

WILLOUGHBY THURSDAY NIGHT RACING

HELPFUL HINTS from Jim Williams

Updated April, 2009

These hints do not rank as rules, but they may be helpful in understanding what's going on, and might help you maximize your enjoyment of the wonderful sport of sailboat racing.

STARTING / OVER EARLY

It is your responsibility to start properly. If you know that you were OCS (On Course Side) at the start, you **MUST** restart, regardless of any signal or announcement that the race committee makes or does not make. You restart by either completely dipping back below the starting line, or going around one end of the line and then crossing correctly. If you don't know whether or not you were over early, you can check with the race committee. If someone was over early, the race committee will make a sound and display code flag X (blue cross on white background). If the committee makes two sounds and displays the first substitute flag (blue triangle around a yellow triangle), all boats in that start are being recalled. The committee may also call out the sail numbers or names of boats that are over early, but it is not required to do so. The committee will **NOT** call out "all clear" or the equivalent, so no news is good news.

FINISH LINES

Note that you can't go through either of the finish lines after you start. If, however, you violate this rule, you are allowed to fix your error by "unwinding" – sailing back through the line, then rounding the buoy in the proper direction. There are two reasons for allowing unwinding. First, if you think you might have been over early, dipping back to the proper side of the line and restarting won't get you disqualified. Second, if the wind dies and the current pushes you across the line, you have a chance to correct your course when the wind picks up and you can continue racing.

PROTESTS

Everyone wants to avoid protests, and the Thursday Night Racing procedures make it easy to do so. Sportsmanship requires us to take responsibility for our fouls, so if you foul another boat, immediately do one of the following: 1) show a yellow flag on the backstay (scoring penalty), or 2) sail to a place where it is safe to do your penalty turns, then sail two complete circles, including two tacks and two jibes, or 3) retire. (Note that if you are at fault and cause serious damage or gain a significant advantage by your foul, you must retire. You cannot exonerate yourself by doing penalty turns or by accepting the 20% penalty.) You need to take one of these three actions whether or not someone intends to protest you.

If you think another boat has broken the rules and the boat does not acknowledge responsibility, you may want to protest. To do so, immediately fly your protest flag (code flag B or another type of red flag) and hail the offending party, using the word "protest", as soon as you can. Note that the next step is an informal meeting mediated by someone who is familiar with the rules. The parties can sit down and go through the rules involved, and discuss who, if anyone, was breaking the rules. At the worst, you can allow your protest to go forward, but hopefully the protest will be withdrawn or responsibility accepted.

Note that time is of the essence – you can't think about it for a few minutes, then fly your yellow flag, do your penalty turns, or fly the protest flag. You have only a few seconds to take action – you can't wait while you adjust sails, dig around in the cabin for the flag, etc. Also, you must file a protest in writing within the timeframe stated in the sailing instructions. You don't have to use a protest form, but they are available from the race committee for your use.

Regardless of who is at fault, everyone has an obligation to avoid contact. Even if you are fouled, a protest committee must disqualify you for making contact if there is damage to either boat, unless you can convince the committee that there was no way for you to avoid contact.

Please note that you aren't being a good sport by letting someone get away with something – if folks who understand the rules but just won't abide by them because they think you won't protest, protesting them will make the race course a safer place and will make the competition fairer.

Having written all of the above, there are times when you may not want to protest, even though the rules allow you to do so. One of the best examples of this is when a competitor thinks he can cross your bow, but slightly misjudges, causing you to have to bear off to miss his transom. You can protest and probably win, but the next time this happens the protested boat will probably tack in front or just to leeward of you, which will hurt you a lot more than bearing off slightly. Also, if you suspect that the other party misunderstands the rules and the situation is not dangerous (boats do not risk colliding), a discussion after the race may do as much good as a protest, and is much easier on all involved.

Also, note that you cannot protest the race committee. You can, however, request redress for something that the committee either did that it wasn't supposed to do, or didn't do that it was supposed to do. It works a lot like a protest (same form, same protest committee), but of course the race committee can't be disqualified from the race. Instead, if the protest committee finds in your favor, an equitable adjustment will be given. This could consist of improving your score, throwing out the race, or a similar remedy.

