed.
- Boats are bound by the RRS after the Preparatory flag is displayed (goes up).
- When the Preparatory flag is removed (goes down) there is a longer duration of the horn.
- A race can be postponed any time before her Start Signal.
- In event of a Recall both flags and horns are mandatory and should be displayed and sounded within five seconds after the Start Signal.

For the Individual Recall the flag stays up for four minutes or until the boat or boats return and do a proper start.

For a General Recall you must restart that fleet right away and not at the end of a multi fleet rolling start.
- There are other starting flags that can be used besides the Preparatory flag. In Canada they usually are the **U or Black** flags. Refer to the RRS rule 30.3 & 30.4.

Other Key Flags



"L" Come within hail 🔊



"Y" Must wear life jackets 🔊



"N" Abandoned 🔊 🔊 🔊



"AP" Postponement 🔊 🔊



"S" Shortened Course 🔊 🔊



"AP" over "A"

No More Racing today 🔊 🔊

Note: Under the new rules the Abandoned signal now means that all races *in progress* are abandoned. Also a flag is "displayed" when it becomes visible. Keep it bunched in your hand until you put it up.

The Notice of Race (NoR)

(Written by the Organizing Authority)

Gives information on;

- Organizing Authority
- Schedule of events & races
- Rules
- Communication
- Eligibility and Fleet Classes
- Fees
- Venue and Courses
- Scoring and Prizes
- Insurance
- Etc

The Sailing Instructions (SI)

(Written by the Race Officer)

They are the key document governing the Race and should be read by all sailors.

They give critical information on such matters as;

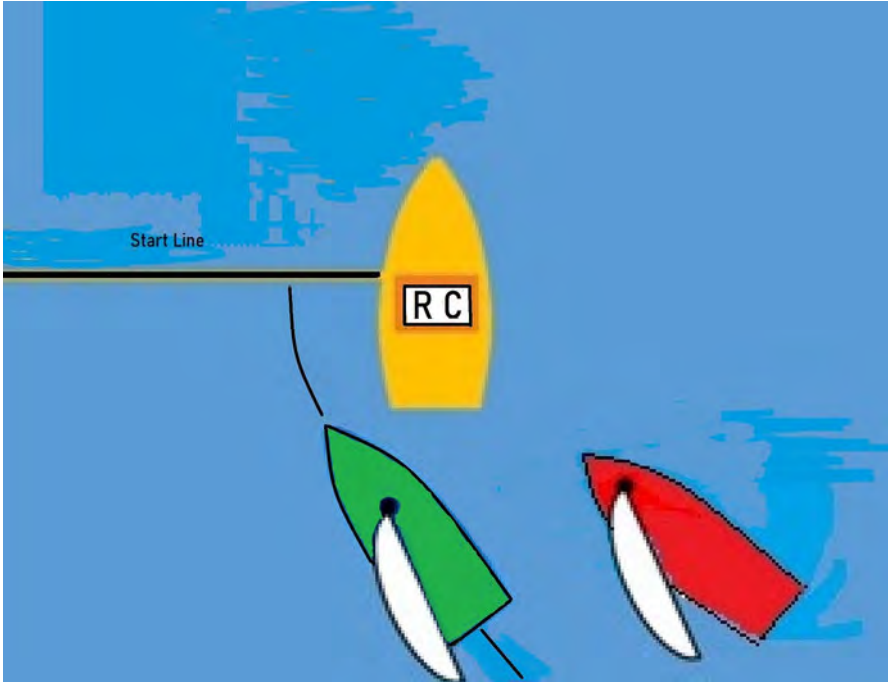
- Assignment of Fleets and their Class flags
- Schedule of races and courses
- Marks and Gates
- The Start Order & Finishing Instructions
- Time limits & Hearing Requests

The sailing instructions may consist of the instructions in RRS Appendix S, Standard Sailing Instructions, and supplementary Sailing Instructions posted to the official notice board.

Care should be taken to ensure that there is no conflict with the Notice of Race.

