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. **DONT’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!**


Reproduction for FREE distribution is encouraged.
**BASIC TERMS**

**Starboard Tack vs Port Tack**
- **Wind Direction**
  - **Starboard Tack**: Wind coming over the starboard (right) side of boat. Sails on port (left) side.
  - **Port Tack**: Wind coming over the port (left) side of boat. Sails on starboard (right) side.

**Windward vs Leeward**
- **Windward Side of the Boat**
- **Leeward Side of the Boat**

**Right-of-Way**
When one boat has the Right-of-Way, the other boat(s) 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.

**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
**BASIC RIGHT-OF-WAY SITUATIONS**

**Two Boats Converging on Opposite Tacks**

*Wind Direction*

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

**Two Boats Overlapped Sailing On the Same Tack**

*Wind Direction*

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

**No Barging at Start**

*Wind Direction*

- *Reaching Boat (Red)* has No Room and MUST Keep Clear!
- *Reaching Boat (Green B)* Has Room in this example!

**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).

**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.

**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.
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.