

A QUICK OVERVIEW of the SIGNIFICANT RULE and GAME CHANGES in the 2009-2012 RACING RULES OF SAILING

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The following is a list of the significant changes in the 2009-2012 edition of The Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS). These are changes from the 2005-2008 edition of the RRS. NOTE: These brief summaries are not intended to be actual representations of the rules; nor is this a complete list of all the changes in the 2009-2012 RRS.

For a complete explanation of The Racing Rules of Sailing, read Dave Perry's book "Understanding the Racing Rules of Sailing" available from US SAILING at: store.ussailing.org/ or by calling 1.800.US.SAIL.1.

Rule 17.2 (On the Same Tack; Proper Course) has been deleted. This means that a windward boat or a boat clear ahead no longer has a proper course limitation when sailing near other boats. She can sail below her proper course if she wishes, for instance to make it more difficult for a boat astern to pass or establish an inside overlap nearing a mark. Windward boats must still keep clear of leeward boats under rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped).

Rule 18 (Mark-Room)

- Instead of saying "room at the mark," there is a new concept called "mark-room." "Mark-room" is the space a boat needs to sail to the mark in a seamanlike way; and then when she's at the mark, the space she needs to sail her proper course around the mark. The primary differences are that the previous rules did not specifically require outside boats to give inside boats room to sail to the mark; and once at the marks, inside boats were required to sail very close to the mark even if it slowed them down, even though most outside boats were more forgiving. There is not much game change here.
- In the previous rules, rule 18 began to apply when the boats were "about to round or pass" the mark. This vague and subjective phrase has been removed. Rule 18 now begins to apply to boats when one of them is in the "Zone." This will clarify more precisely when outside boats need to begin giving mark-room to inside boats.
- The "Zone" has been enlarged from two hull lengths to three (see the definition Zone). This is intended to provide inside boats and boats that are clear ahead at the Zone the time and space they should need to prepare for and execute their rounding maneuver. Note that the sailing instructions for a race or event can change the Zone to two or four lengths (rule 86.1(b)); and match and team racing will continue to use a two-length zone (Appendices C and D) and radio-controlled boat racing will continue to use a four-length zone (Appendix E). Under the previous rules, most overlapped outside leeward boats began giving room before the two-length zone, so the only real game change here is that boats clear ahead at three lengths from the mark are safe from being overlapped on the inside, whereas under the previous rules they weren't safe until two lengths away.
- Under new rule 18, if a boat entitled to mark-room sails outside the Zone for any reason, even if she is giving mark-room to boats inside her, rule 18 ceases to apply; and it is a fresh start under rule 18 when she re-enters the Zone.
- When a leeward "gate" is being used (two leeward marks close to one another that boats pass between and exit in either direction), rule 18.4 does not apply. That means that when a boat is approaching a gate mark on the inside with right of way over other boats, she does not need to sail her proper course around that mark for as long as she remains the right-of-way boat. She may sail farther from the mark than needed to sail her proper course before she gybes, even if she has no intention of sailing over to the other gate mark. Outside keep-clear boats will need to keep clear of her under rules 10 or 11.

Rule 19 (Room to Pass an Obstruction)

- “Obstructions” no longer have a “zone” around them. If boats are overlapped when they get to an obstruction, outside boats must give inside boats room to pass the obstruction, even if they weren’t overlapped before arriving at the obstruction. The only test for establishing an overlap between a boat and an obstruction (other than a continuing obstruction) is whether the outside boat is able to give the inside boat room after the overlap is established.
- At a continuing obstruction (such as a long dock, shore or seawall), a boat astern (B) that has the right of way is now allowed to establish an inside overlap between the boat ahead (A) and the obstruction even when there is not room for her to pass between them in safety; and A, as the keep-clear boat, must keep clear of B.
- Right-of-way boats in a race can still be “obstructions” but they are never “continuing” obstructions (see definition Obstruction). For instance, on the starting line, a boat astern (B) can now establish an overlap between a leeward boat (L) and a windward boat (W) even if there is not room for her to pass between them in safety, provided B complies with rule 15 when she becomes overlapped to leeward of W, and with rule 16 if she then luffs, and provided W can give B room to keep clear of L from the time the overlap begins (rule 19.2(b)). The same will be true on a downwind leg when B approaches two boats ahead (L and W).

Rule 20 (Room to Tack at an Obstruction) is previous rule 19. It now clarifies that when a boat is hailed, she must respond by tacking or hailing “You tack,” even when the hailing boat has hailed when safety did not require her to make a substantial course change to avoid the obstruction, or if the obstruction is a mark that the hailed boat was fetching. This is for safety. However, in that case the hailing boat has broken rule 20.3 and must take a penalty, and can be protested by the hailed boat.

Rule 23.2 (Interfering with Another Boat) has been changed to say that a boat is allowed to interfere with a boat taking a penalty or sailing on another leg as long as she is sailing a “proper course.” This makes this rule the same for fleet, match and team racing.

Rule 28.1 (Sailing the Course) now includes the language needed to require boats to pass through a “gate,” such that sailing instructions no longer need to write this out.

Rule 29.1 (Individual Recall) clarifies that when rule 30.3 (Black Flag Rule) is in effect, and a boat is OCS at the start, the race committee does not have to signal the OCS with flag X and a sound signal.

