

UNITED STATES SAILING ASSOCIATION  
RACING RULES OF SAILING 2005 – 2008 (ABRIDGED)  
THE BARE NECESSITIES

NOTE: Sailboat racing is conducted throughout the world under the same rules and regulations that are updated every four years by the International Sailing Federation. All of these rules apply to races held on Piseco Lake. Each skipper is responsible for knowing the rules, published every four years by the U.S. Sailing Association. The following rules, taken directly from the 2005 – 2008 edition are the ones we are most likely to encounter during a normal race. Interpretive comments were taken from the DVD LEARN THE RACING RULES by David Dellenbaugh. Each member is encouraged to borrow the DVD by contacting the PYC Commodore.

PART 1 – FUNDAMENTAL RULES

SAFETY

1.1 Helping Those in Danger

A boat or competitor shall give all possible help to any person or vessel in danger.

**Comment:** “Shall” means mandatory. Try to note the time and your position when you began sailing to help, and when you got back in the race. Ask the race committee for time/position compensation.

1.2 Life-Saving Equipment and Personal Buoyancy

A boat shall carry adequate life-saving equipment for all persons on board, including one item ready for immediate use, unless her class rules make some other provision. Each competitor is individually responsible for wearing personal buoyancy adequate for the conditions.

2 Fair Sailing

A boat and her owner shall compete in compliance with recognized principles of sportsmanship and fair play. A boat may be penalized under this rule only if it is clearly established that these principles have been violated. A disqualification under this rule shall not be excluded from the boat’s series score.

**Comment:** This important rule leads to a severe penalty – disqualification that must be counted.

4 Decision to Race

The responsibility for a boat’s decision to participate in a race or continue *racing* is hers alone.

**Comment:** Can’t fault or blame the race committee for holding the race.

## PART 2 – WHEN BOATS MEET

### SECTION A – RIGHT OF WAY

*A boat has right of way when another boat is required to **keep clear** of her. However, some rules in Sections B, C and D limit the actions of a right of way boat.*

#### 10 On opposite tacks

When boats are on opposite tacks, a *port-tack* boat shall *keep clear* of a *starboard-tack* boat.

#### 11 On the Same Tack, Overlapped

When boats are on the same *tack* and *overlapped*, a *windward* boat shall *keep clear* of a *leeward* boat.

**Comment:** This is the rule that is violated when a boat “Barges” at the start of a race.

#### 12 On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped

When boats are on the same *tack* and not *overlapped*, a boat *clear astern* shall *keep clear* of a boat *clear ahead*.

#### 13 While Tacking

After a boat passes head to wind, she shall *keep clear* of other boats until she is on a closehauled course. During that time rules 10, 11 and 12 do not apply. If two boats are subject to this rule at the same time, the one on the other’s port side or the one astern shall *keep clear*.

### SECTION B – GENERAL LIMITATIONS

#### 14 Avoiding Contact

A boat shall avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible. However, a right of way boat or one entitled to *room*

- (a) need not act to avoid contact until it is clear that the other boat is not *keeping clear* or giving *room*, and
- (b) shall not be penalized under this rule unless there is contact that causes damage or injury.

**Comment:** Rule’s intent is to minimize the number of collisions, especially the intentional ones.

#### 15 Acquiring Right of Way

When a boat acquires right of way, she shall initially give the other boat *room* to *keep clear*, unless she acquires right of way because of the other boat’s actions.

**Comment:** When a boat suddenly gains right of way, she must give the other boat space and time for response and a fair opportunity to keep clear. A leeward boat on the same tack gains right of way when she has established an overlap (bow ahead of the other's stern).

## 16 Changing Course

16.1 When a right-of-way boat changes course, she shall give the other boat *room to keep clear*.

16.2 In addition, when after the starting signal a *port-tack* boat is *keeping clear* by sailing to pass astern of a *starboard-tack* boat, the *starboard-tack* boat shall not change course if as a result the *port-tack* boat would immediately need to change course to continue *keeping clear*.