Quizzes on the start line

Example 1



Scenario

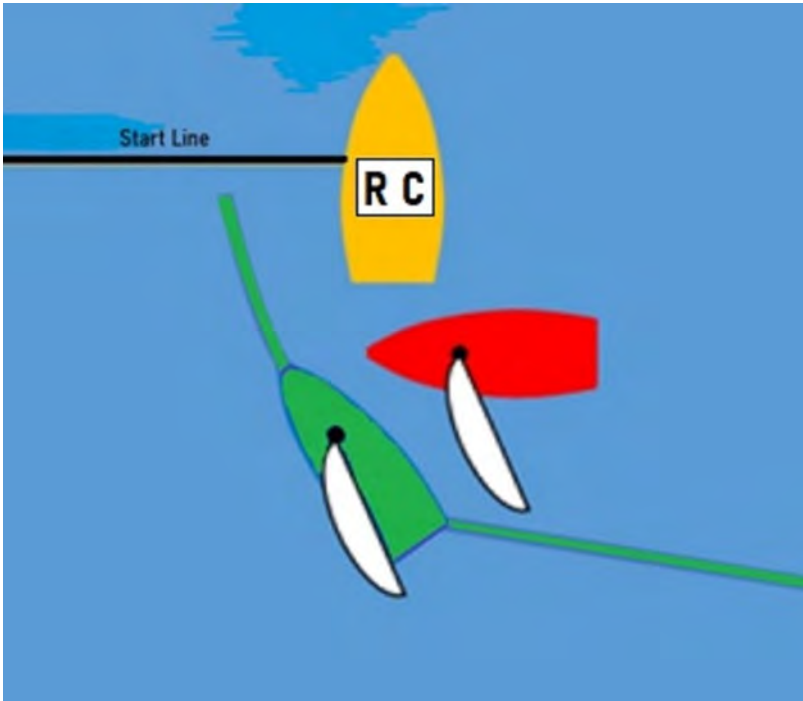
Green and Red are approaching the RC Boat on starboard. Green is ahead and heads up towards the RC boat to reach the start line close hauled. Red has to take avoiding action.

Is Red entitled to room here?

Answer – No

Preamble of Section C states that rule 18 does not apply at a starting mark surrounded by navigable water. Green may luff head to wind and close the gap between her and the RC boat provided she leaves Red enough room to keep clear of the RC boat - RRS 16.

Example 2



Scenario

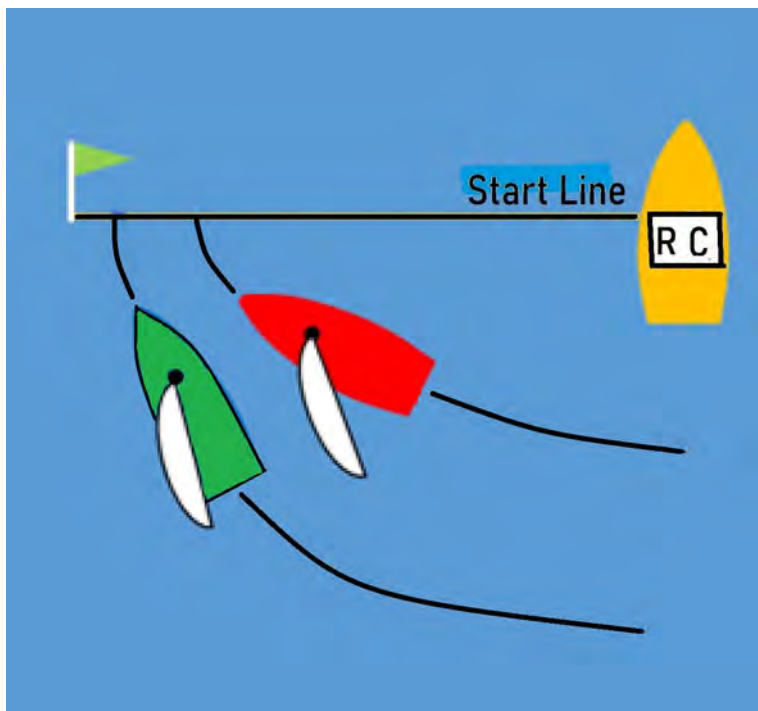
Green and Red are both reaching on starboard to the RC Boat end for the start. Just before the start signal Green luffs up to the line, cutting off Red's approach. Red protests.