SHORTENED COURSE

This is covered in the "Race Signals" section in front of the rulebook. You need to know what code flag "S" looks like, and that it means "finish between the nearby mark and the staff displaying this flag."

FINISH

Your time will be taken as soon as any part of your boat, including sails, breaks the plane of the finish line. You do not have to cross the line entirely – you can bear off and go the other way after your time is taken. You are still racing even after you finish until you have cleared the finish line, meaning that no part of your boat is still on the line. For example, if you are just making the finish line, get the finish signal, your stern just clears the line, then you drift into the finish mark, you do not need to take any corrective action. However, if you drift into the mark before your transom is clear of the mark, you must sail to the course side, sail a 360-degree turn, and refinish. Also, the racing rules do not apply after you have cleared the finish line, except that you cannot interfere with a boat that is still racing if you can reasonably avoid doing so (this is also true before you start racing).

RESOURCES

You can download the entire Racing Rules of Sailing for free at: [http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/RRS2009-2012-\[5950\].pdf](http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/RRS2009-2012-[5950].pdf) (copy/paste if link is broken), or purchase a printed copy from US Sailing or other outlets such as West Marine.

There is an abbreviated version of the Racing Rules of Sailing called The Basic Sailboat Racing Rules All Racers Should Know attached to this document. It is also available at: <http://www.sailingscuttlebutt.com/news/09/0309/> .

There are many great articles on Sailing World's web site by Dick Rose. If you really understand these scenarios, you will be a long way toward ensuring that you won't get into trouble while racing. The link is http://www.sailingworld.com/article_search.jsp?author=Dick+Rose

UK Sailmakers has an excellent, free animated rules quiz on their web site: http://www.ukhalsey.com/RulesQuiz/quiz_list.asp .

There have been several books written on the subject of understanding the racing rules, and several magazines publish rules quizzes.

Most of the folks who have been doing this for a while love to talk rules. Don't hesitate to ask someone if you need clarification.

Finally, you should know that the rules are just the starting point. The best authority on the application of the rules is the appeals book. If you want to be an authority on the racing rules, a great place to start is with the appeals, which you can also order through US Sailing: <http://www.ussailing.org/> .



THE BASIC SAILBOAT RACING RULES ALL RACERS SHOULD KNOW

In MAST sailboat racing there are no out-of-bounds lines on the floor or referees to call fouls. The rules are self enforced and administered within the fleet. A basic understanding of just a few important rules will help ensure that everyone has fun and gets home safe.

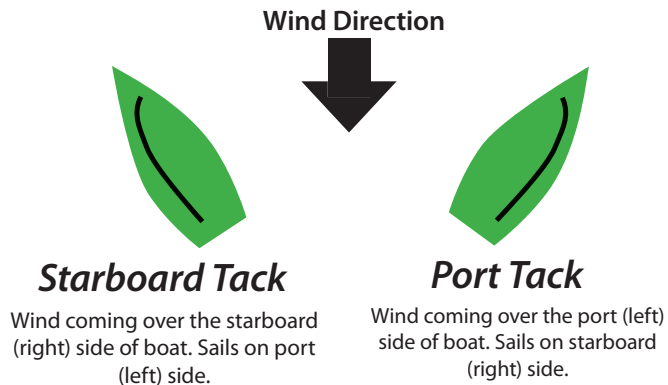
The specifics of the sailboat racing rules are mind-numbingly detailed and written to cover all potential incidents. **DON'T WORRY** - You do not need to know everything about the rules to go out and have fun and be safe. By reading and understanding the following rules and terms, you should be able to get around the course without fouling another boat or causing an accident.

These rules should only be thought of as a beginning!