Rule 30.2 (Z Flag Rule) clarifies that if a boat receives a 20% Scoring Penalty and there is a general recall or abandonment after the starting signal, and the boat is in the triangle on a subsequent start of that race, she gets an additional 20% Scoring Penalty.

Rule 32.2 (Shortening or Abandoning After the Start) now requires the race committee to signal a shortened course before the first boat crosses the finishing line.

Rule 40 (Personal Flotation Devices) now refers to “personal buoyancy” as “personal flotation devices.” When personal flotation devices are required to be worn under this rule, the rule permits such devices to be taken off briefly while changing or adjusting clothing or personal equipment. Now sailing instructions referencing this rule do not need to include that language.

Rule 42 (Propulsion) now permits sailing instructions to specify certain circumstances when a boat can be propelled by an engine or other propulsion method, provided the boat does not gain a significant advantage in the race.

Rule 44 (Penalties at the Time of an Incident) now contains the One-Turn Penalty for touching a mark. Old rule 44.4(b) regarding penalizing a boat that has already taken a penalty has been moved to new rule 64.1(b).

Rule 51 (Movable Ballast) clarifies that sails that are not being used are considered "ballast," and as such they must be properly stowed and cannot be moved for the purpose of changing a boat's trim or stability; and it clarifies that bilge water may be pumped out.

Rules 60.2 & 60.3 (Right to Protest; Right to Request Redress or Rule 69 Action) now permits a race committee or a protest committee to protest a boat based on a self-incriminating remark made by that boat. Rule 60.2 now prohibits a race committee from protesting a boat based on information in a request for redress, which is the same for protest committees (see rule 60.3).

Rule 62.1(a) (Redress) now prohibits a boat from requesting redress from a protest committee decision when that boat was a party to the hearing.

Rule 62.2 (Redress) now requires requests for redress to be delivered to the race office, which makes it the same as for protests (see rule 61.3, Protest Time Limit).

Rule 63.4 (Interested Party) now requires members of a protest committee to declare any possible self-interest as soon as they are aware of it.

Rule 64.1(b) (Penalties and Exoneration) now clarifies that a boat that has taken an applicable penalty, whether on the water or ashore, cannot be further penalized for that incident, unless the penalty for the rule she broke is a disqualification that is not excludable from her series score. Note: a turns penalty is not applicable if the boat caused injury or serious damage or gained a significant advantage in the race or series by her breach (see rule 44.1(b), Penalties at the Time of an Incident).

Rule 69.1 (Allegations of Gross Misconduct; Action by a Protest Committee) now requires a protest committee to reschedule a rule 69 hearing if the competitor provides good reason for being unable to attend the hearing (rule 69.1(a)). Furthermore, if the competitor does not provide good reason for being unable to attend the hearing and does not come to it, the protest committee may conduct it without the competitor present (rule 69.1(d)). And if the protest committee chooses not to conduct the hearing without the competitor present or if the hearing cannot be scheduled for a time and place when it would be reasonable for the competitor to attend, the protest committee shall collect all the available information and, if the allegation seems justified, make a report to the relevant national authority (69.1(e)).

Rule 70.3 (Appeals and Requests to a National Authority) requires that, if boats will pass through the waters of more than one national authority while racing, the sailing instructions must identify the national authority to which appeals or requests are to be sent.

Rule 70.5 (Appeals and Requests to a National Authority) now contains a US SAILING prescription that requires race organizers to receive approval from US SAILING before they can deny the right of appeal from an event.

Rule 79 (Classification) is a new rule that says if a notice of race or class rule state that some or all competitors must satisfy classification requirements, the classification must be carried out as described in ISAF regulation 22, Sailor Classification Code.

Rule 86.1(b) (Changes to the Racing Rules) permits sailing instructions to change the "zone" around a mark to two or four lengths, provided the number is the same for all marks and all boats using those marks. They must refer specifically to the definition Zone when making this change.

Rule 86.1(c) (Changes to the Racing Rules) requires, as of January 1, 2011, that when a class rule changes one of the rules listed in rule 86.1(c), it refers specifically to the rule and states the change.

Rule 87 (Changes to the Class Rules) is a new rule that permits sailing instructions to change a class rule only when the class rules permit the change, or when written permission of the class association for the change is displayed on the official notice board.

Rule 88.1 (National Prescriptions) clarifies that the prescriptions that apply are the prescriptions of the national authority with which the organizing authority is associated. However, if boats will pass through the waters of more than one national authority while racing, the sailing instructions must identify any other prescriptions that will apply and when they will apply.

Appendix BB (Experimental Kiteboard Racing Rules) is a US SAILING prescription that applies to 'round the buoys' kiteboard racing.

Appendix P (Special Procedures or Rule 42) is the appendix that pertains when rule 67 (Rule 42 and Hearing Requirement) permits judges to penalize boats during the race for breaking rule 42 (Propulsion). Now, if a boat is penalized a third time in a regatta, she does not have to retire from the regatta. Her penalty is to retire from the race and be scored disqualified (DSQ), and she cannot drop that DSQ from her score. The Appendix now also states that a boat is not entitled to redress from the action of a judge penalizing her under rule P1 (Signalling a Penalty) unless that action failed to take into account a race committee signal or class rule.