Does Red have a valid protest?

Answer – YES

In accordance with rule 16.1 Green may not change her course so late, because Red by this time has no longer room to keep clear of the RC boat. Green should have luffed earlier if she wanted to close the gap.

Example 3



Scenairo

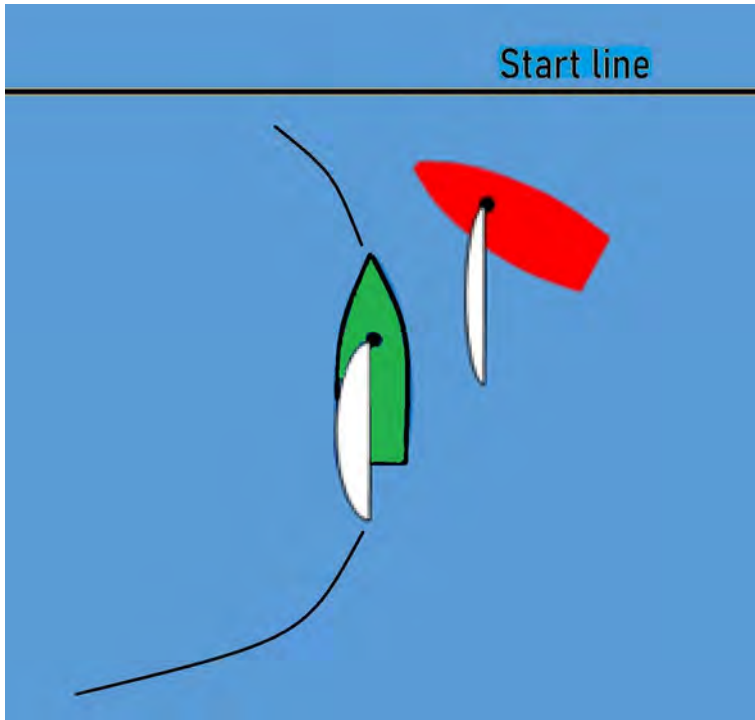
Green and Red are heading to the Pin end at the start signal. Green is slightly ahead but there is an overlap. Green will miss the Pin on the current heading but has enough momentum to pass the Pin by pinching. Red tacks away to avoid the collision.

Is Green entitled to room here?

Answer – YES

Preamble of Section C states that Rule 18 does not apply at a starting mark, but Rule 11 (boats on the same tack, overlapped) requires the windward boat Red to keep clear of the leeward boat Green. Green is allowed to luff up to head to wind. Green's luffing is only restricted by rule 16, whereby she must change course in such manner that Red has room to keep clear.

Example 4



Scenario

Red is luffing on Starboard when Green approaches from behind on Port to tack beneath Red, but while she passes through to Starboard she does not reach the closed hauled position. She blocks Red's way and Red calls for water. Green protests saying the windward boat should have kept clear.

