

Racing Rules of Sailing 2009-2012

– a brief guide

The main Right-of-Way rules are summarized in the diagrams on the following four pages. This first page explains the most important of the other rules.

NOTE: There are many exceptions and details not covered in this guide.

The following are quoted directly:

SPORTSMANSHIP AND THE RULES

Competitors in the sport of sailing are governed by a body of *rules* that they are expected to follow and enforce.

A fundamental principle of sportsmanship is that when competitors break a *rule* they will promptly take a penalty which may be to retire.

FUNDAMENTAL RULES

SAFETY

Helping Those in Danger

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

Life-Saving Equipment and Personal Flotation Devices

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.

FAIR SAILING

A boat and her owner shall compete in compliance with recognized principles of sportsmanship and fair play.

DECISION TO RACE

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

Over the Line at the Start

If any part of your boat is on the wrong side of the line at the starting signal then you must sail back completely to the pre-start side of the line and start correctly. Note that while you are returning to start you must keep clear of all boats which are not returning.

Hauling Out, Making Fast, Anchoring

You must be "afloat and off moorings" at the preparatory signal. After the preparatory signal you cannot go ashore again or tie up to (eg) a mooring buoy except to bail out, reef sails or make repairs.

You may anchor or a crew member may stand on the bottom and hold the boat.

General Right-of-Way Principles

The Right-of-Way rules apply from the preparatory signal (currently 4 minutes before the start) until finishing and clearing the finish line.

Tacking

While tacking you must keep clear of other boats.

Avoiding Contact

You must avoid contact with other boats if reasonably possible, even when you have right-of-way. If you have right-of-way you do not have to take avoiding action until it is clear the give-way boat is not keeping clear.

Changing Course

If you are the right-of-way boat, you must ensure that when changing course you allow the give-way boat room to keep clear.

Sailing the Course

You must sail the prescribed course so that a string representing your wake when drawn taut would pass each mark on the required side and touch each rounding mark.

If you realise that you have rounded a mark incorrectly you may return and correct your course so that it complies with the string requirement just described.

After finishing you may clear the finish line in either direction (ie you need not cross it completely).

Penalties & Protests

Penalty for breaking a Right-of-Way rule

If you infringe a right-of-way rule whilst racing, whether or not there is contact, you must promptly take a **two-turns** penalty. This means sailing clear of all other boats **as soon as possible after the incident** and performing two turns in the same direction including **two tacks and two gybes**.

Penalty for touching a mark

If you touch a mark of the course, or a starting or finishing mark, you must, **as soon as possible**, sail clear of all other boats and perform **one turn** including **one tack and one gybe**.

Protesting a boat

If a boat infringes a rule against you and you wish to protest you must shout the word "**Protest**" (no other word will do) straight away. Boats over 6m long must also display a **red flag** asap. If the other boat then takes a two-turns penalty you can leave it at that. If she does not take a penalty then you may proceed to a protest by informing the Race Officer after finishing and completing a protest form within the specified time limit.

Books that explain the racing rules

They contain the full rules text as well as explanations. Ensure you get the latest edition [currently 2009-2012]

- The Rules In Practice [Bryan Willis]
- The Rules Book [Eric Twiname / Bryan Willis]
- Paul Elvström Explains the Racing Rules of Sailing

Useful websites:

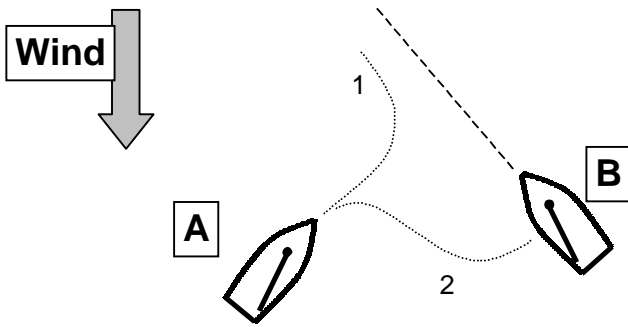
International Sailing Federation www.sailing.org

Uncle Al's Rules College (Includes photos and quiz)