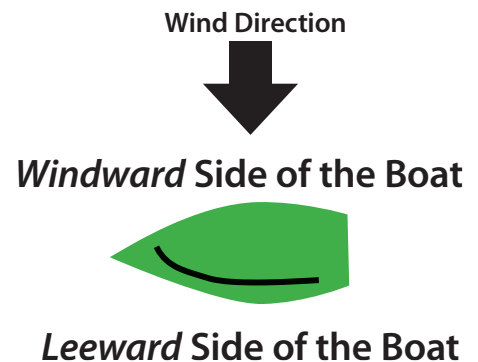
To get an official copy of the complete rules, join US Sailing at www.ussailing.org Members receive an official copy of the current rules as a membership benefit. For a plain language discussion of the rules, look into purchasing Dave Perry's book entitled "*Understanding the Racing Rules of Sailing*" at the same site.

BASIC TERMS

Starboard Tack vs Port Tack

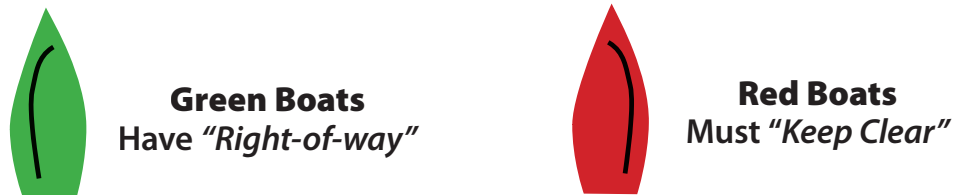


Windward vs Leeward



Right-of-Way

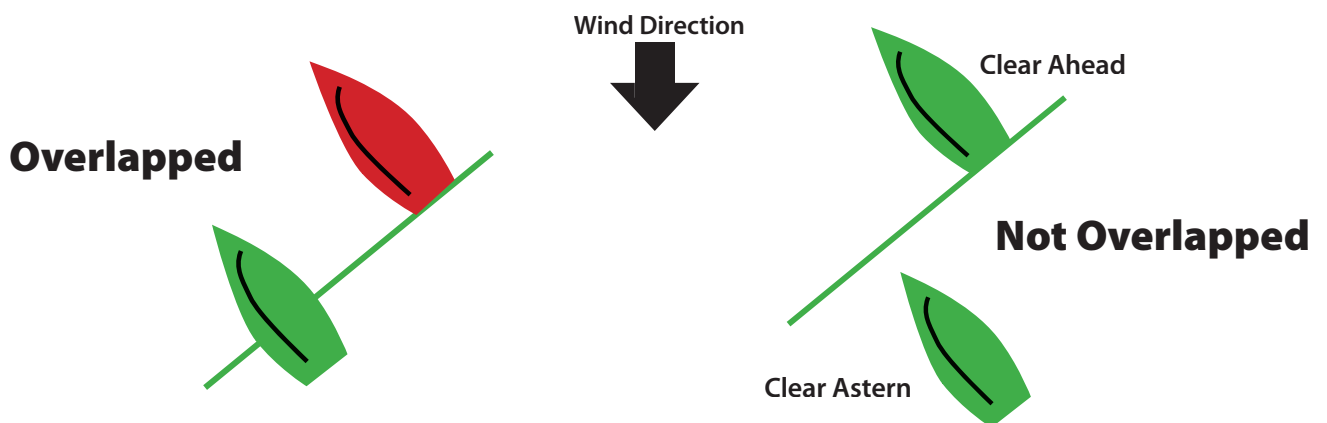
When one boat has the *Right-of-Way*, the other boats is required to *Keep Clear*.



Avoiding Collisions - All boats are required by rule to avoid a collision if possible!
Right-of-Way is no excuse to cause a collision.

Overlapped Boats

A boat *Overlapped* to *Leeward* has *Right-of-Way*. Overlaps are established from the transom.