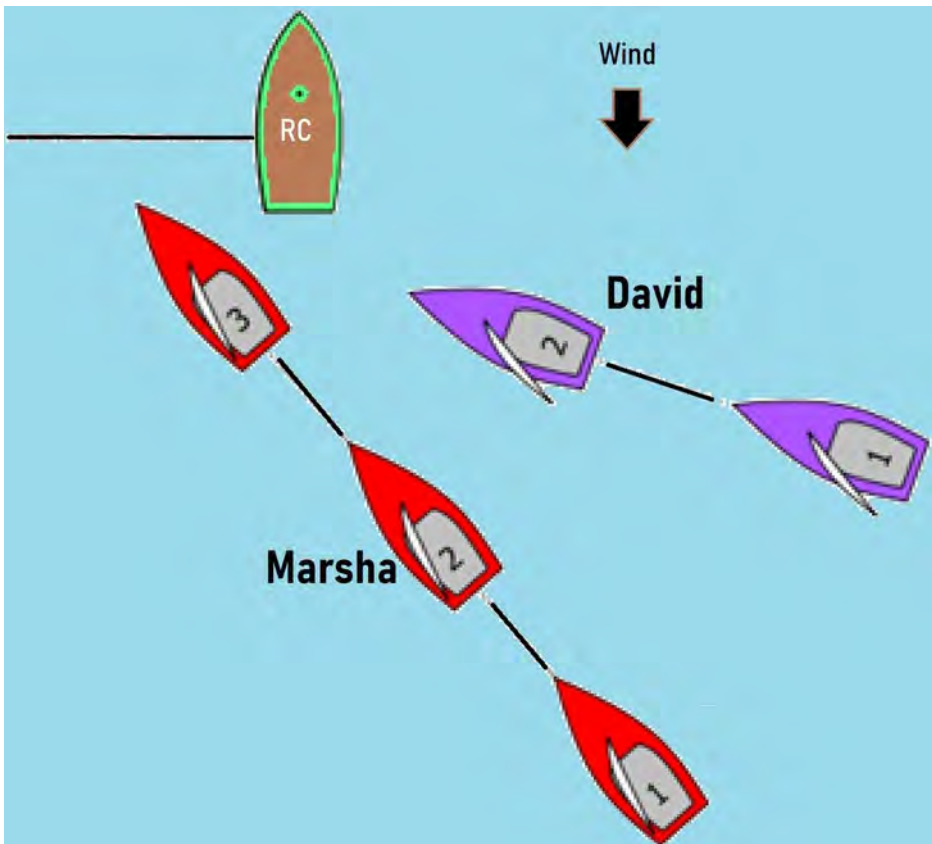
Does Red have the right of way?

Answer – Yes

Green will be penalized. She did not bear away to a close-hauled course after beginning her tack. Therefore RRS 13 applies and Green should be keeping clear of Red.