<http://www.wayfarer-international.org/WIT/race.related/RacingRulesOfSailing/RulesIndex.html>
[or try Googling: uncle al racing rules]

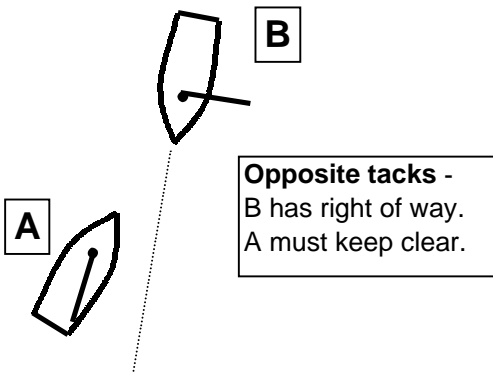
Animated Quiz: <http://game.finckh.net/indexe.htm>

Opposite tacks - Port keeps clear of Starboard



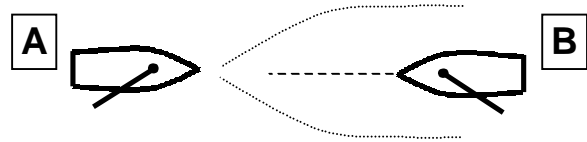
A & B are on opposite tacks.
 B (on starboard tack) has right of way.
 A (on port tack) must keep clear either by tacking onto starboard (1) or by bearing away behind B (2).

If B is in any doubt as to whether A has seen him then a hail of "Starboard!" may be advisable, but it is not required by the rules.

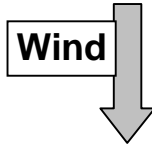
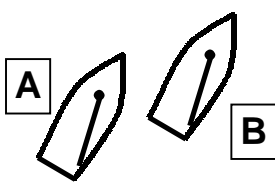


Opposite tacks -
 B has right of way.
 A must keep clear.

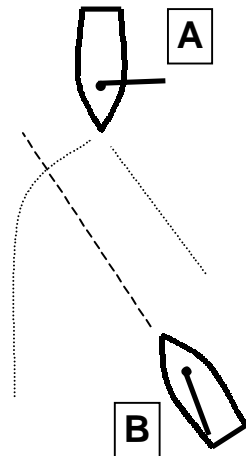
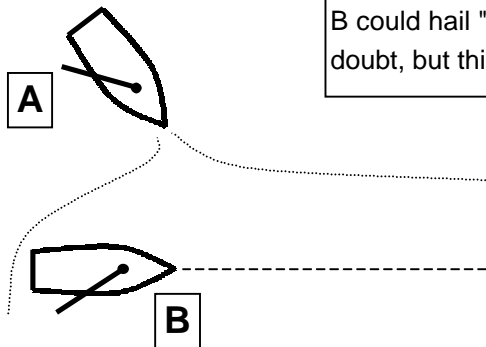
Opposite tacks - B has right of way.
 A must keep clear by going one side or the other of B



Same tack - overlapped - Windward boat must keep clear



In each case here A & B are **on the same tack** and A is to windward of B.
 A must therefore keep clear of B.
 B could hail "Windward boat keep clear!" to avoid doubt, but this is not required by the rules.

