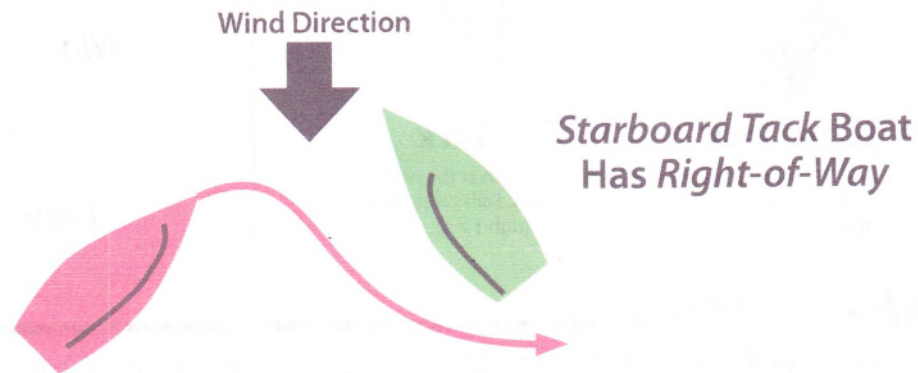


# ***THE BASIC SAILBOAT RACING RULES ALL RACERS SHOULD KNOW***

By Ken Quant



In 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](http://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.

Reproduction for FREE distribution is encouraged.

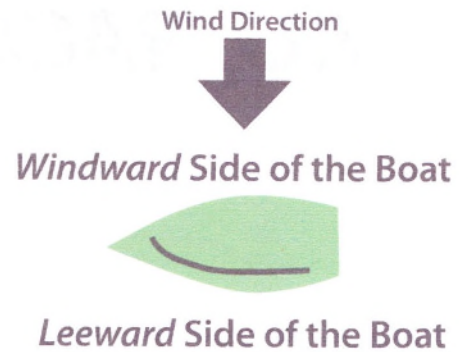


# BASIC TERMS

## 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*.



**Green Boats**  
Have "*Right-of-way*"

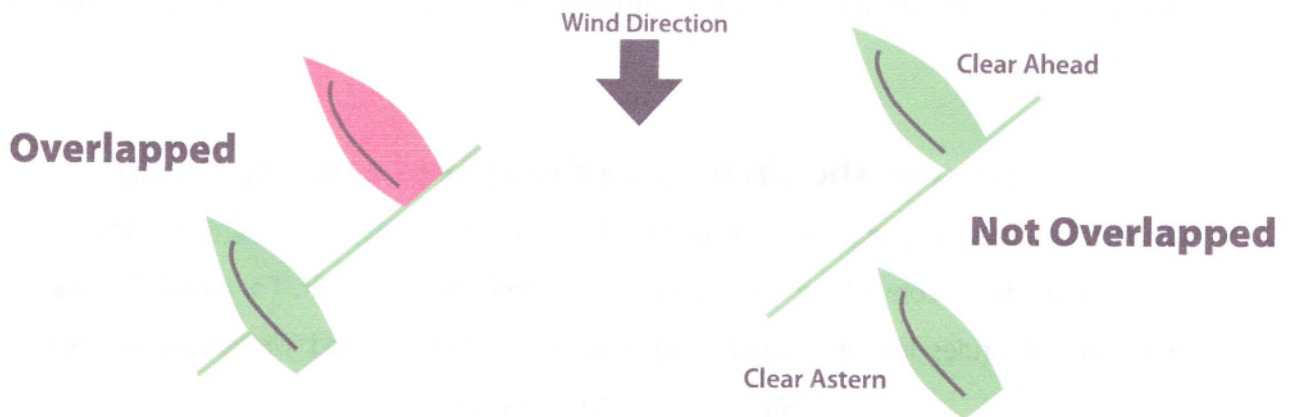


**Red Boats**  
Must "*Keep Clear*"

**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

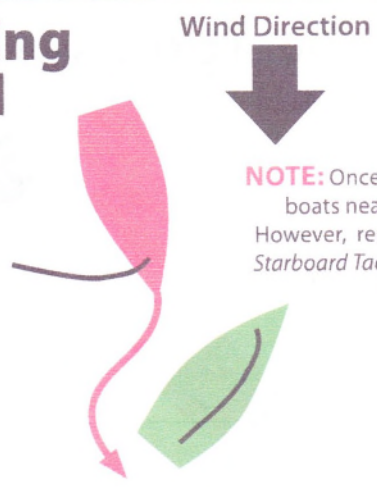
- Close Hauled** - A boat sailing as close to the wind direction as possible
- Head-to-Wind** - A boat pointed straight into the wind. Sails will be luffing.
- Inside** - A boat positioned between the mark and another boat
- Outside** - A boat positioned with another boat between them and the mark
- 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