Barging at the start

Example 5

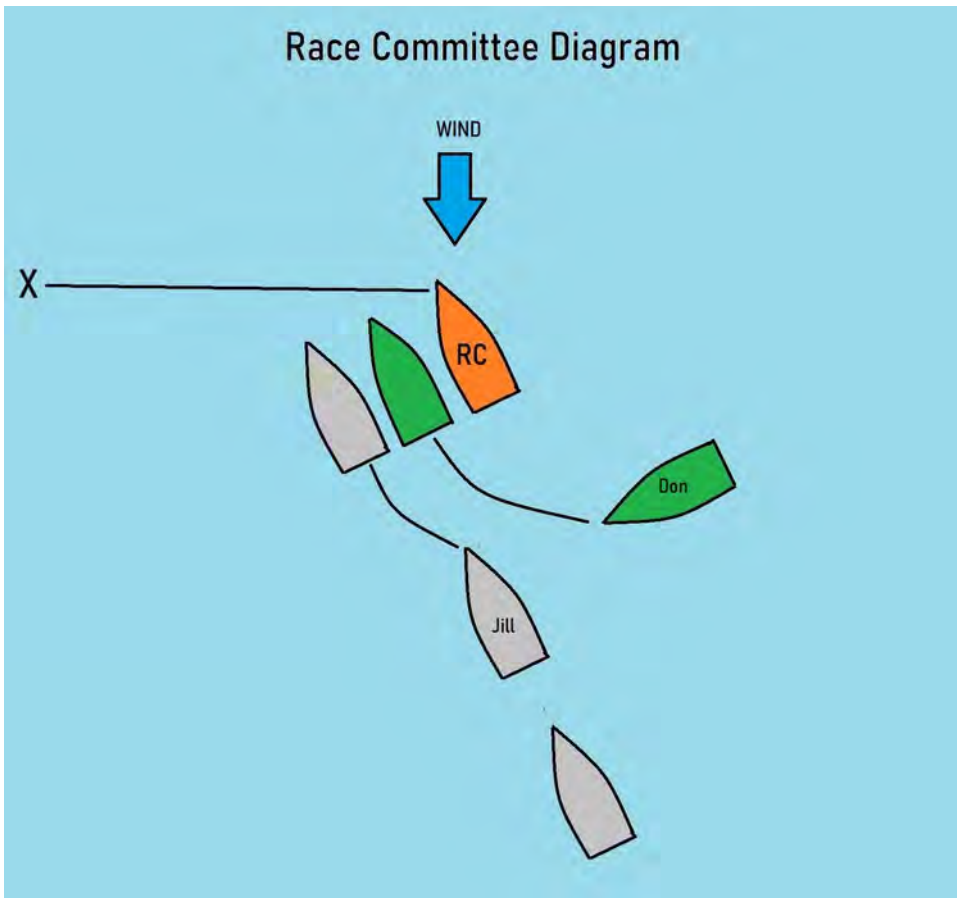


There is no specific “anti-barging” rule in the RRS

- Part 2 of RRS outlines the right of way rules
- RRS 18 “mark room” does not apply at the start line
- David is the “keep clear” boat RRS 11
- Marsha is the “right of way” boat RRS 11
- David is attempting to take room he is not entitled to and is **barging** between Marsha and RC boat.
- Marsha is going to have to turn down to avoid a collision
- David did not keep clear and breaks RRS 11
- Marsha protests and David is disqualified

Barging at the start

Example 6 - Protest Case



Barging at the start

Example 6 - Jill Protested Don

Facts Found by the Protest Committee.

- Incident took place minutes before the starting signal near the RC.
- Jill (Grey) heading on close hauled to the starting line leeward of Don (Green).
- Don was windward of Jill on a beam reach to her starboard side.
- Don turned to the right to get between Jill and the RC boat.
- Jill changed course to avoid a collision.
- Jill protested Don

Conclusions and Rules that apply.

Don broke rule 11 by being the windward boat and not keeping clear.

Jill had to deviate her course to avoid a collision (rule 14)