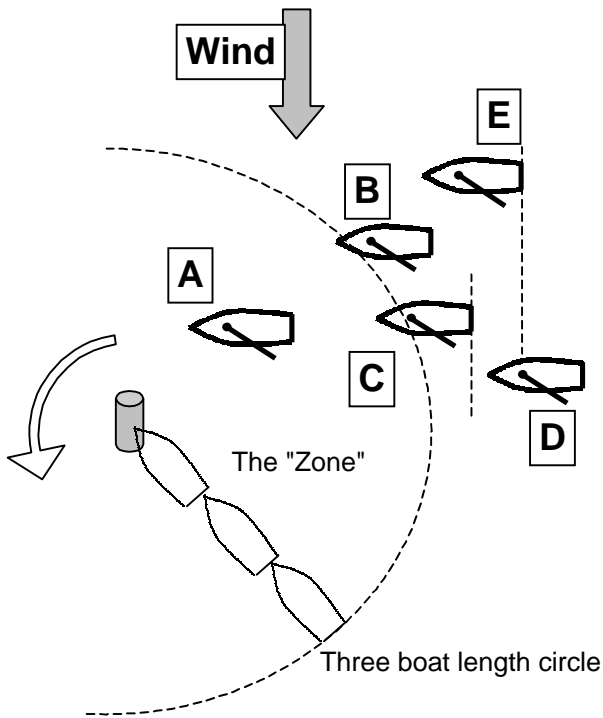


Same tack - not overlapped - Keep clear of a boat ahead



A is **clear astern** of B. B is **clear ahead** of A.
 A must keep clear of B.
 (ie A must not hit B's transom).

Rounding or passing marks - general case



When rounding a mark, you must give **Mark-Room** to any boats overlapped on your inside when you reach the three boat-length **zone** (even if the overlap is broken between the circle and the mark).

A does not have to give mark-room to anybody.

B must give C mark-room.

C does not have to give mark-room to anybody - (D has not gained an overlap when C reaches the circle).

D has an overlap inside E and so will be entitled to mark-room from E, provided the overlap still exists when D or E reaches the circle.

E will have to give mark-room to B & C (& probably D as well) since they are all overlapped on the inside.

These situations are very hard to judge accurately on the water. In any cases where there is doubt it is advisable to hail nearby boats to assert your rights.

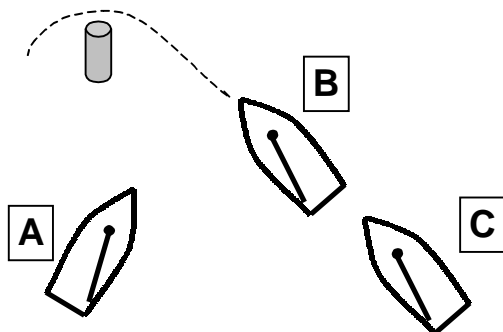
B could hail "Mark-Room" to E

C could hail "Mark-Room" to B.

D could hail "Mark-Room" to E.

C could hail "No Mark-Room" to D.

Rounding the windward mark - boats on opposite tacks

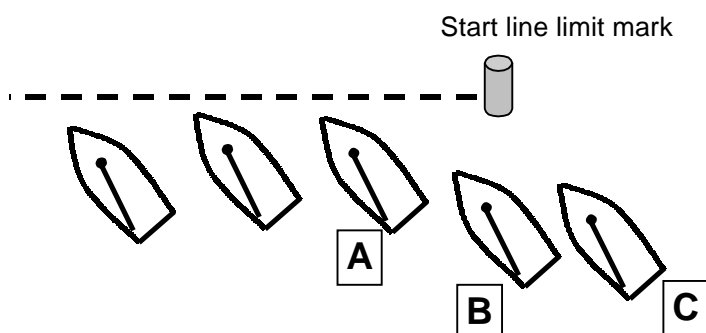


This is a special case.

In this situation, the rules apply **just as if the mark were not there**, ie A on Port must keep clear of B and C (and D, E) on Starboard.

This is not a good situation for A!

No right to room at a starting mark



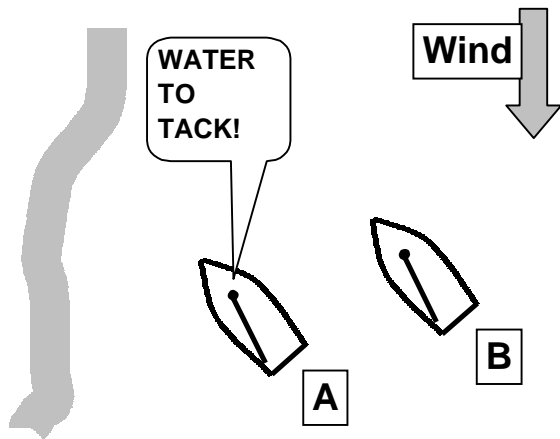
This is another special case.