## 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).

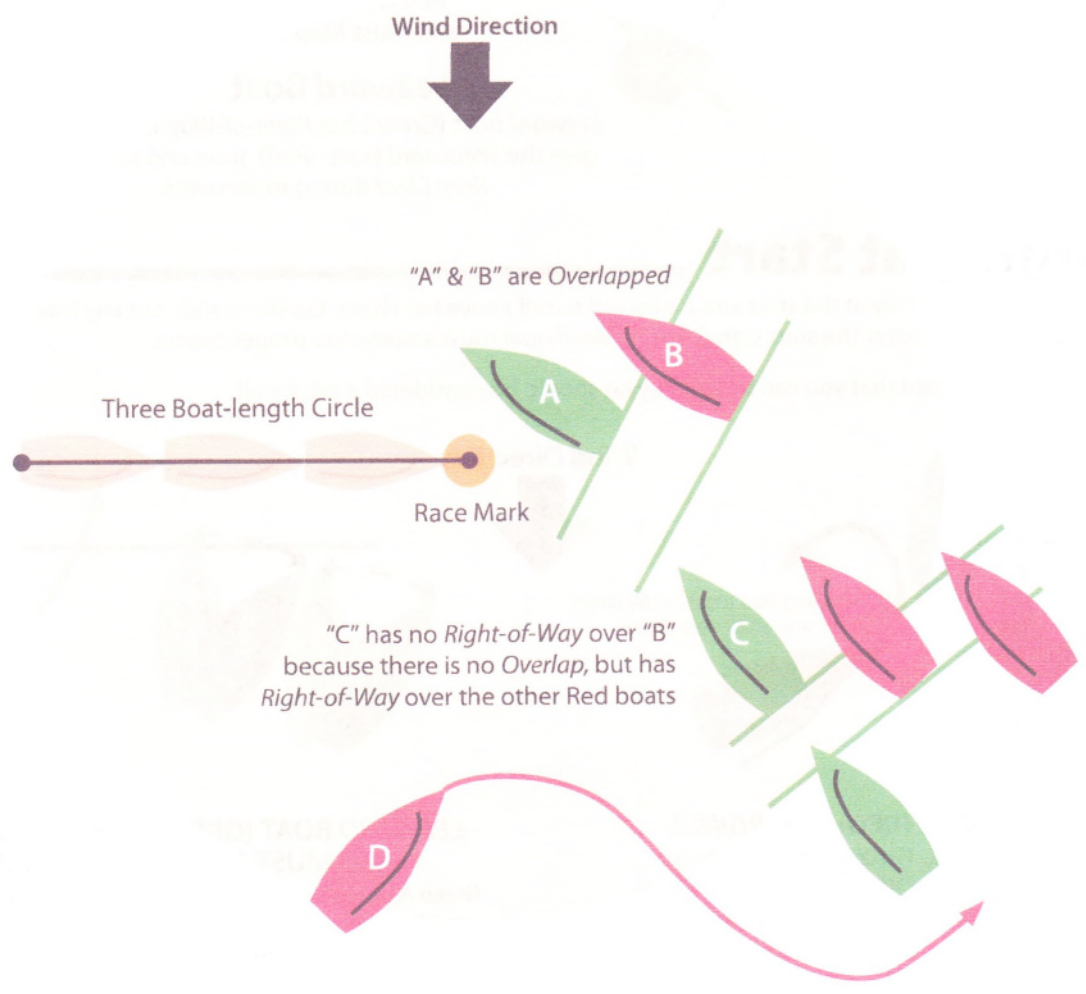


**NOTE:** Once again this rule applies for two boats near each other on the same tack. However, remember that any approaching *Starboard Tack* boat will have *Right-of-Way* over all *Port Tack* boats.

## Boats Converging at Mark

An *Inside* and *Overlapped* boat (Green A) within 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.