Don was disqualified

Closing the gap on the start line

Figure 1

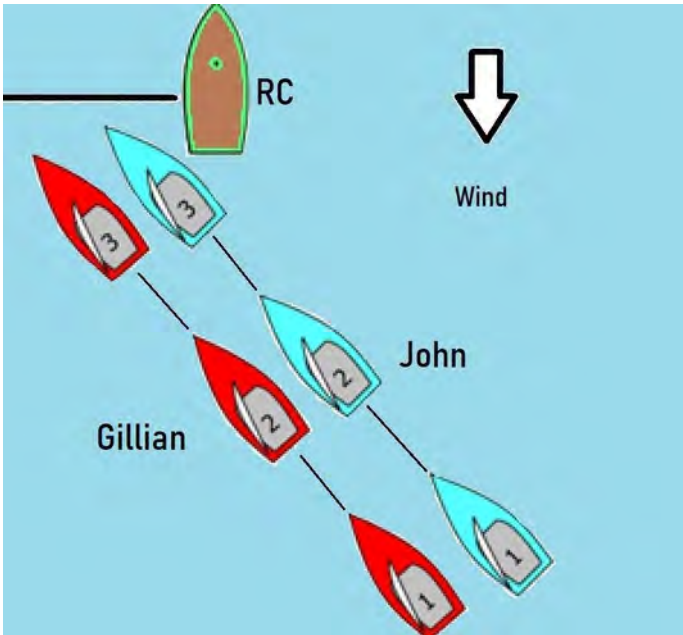


Figure 2

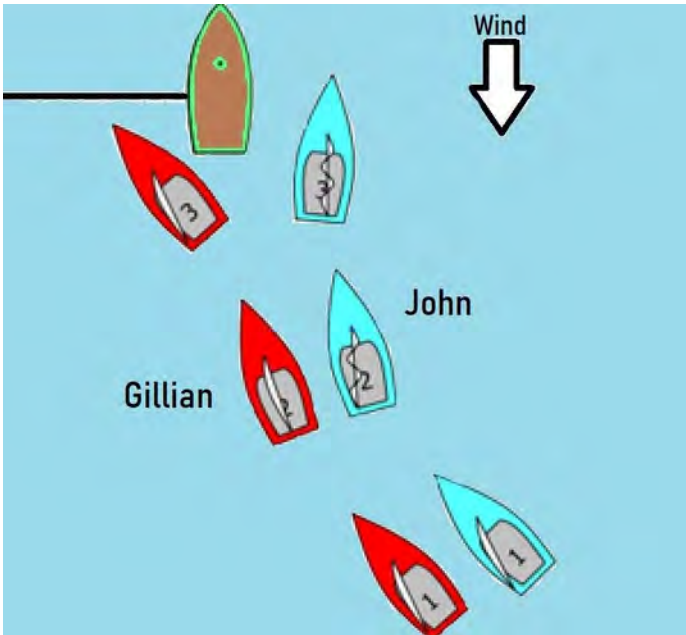


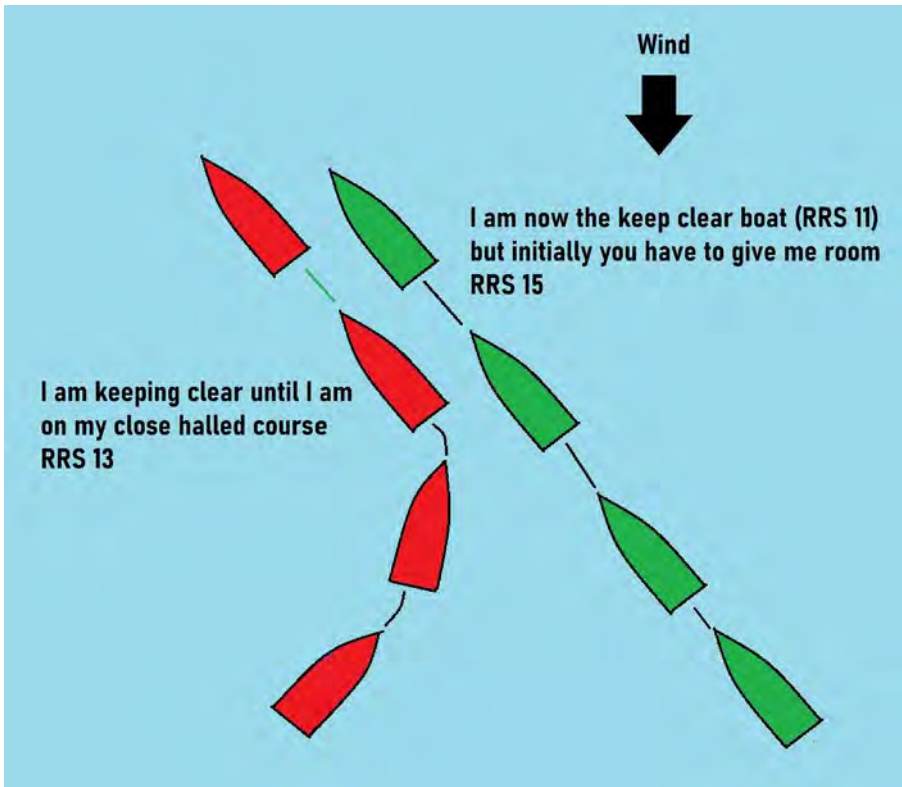
Figure 1

- If both boats (close-hauled) hold their course John complying with RRS 11 has room to sail below the RC boat.
- Gillian however does not want John on her windward side when the boats start.

Figure 2

- Since the boats are approaching the starting line RRS 18 doesn't apply and John is not entitled to mark room
- Gillian luffs at position 2 however must comply with RRS 16.1 to give John room to avoid hitting the RC boat.