You cannot call for Room to pass a Starting mark.

In this diagram, B will probably be able sail across the line without hitting A or the starting mark. The outlook for C is not good - C cannot call on B for mark-room. (C needs to slow down and tuck in behind B (and learn to avoid this situation in future).

This is known as the "anti-barging rule".

Room to tack at an obstruction



An obstruction could be the harbour wall, approaching shallows or a passing yacht; anything that requires A, close hauled, to make "a substantial course change".

A is **close hauled approaching an obstruction**.

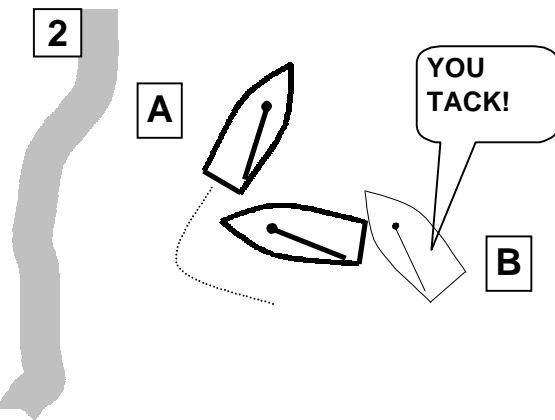
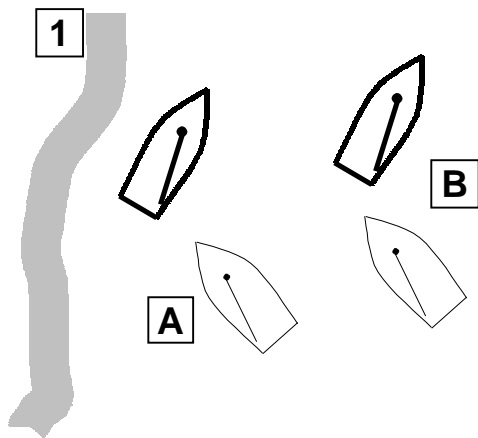
A needs to tack but is not sure she can avoid B in the process.

A should hail (loudly) "Water to tack!"

B must now do one of two things immediately:.....

(1) B tacks as soon as possible.

In this case A must then tack as soon as possible.

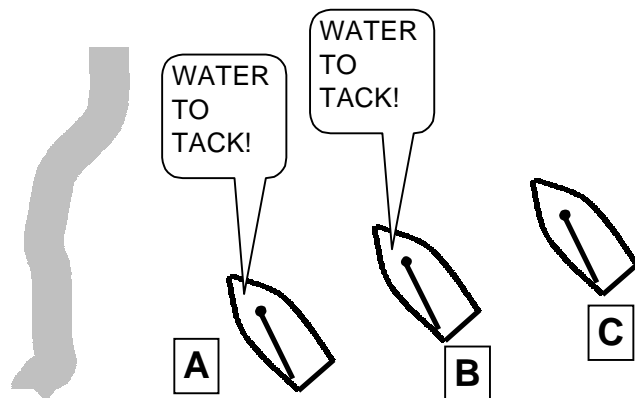
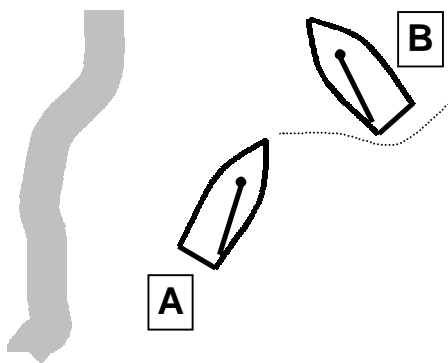


(2) B replies "You Tack!"

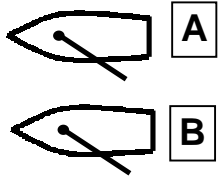
In this case A must then tack straight away and B must give A room to tack and avoid her.

If B chooses the "You tack" option then as soon as A has completed her tack, the Port and Starboard rule begins to apply again and A may have to alter course to avoid B (as shown here). B must ensure A has room to keep clear. If A cannot avoid B then B was wrong to call "You tack".