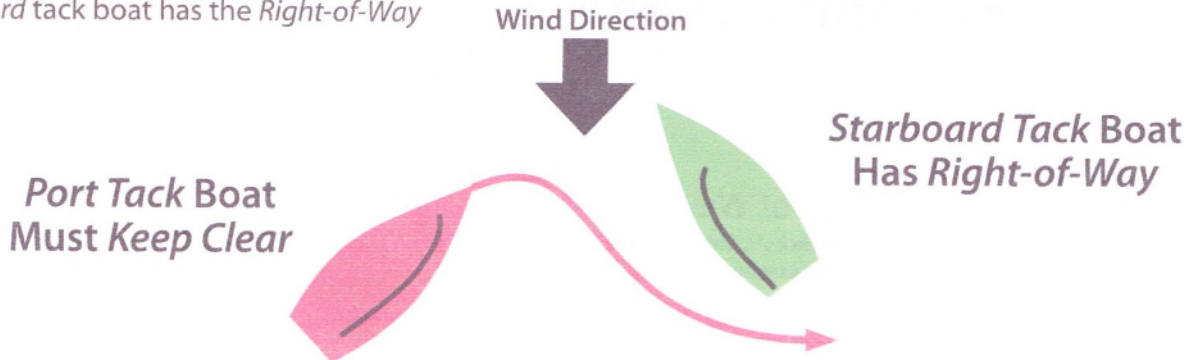
"A" & "B" are Overlapped

"C" has no *Right-of-Way* over "B" because there is no *Overlap*, but has *Right-of-Way* over the other Red boats

# 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*

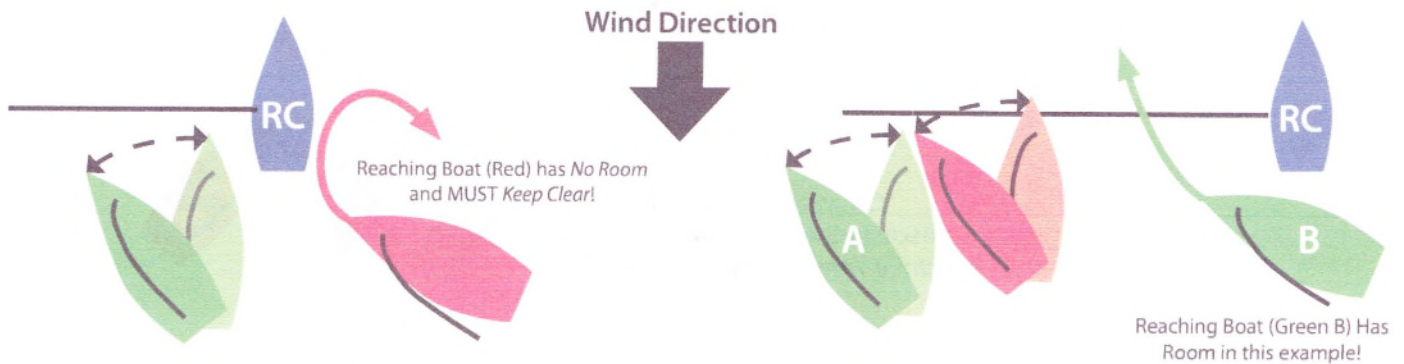
**NOTE:** This Rule applies for two boats near each other on the same tack. However, remember that any approaching Starboard Tack boat will have *Right-of-Way* over all Port Tack boats



## 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.



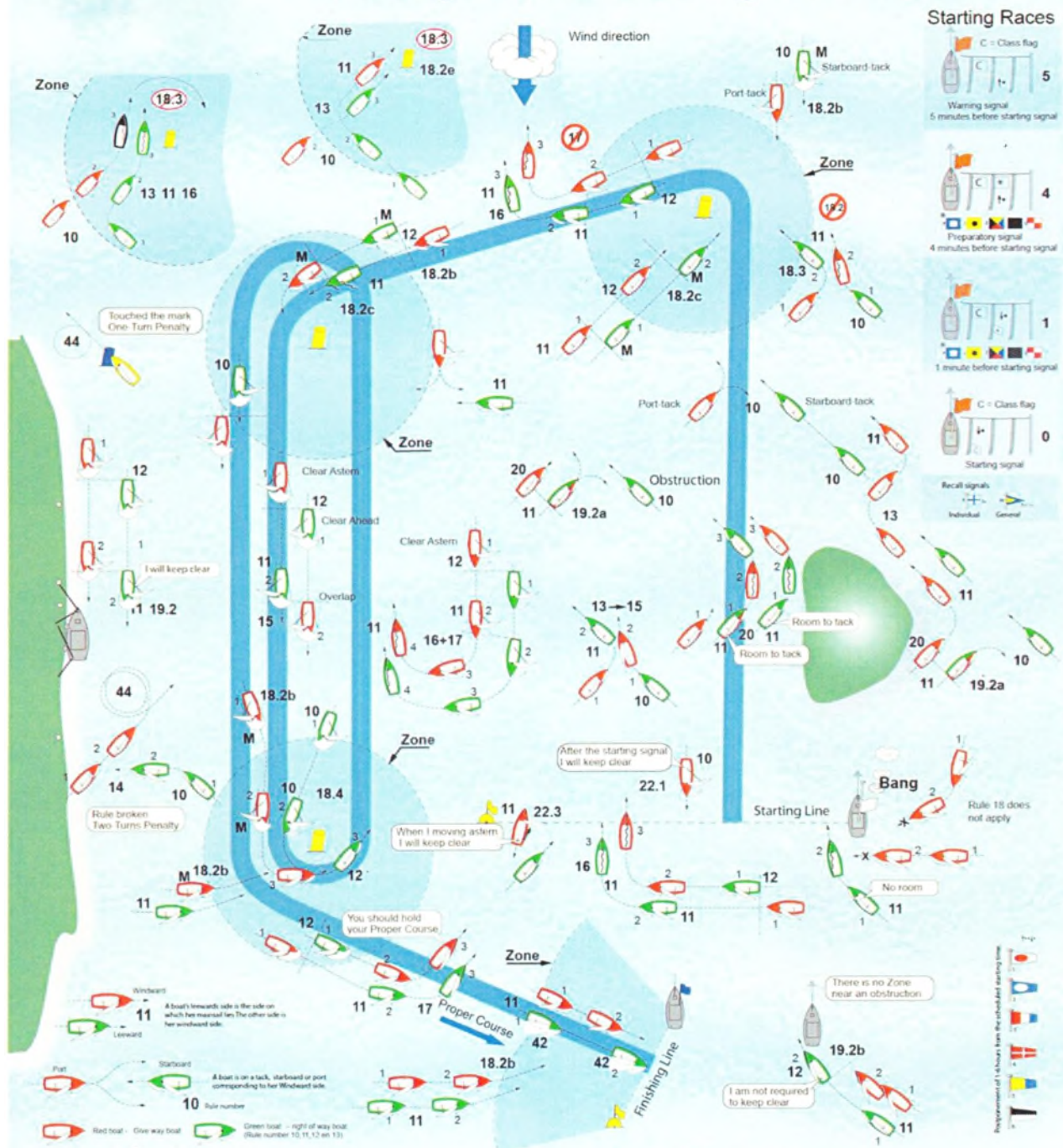
### REACHING BOAT (RED) IS BARGING!