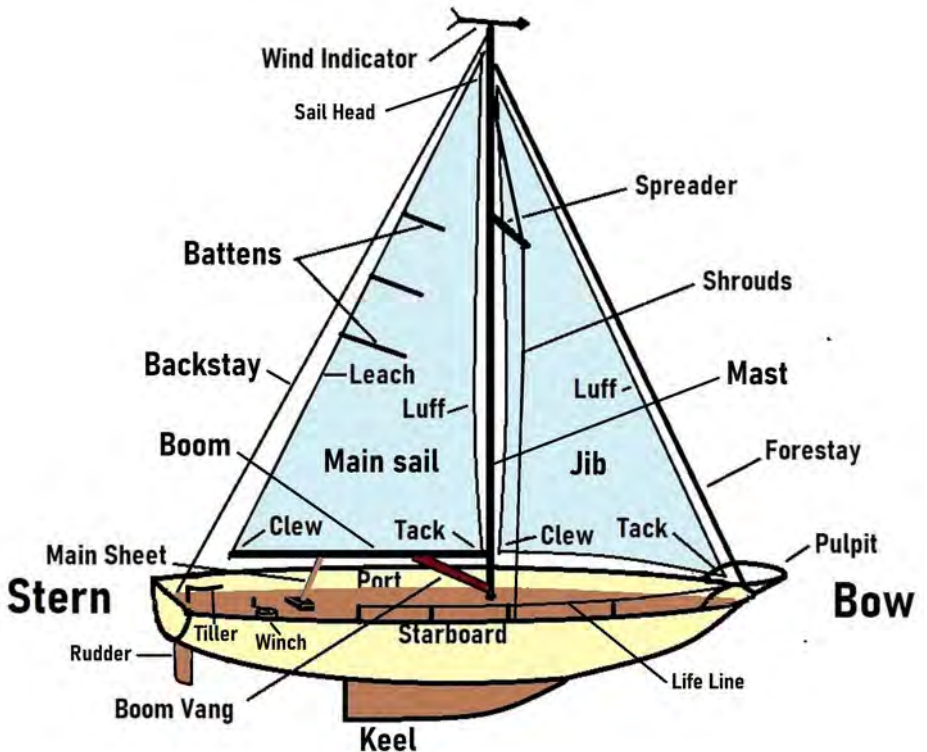
Lee-Bowing



Lee-Bowing

Lee-Bowing a competitor, means placing yourself to leeward and ahead in a position which causes your boat's wake and wind shadows to disturb the area where the windward boat either slips to leeward into your wind shadow completely or can only stay to windward of you through pinching, resulting in a loss of speed. The timing of this move is critical and be careful not break rules in part 2.

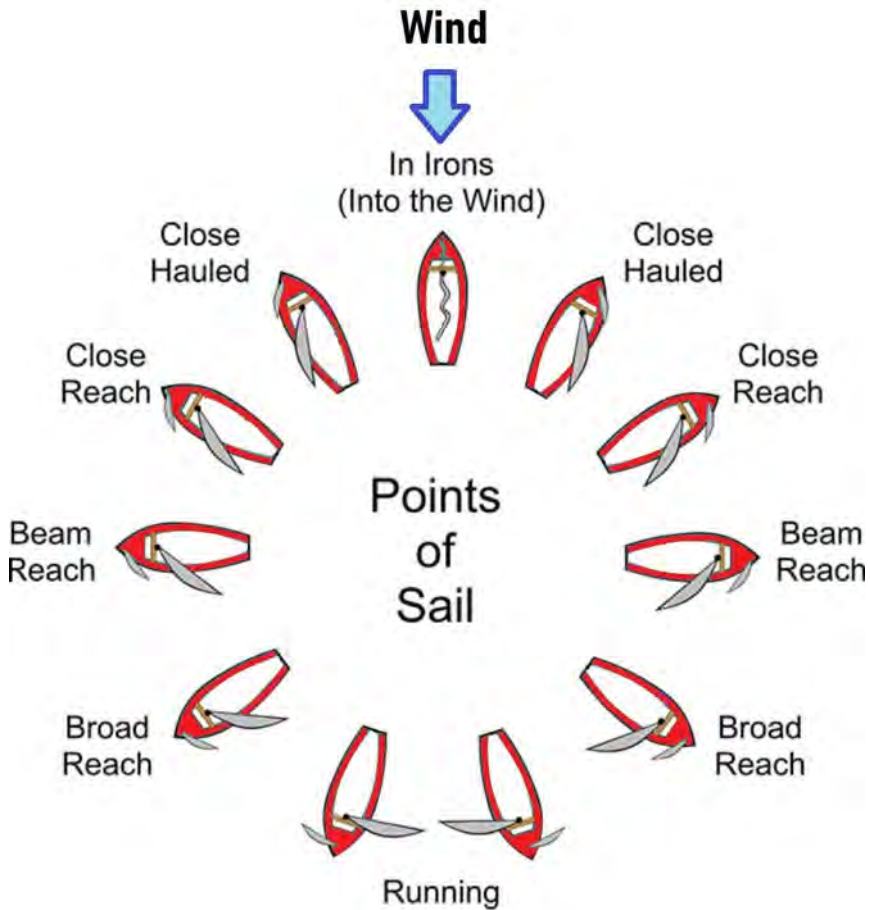
Parts of the Sailboat



Halyards are used to hoist and lower the Main Sail and Jib.