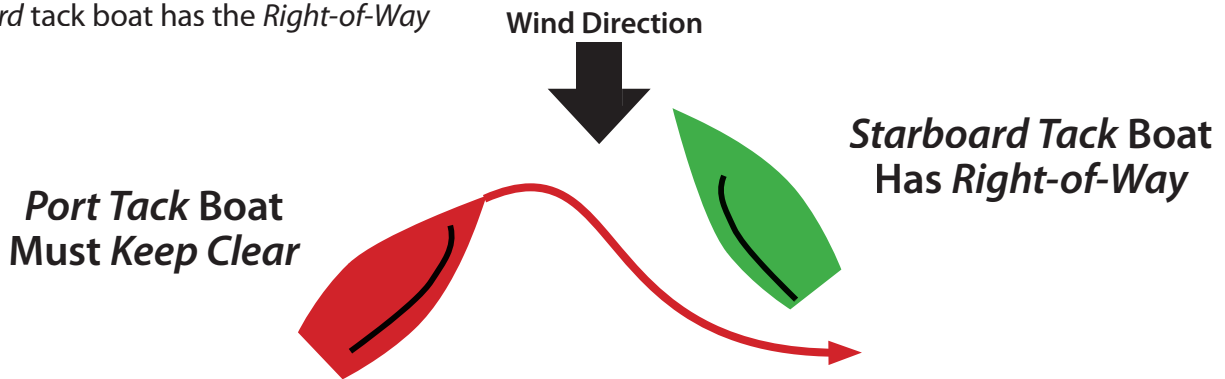
Other Terms Used In This Discussion

- Close Hauled** - A boat sailing as close to the wind direction as possible
- Head-to-Wind** - A boat pointed straight into the wind. Sails will be luffing.
- Inside** - A boat positioned between the mark and another boat
- Outside** - A boat positioned with another boat between them and the mark
- Proper Course** - The course a boat would sail to get to the next mark as quickly as possible
- Room** - The space a boat needs to maneuver properly given conditions

BASIC RIGHT-OF-WAY SITUATIONS

Two Boats Converging on Opposite Tacks

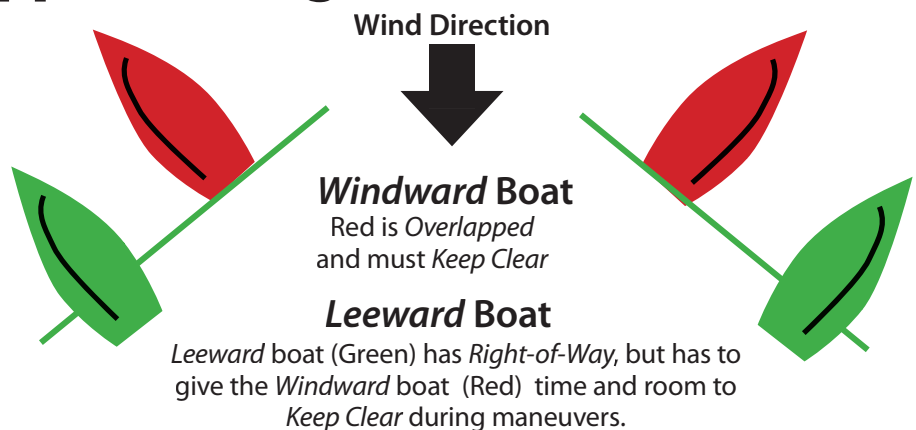
A Starboard tack boat has the *Right-of-Way*



Two Boats Overlapped Sailing On the Same Tack

Leeward boat has the *Right-of-Way*

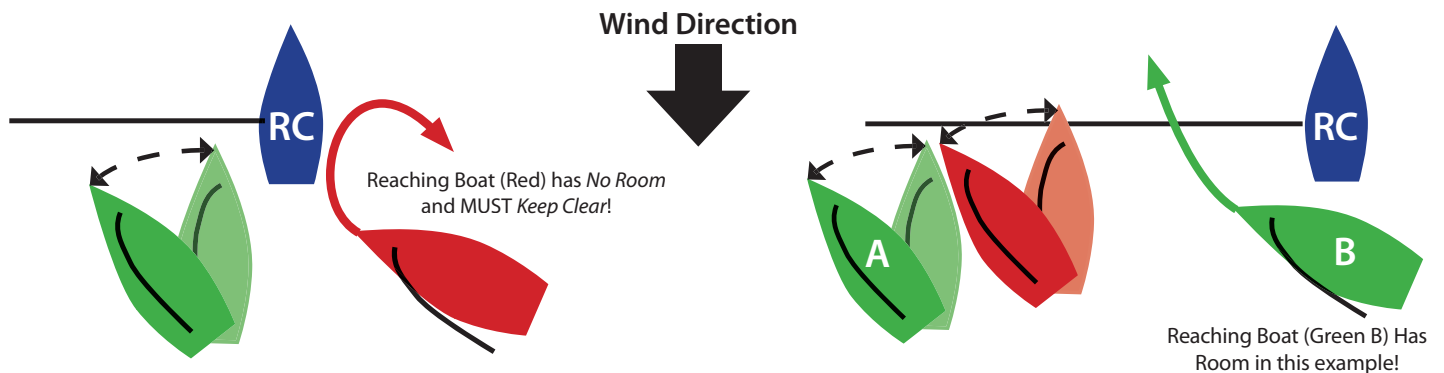
NOTE: This Rule applies for two boats near each other on the same tack. However, remember that any approaching *Starboard Tack* boat will have *Right-of-Way* over all *Port Tack* boats



