

Basic Rules of Sailboat Racing www.sailingcourse.com/racing_rules.htm

There are three guiding principles that underlie the Racing Rules. All competitors are expected to compete within the framework of sportsmanship, fair sailing and helping those in danger. If you're new to racing, you only need to know 10 basic rules that will handle most situations you'll encounter on the race course. As you gain more experience, you'll learn more about the subtleties and limitations of these and other rules.

The basic rules are summarized below. A boat has right of way when another boat is required to *keep clear*. If you want to read the actual wording of the rule in the rules book, "Racing Rules of Sailing," just click on the rule number.

There are some words in racing that have special meaning and they are identified in italics

Opposite Tacks

When boats approach each other on **opposite tacks**, the boat on *port tack* shall *keep clear* of the boat on *starboard tack* (**Racing Rule 10**). The *port-tack* boat keeps clear, if the *starboard-tack* boat does not have to change course to avoid a collision. If your boom is on the starboard (right) side, you are on *port tack*; if it's on the port (left) side, you are on *starboard tack*.

Windward/Leeward

When boats are on the **same tack** and *overlap* each other, the *windward* boat shall *keep clear* of the *leeward* boat (**Racing Rule 11**). If your boom is on the side next to the other boat, you are the *windward* boat.

Same Tack Not Overlapped

When boats are on the **same tack** and don't *overlap* each other, a boat that is overtaking from behind shall *keep clear* of the boat that is *clear ahead* (**Racing Rule 12**). It must change course to avoid running into the back of the other boat. If the boat from behind continues to overtake the other boat and they become *overlapped* then the windward-leeward rule switches on where the *windward* boat must keep clear of the *leeward* boat.

While Tacking

When you're tacking, you must *keep clear* of all other boats from the time your boat passes head to wind until it is on a close-hauled course (**Racing Rule 13**). Look around before you tack to make sure you don't tack in the way of another boat.

Avoid Contact

You must avoid contact with other boats if possible. Even if your boat has right of way you must avoid contact, but you don't need to act until it becomes obvious that the other boat is not going to *keep clear* (**Racing Rule 14**).

Changing course

Whenever you are the right-of-way boat and want to turn, you must give the other boat a chance to *keep clear* (**Racing Rule 16**). You cannot make an abrupt turn that allows no opportunity for the other boat to stay out of your way.

Mark Room

When a boat reaches the *three-length zone* from a *mark* or *obstruction*, it has to give boats *overlapped* inside it *room* to round or pass the *obstruction* (**Racing Rule 18**). The outer edge of this zone is three hull lengths from the *mark*. This Rule is switched off at starting *marks*, and between boats on **opposite** *tacks* at the *windward* mark.

Starting Errors

If you cross the starting line too soon before the start, you have to go back behind the line and start again. While going back, you have to *keep clear* of all boats that have started (**Racing Rule 21**). If a boat starts prematurely, the race committee boat displays the code flag for the letter "X" and sounds one blast of a horn

Hitting a Mark – One Turn

If you hit a *mark* while *racing*, you must take a penalty as soon as possible by making one turn, including one tack and one jibe (or one jibe and one tack) (**Racing Rule 31**). While doing your One-Turn Penalty , you must stay clear of all other boats.

Taking a penalty – Two Turns

If you foul another boat while *racing*, you must take a penalty as soon as possible by making two turns in the same direction, including two tacks and two jibes (**Racing Rule 44**). While doing your Two-Turns Penalty, you must stay clear of all other boats.