Sheets are used to take-in or let-out the Main Sail and the Jib

Points of Sail

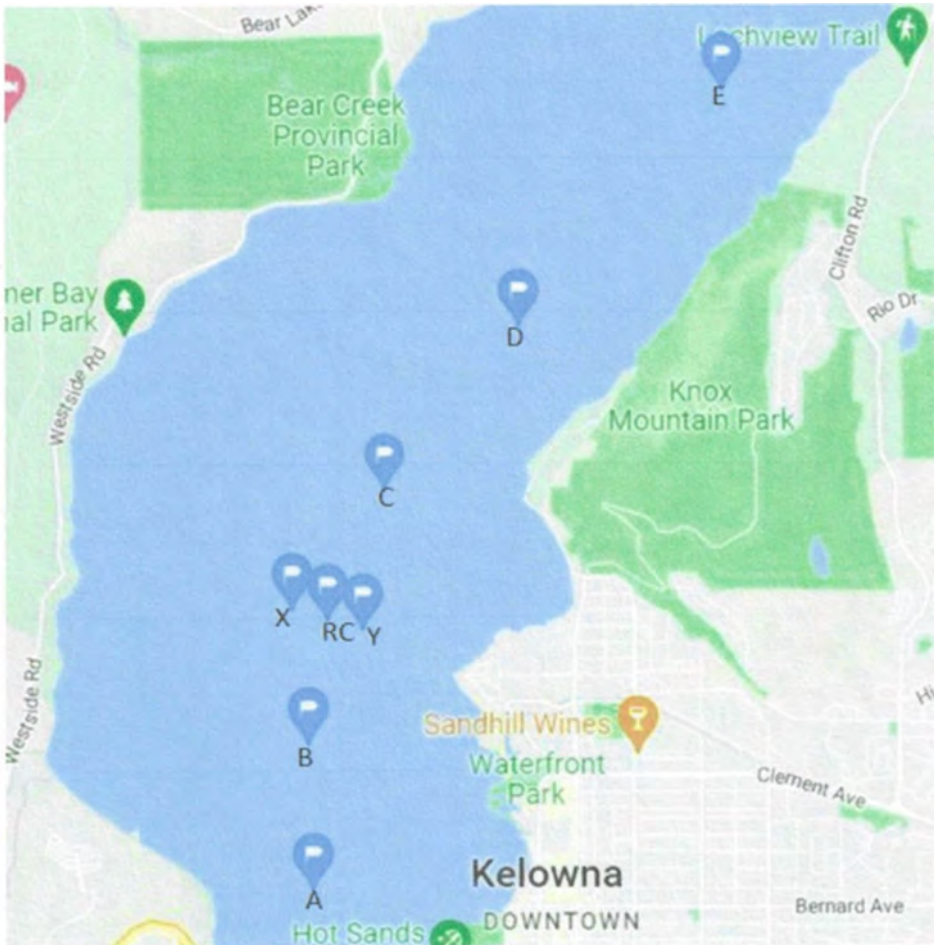


Tacking - Turning the bow of the boat through the eye of the wind.

Gybing - Turning the stern of the boat through the eye of the wind.

(Gybing or Jibing)

KYC Race Course and Marks



X to RC is the Start Line

Y to RC is the Finish line

Note: For Keel Boats the Start Line should measure ($1.5 \times \text{boat length} \times \text{number of boats}$).

Remember

Fun

Fair

&

Safe

About The Author

William (Bill) Thompson

University of British Columbia – BSc Physics, 1967

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Amoco -1967-76 District & Research Geophysicist

Petro-Canada Resources – 1976 – 2000

Vice-President (Exploration & Finance)

Directorships - Oil companies and
Not-for-Profit organizations

Associations Retired - APPEGA, PEGBC

Past Chair - BC Division Canadian Petroleum Assoc.

Kelowna Yacht Club - Past Treasurer, Life Member

Sail Canada - Club Race Officer and Club Judge

Former Skipper and Principal Race Officer (many
years) for KYC Open Racing Program