No Barging at Start

A *Leeward* boat has *Right-of-Way* at the start and is allowed to sail above her *Proper Course* to shut-out any boat heading into the start before the start signal. After the start signal, the *Leeward* boat must assume her proper course.

Basically, any boat to leeward that you can potentially hit should be considered a brick wall.



REACHING BOAT (RED) IS BARGING!

Before the start signal, Green has the right to go "head-to-wind" and force a *Windward Overlapped* boat (RED) over the start line or into a position that it must avoid the Committee Boat or Start Mark by turning away.

LEEWARD BOAT (GREEN A) HAS RIGHT-OF-WAY RED MUST KEEP CLEAR OF GREEN A!

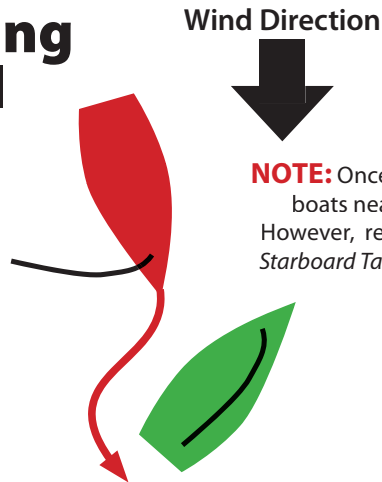
Green A has the right to go "head-to-wind" to force Red over the start line before the start signal. Green A is not close enough to committee boat to shut-out Green B.

BASIC RIGHT-OF-WAY SITUATIONS

Same Tack Boats Converging on Different Points-of-Sail

Leeward Boat has Right-of Way

In this example, both boats are on *Port Tack*. As they converge, the *windward* boat (Red), which is sailing downwind, has to *Keep Clear* of the *leeward* boat (Green).