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.

# Racing Rules of Sailing 2017 - 2020



### Starting Races

C = Class flag

5 Warning signal  
5 minutes before starting signal

4 Preparatory signal  
4 minutes before starting signal

1 Starting signal  
1 minute before starting signal

0 Starting signal

Recall signals  
Individual General

## Rules Chart

<p><b>Preparatory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparatory signal</li> <li>Rule 30.3 is in effect</li> <li>Rule 30.2 is in effect</li> <li>Rule 30.1 is in effect</li> <li>Rule 30.4 is in effect</li> </ul>	<p><b>Shortened Course</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The course has been shortened. Rule 12.2 is in effect.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recall Signals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual</li> <li>General recall: The warning signal will be made 1 minute after removal.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Abandonment Signals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All races that have started are abandoned. Return to the starting area. The warning signal will be made 1 minute after removal unless at that time the race is abandoned again or postponed.</li> <li>All races are abandoned. Further signals ensue.</li> <li>All races are abandoned. No more racing today.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Postponement Signals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Races not started are postponed. The warning signal will be made 1 minute after removal unless at that time the race is postponed again or abandoned.</li> <li>Races not started are postponed. Further signals ensue.</li> <li>Races not started are postponed. No more racing today.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other Signals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The object displaying this signal replaces a missing mark.</li> <li>Wear a personal Rotation device (see rule 42).</li> <li>Blue flag or shape. This race committee vessel is in position at the finishing line.</li> <li>Advice: A notice to competitors has been posted.</li> <li>Alert: Come within hail or follow.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Changing the Next</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The position of the next mark has been changed.</li> <li>To starboard</li> <li>To port</li> <li>To increase the length of the leg</li> <li>To decrease the length of the leg</li> </ul>
--	--	---	---	--	--

**Zone** A distance of three hull lengths    **M** Mark-room given

**Windward** A boat's windward side is the side on which her masthead lies. The other side is her leeward side.  
**Leeward**

**Port** A boat is on a tack, starboard or port corresponding to her leeward side.  
**Starboard**

**Red boat** - Give way boat    **Green boat** - right of way boat (Rule number 10, 11, 12 or 13)  
**Developing situation**

**Zone** A distance of three hull lengths    **M** Mark-room given



# 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 race official to fill out the appropriate paperwork.

## IF YOU FOUL ANOTHER BOAT

---

1. Avoid Contact!
2. If you believe you fouled another boat, promptly get clear of all other boats and do two complete circles in the same direction consisting of two tacks and two gybes. 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, and not necessarily on the same day, a protest committee will hear the incident to determine which boat was correct. If you are wrong, you will be Disqualified (DQ) from that race.

## IF YOU HIT A MARK

---

1. Promptly get clear of all other boats and do one complete circle in the same direction consisting of one tack and one gybe.

**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 during starting your circles.