

RACING RULES IN BRIEF 2013-2016

For casual racers, please be advised that the rules published by US Sailing govern all sailboat racing, from Championship events to Wednesday night beer cans. Rules addressing what to do when boats meet while racing are Part 2 of the rules, requiring only pages 8-13 of the rule book. Briefly, the key rules are:

Right-of-Way Rules

- 1. PORT-STARBOARD** A port-tack boat must keep clear of starboard-tack boat. **(Rule 10)** You are “keeping clear” of another boat if she doesn’t have to avoid you.
- 2. WINDWARD-LEEWARD** When boats are overlapped on the same tack, the windward boat must keep clear. **(Rule 11)**
- 3. ON SAME TACK, ASTERN-AHEAD** When boats are on the same tack and not overlapped, the boat clear astern must keep clear. **(Rule 12)** A boat is “clear astern” of another if she is behind a line through the other boat’s aft-most point and perpendicular to the other’s centerline. The other boat is “clear ahead.” Two boats “overlap” if neither is clear astern of the other.
- 4. TACKING TOO CLOSE** Before you tack, make sure your tack will keep you clear of all other boats. **(Rule 13)**

Limitations on the Right-of-Way Boat

If the other boat must keep clear, you have “right of way.” But even if you have right of way, there are limitations on what you can do:

- 5. AVOID CONTACT** You must avoid contact with other boats if you can. However, if you have right of way and there is contact that causes no damage, you will be exonerated. **(Rule 14)**
- 6. ACQUIRING RIGHT OF WAY** When you do something to become the right-of-way boat (such as getting an overlap to leeward of another boat), you must give the other boat a chance to keep clear of you. **(Rule 15)**
- 7. CHANGING COURSE** When you change course, you must give the other boat a chance to keep clear of you. **(Rule 16)**
- 8. ON THE SAME TACK; PROPER COURSE** If you are overlapped to leeward of a boat on the same tack, and if just before the overlap began you were clear astern of her, you cannot sail above your proper course (i.e., the course that will take you to the next mark as soon as possible). **(Rule 17)**

At Marks and Obstructions

Additional rules apply at marks or obstructions. However, these rules do not apply at a starting mark on the approach to the line to start or while boats are on opposite tacks on a beat to windward. **(Preamble to Section C and Rule 18.1)**

- 9. INSIDE THE ZONE** The “zone” is the area within three lengths of a mark. “Mark-room” is room to sail to the mark and room to round it as needed to sail the course to the next mark. The right to mark-room is “frozen” when the first of two boats enters the zone. If you were overlapped outside another boat at that time, you must give her mark-room. If you were clear astern of another boat at that time, you must give her mark-room. You must continue to give mark-room even if later your overlap is broken or a new overlap begins. **(Rule 18.2)**
- 10. TACKING NEAR A MARK** Don’t tack in the zone at a windward mark if you will cause a boat that is fetching the mark to sail above close-hauled to avoid you, or if you will prevent her from passing the mark on the required side. **(Rule 18.3)**
- 11. ROOM TO PASS AN OBSTRUCTION** When boats come to an obstruction, the right-of-way boat gets to decide which way they are going to pass it. If you are overlapped outside another boat, you must give her room to sail between you and the obstruction. **(Rules 19.2(a) and (b))**
- 12. ROOM TO TACK AT AN OBSTRUCTION** When boats on the same tack on a beat come to an obstruction, the leeward boat may hail for room to tack.. The other boat must give her room, but before the leeward boat tacks she must give the other boat time to respond. **(Rule 20)**

Other Rules

Before your Preparatory Signal, and after you finish, don’t interfere with boats that are about to start or are racing. **(Rule 24.1)**

If you break a rule while racing, get away from other boats and turn your boat until you have done two tacks and two gybes in the same direction. If you hit a mark, you need to only do one tack and one gybe. **(Rule 44)**

If you start too soon, keep clear of others until you get behind the line again. **(Rule 22.1)**