If more than two boats are in proximity then A must hail early enough for all outer boats to also have time to hail for water if necessary. The situation between B & C here is the same as that between A & B already described.



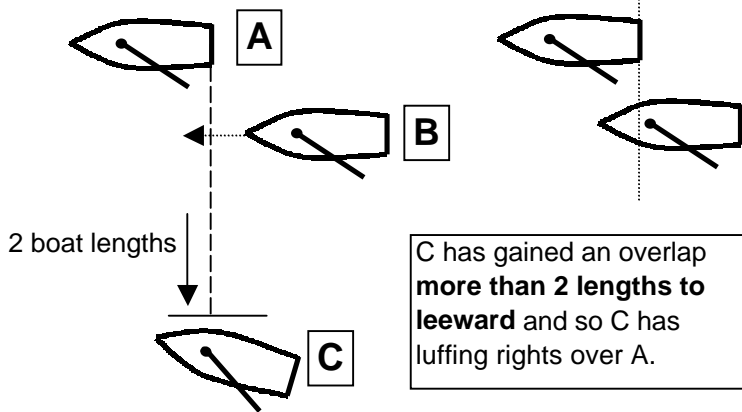
Overlaps and Luffing Rights



Does B have luffing rights ?

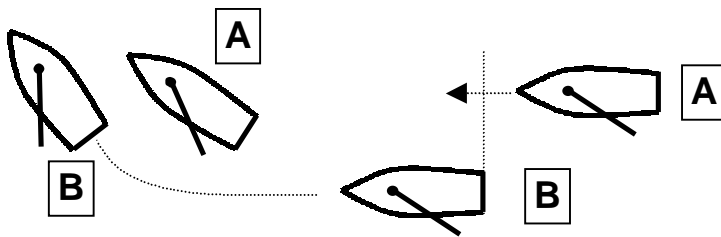
The term "luffing rights" does not actually exist in the rules but is commonly used. It means that the boat has the right to sail a course as high up into the wind as she likes and the windward boat must keep clear.

When two boats on the same tack are overlapped the windward boat (A) must keep clear of the leeward boat (B). But the extent to which the leeward boat may alter course depends on **how the overlap began**.



C has gained an overlap **more than 2 lengths to leeward** and so C has luffing rights over A.

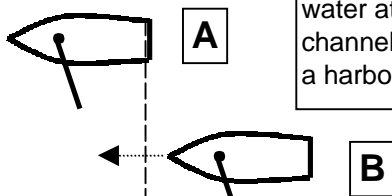
If B gains an overlap **to leeward** of A from **clear astern within 2 boat lengths** then, although A must still keep clear, B is not allowed to sail above her **proper course** while the overlap exists. B does not have luffing rights.



If the overlap is created by A sailing **from clear astern to windward** of B then B has luffing rights and is entitled to sail above her proper course as high as she likes (up to head to wind) and A must keep clear. B must give A room to keep clear and so may not luff too quickly.

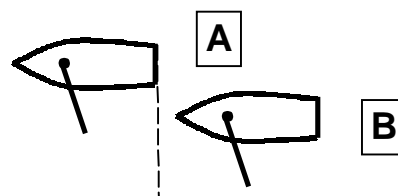
Proper Course: A boat's proper course is a course that the boat would sail in the absence of the other boat in question in order to sail the race as quickly as possible. Note that there may be more than one opinion as to what the proper course is (eg in weaker tide, avoiding a wind shadow, looking for stronger wind etc) but as long as the boat in question can argue a logical reason for it then that is her proper course.

Passing a Continuing Obstruction



Examples are shallow water at the edge of the channel near low water or a harbour wall

Note that this rule takes precedence over the port/starboard or windward/leeward rules.



At the moment that B obtains an overlap here, there **is** room for her to pass between A and the obstruction. Therefore she **is entitled to room**.

Here there will **not** be room for B to pass between A and the obstruction at the moment the overlap is established, therefore she will **not be entitled to room** from A. If B gains an overlap here she will be in trouble as she may have nowhere to go.