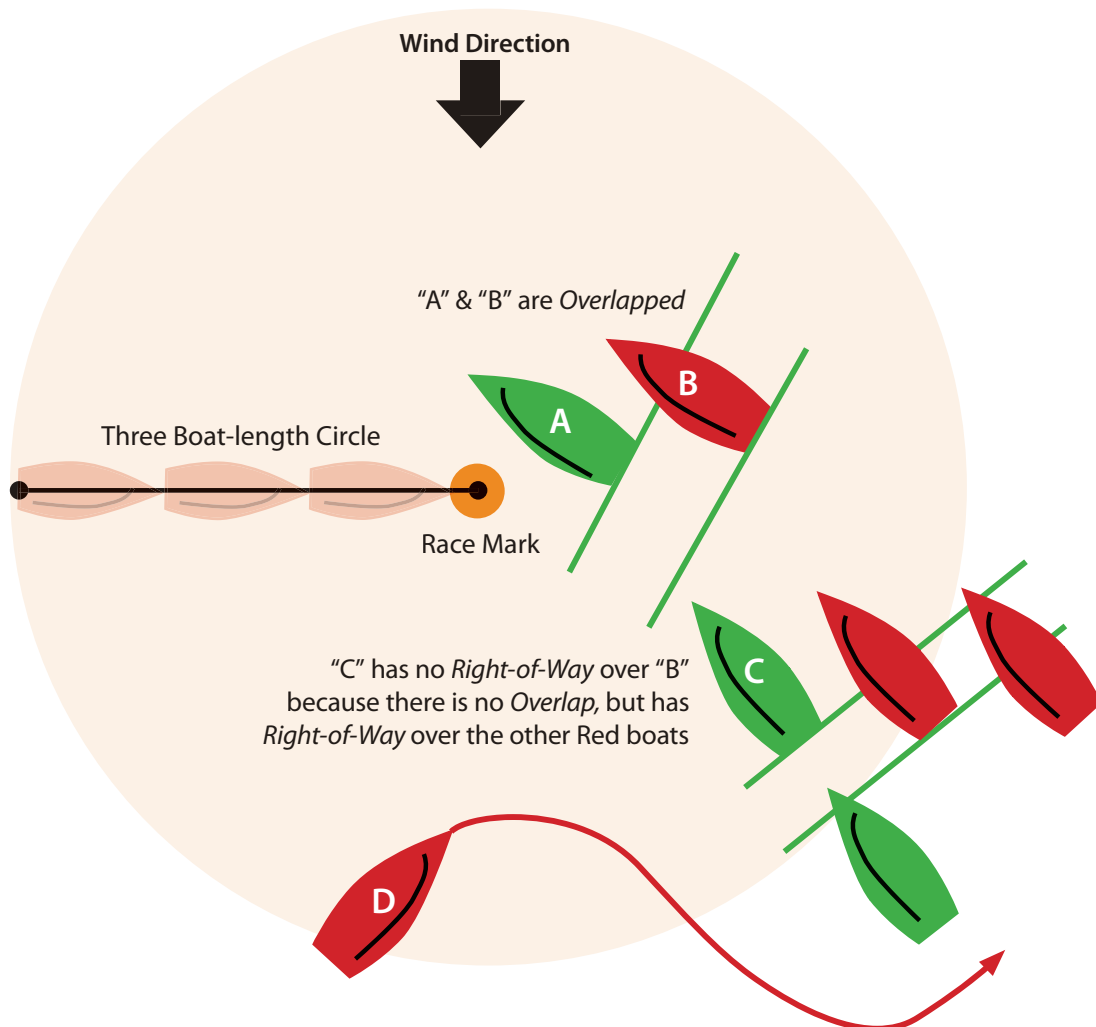


NOTE: Once again this rule applies for two boats near each other on the same tack. However, remember that any approaching *Starboard Tack* boat will have *Right-of-Way* over all *Port Tack* boats.

Boats Converging at Mark

An *Inside* and *Overlapped* boat (Green A) within a three boat-lengths of the mark has the *Right-of-Way*. In general, any *Overlapped* outside boat (Red B) must *Keep Clear* and give room to any boat between them and the mark.

A boat coming into the mark on *Port Tack* (Red D) must be able to complete its tack without obstructing the progress of an incoming *Starboard Tack* boat. If a *Starboard Tack* boat has to adjust course, you fouled them.



WHAT TO DO IF A FOUL OCCURS

IF YOU ARE FOULED

1. Avoid Contact!
2. Hail the word, "PROTEST" to the boat that you believe created the foul.
3. Raise a Red Protest Flag somewhere visible from your stern
4. At the finish, notify the Race Committee that you plan to issue a protest giving the name and/or sail number of the offending boat.
5. Once onshore, find a MAST official to discuss what actions will be taken.

IF YOU FOUL ANOTHER BOAT

1. Avoid Contact!
2. If you believe you fouled another boat, get clear of all other boats and do two complete circles in the same direction. Once the circles are complete, you can rejoin the race without further penalty.
3. If you do not think there was a foul, continue sailing the race with the understanding that you are racing under protest. Once the race is complete, MAST officials will determine which boat was correct based on eye witness accounts and then determine an appropriate action.

IF YOU HIT A MARK

1. Get Clear of all other boats and complete one full 360° circle.

NOTE - You have NO rights over any other boat during the time you are doing penalty circles. Make sure you are clear in both time and distance from all other racers before starting your circles.