

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

By Ken Quant Wind Direction

***Starboard rboard rboard Tack Tack Tack***

***Boat Has Right-of-Way***

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.*

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# *Starboard board board Tack Tack Tack vs Port Tack*

## *Windward Windward Windward vs Leeward Wind Direction*

Wind Direction

***Windward Windward***

***Windward Side of the Boat Starboard Tack***

***Port Tack***

Wind coming over the starboard

Wind coming over the port (left) (right) side of boat. Sails on port (left) side.  
side of boat. Sails on starboard (right) side.

*Leeward Leeward*

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

***Green Boats Have “Right-of-way”***

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

Wind Direction

Overlapped

***Red Boats Must “Keep Clear”***

Avoiding Collisions - All boats are required by rule to avoid a collision if possible!

*Right-of-Way ight-of-Way ight-of-Way*

is no excuse to cause a collision. Not Overlapped

## 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

**Clear Ahead**  
**Clear Astern**

*BASIC RIGHT-OF-WAY SITUATIONS Two Boats Converging on Opposite Tacks A Starboard Starboard Starboard tack boat has the Right-of-Way*

**Wind Direction**

***Starboard rboard  
rboard Tack Tack Tack Boat Port Port Port Tack Tack Tack  
Boat Has Right-of-Way Must Keep Clear***

**Two Boats Overlapped Sailing On the Same Tack Leeward Leeward 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 ight-of-Way ight-of-Way over all Port Tack boats

**No Barging at Start**

A Leeward Leeward Leeward boat has Right-of-Way ight-of-Way ight-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 Leeward Leeward boat must assume her proper course. Basically, any boat to leeward that you can potentially hit should be considered a brick wall.

**Wind Direction**

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

**Wind Direction**

***Windward Windward Windward***

*Boat Red is Overlapped and must Keep Clear*

*Leeward Leeward Leeward Boat Leeward Leeward Leeward boat (Green) has Right-of-Way, ight-of-Way ight-of-Way but has to give the Windward Windward Windward boat (Red) time and room to Keep Keep Keep Clear Clear Clear during maneuvers. RC*

Reaching Boat (Red) has No Room and MUST Keep Clear!

B Reaching Boat (Green B) Has Room in this example!

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

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 on Different Tack Boats Points-of-Sail

## Converging

### Wind Direction

NOTE: Once again this rule applies for two boats near each other on the same tack. However, remember that any approaching Leeward Boat has Right-of Way

*Starboard rboard rboard Tack Tack Tack boat will have Right-of-Way*

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

## Boats Converging at Mark

An Inside and Overlapped Overlapped Overlapped boat (Green A) within three boat-lengths of the mark has the Right-of-Way. ight-of-Way ight-of-Way In general, any Overlapped Overlapped Overlapped outside boat (Red B) must Keep Keep Keep Clear Clear 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 rboard rboard Tack Tack Tack boat. If a Starboard rboard rboard Tack Tack Tack

boat has to adjust course, you fouled them. Wind Direction

Three Boat-length Circle

*“A” & “B” are Overlapped*

Race Mark

*“C” has no Right-of-Way ight-of-Way ight-of-Way*

over “B” C because there is no Overlap, but has Right-of-Way over the other

Red boats

## **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.**

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