## 17 On the Same Tack; Proper Course

17.1 If a boat *clear astern* becomes *overlapped* within two of her hull lengths to *leeward* of a boat on the same tack, she shall not sail above her *proper course* while they remain *overlapped* within that distance, unless in doing so she promptly sails astern of the other boat. This rule does not apply if the *overlap* begins while the *windward* boat is required by rule 13 to *keep clear*.

**Comment:** Remember – 1. boats are on the same tack, 2. one boat comes from clear astern and establishes an overlap within two boat lengths of the other, 3. before the start there is no proper course so a boat can force the other up, 4. there is no overlap if a boat is required by rule 13 to keep clear, 5. a boat can head up another boat while it is tacking.

17.2 Except on a beat to windward, while a boat is less than two of her hull lengths from a *leeward* boat or a boat *clear astern* steering a course to *leeward* of her, she shall not sail below her *proper course* unless she gybes.

**Comment;** A boat sailing downwind that is clear ahead or to windward cannot sail below her proper course if another boat within two lengths is attempting to pass to leeward. However, she can bear up or luff to prevent a windward side passing attempt.

## SECTION C – AT MARKS AND OBSTRUCTIONS

*To the extent that a Section C rule conflicts with a rule in Section A or B, the Section C rule takes precedence.*

**Comment:** Rules about marks and obstructions take precedence over all other rules.

## 18 Rounding and Passing Marks and Obstructions

*In rule 18, **room** is **room** for an inside boat to round or pass between an outside boat and a **mark** or **obstruction**, including **room** to tack or gybe when either is a normal part of the manoeuvre.*

#### 18.1 When this Rule Applies

Rule 18 applies when boats are about to round or pass a *mark* they are required to leave on the same side, or an *obstruction* on the same side, until they have passed it. However, it does not apply

- (a) at a starting *mark* surrounded by navigable water or at its anchor line from the time the boats are approaching them to *start* until they have passed them, or
- (b) while the boats are on opposite tacks, either on a beat to windward or when the *proper course* for one of them, but not both, to round or pass the *mark* or *obstruction* is to tack.

**Comment:** A boat about to round or pass a mark is two or more boat lengths from the mark depending on: 1. boat size and speed, 2. wind strength, 3. presence of current or waves (large ones), 4. amount of sail-handling required before rounding. Rule 18 applies until the sterns of both boats are past the mark or obstruction. Rule 18 doesn't apply at a starting line surrounded by navigable water (anti-barging) when boats are making their final pass to the starting line. The leeward boat can luff the windward boat all the way to head to wind even if she passes from clear astern, because there is no proper course before the start. But once the gun goes off, the leeward boat (if it established the overlap from clear astern) must bear off to let the windward boat pass behind the committee boat, as there is now a proper course. Note that a "Barging" boat could still be forced up before the committee boat, when the leeward boat would not have established the overlap from clear astern. Rule 18 does not apply at the pin end of the starting line. Also note that a port tack boat cannot get buoy room from a starboard tacker.

#### 18.2 Giving Room; Keeping Clear

- (a) Overlapped – basic rule

When boats are *overlapped* the outside boat shall give the inside boat *room* to round or pass the *mark* or *obstruction*, and if the inside boat has right of way the outside boat shall also *keep clear*. Other parts of rule 18 contain exceptions to this rule.

**Comment:** If a gybe is a normal move at the mark, the outside boat must give the inside boat enough room to gybe. In stronger winds, the outside boat must give more room to the inside boat.

- (b) Overlapped at the zone

If boats were *overlapped* before either of them reached the *two-length zone* and the *overlap* is broken after one of them has reached it, the boat that was on the outside shall continue to give the other boat *room*. If the outside boat becomes

*clear astern* or *overlapped* inside the other boat, she is not entitled to *room* and shall *keep clear*.

(c) Not overlapped at the zone

If a boat was *clear ahead* at the time she reached the *two-length zone*, the boat *clear astern* shall thereafter *keep clear*. If the boat *clear astern* becomes *overlapped* outside the other boat, she shall also give the inside boat *room*. If the boat *clear astern* becomes *overlapped* inside the other boat, she is not entitled to *room*. If the boat that was *clear ahead* passes head to wind, rule 18.2(c) no longer applies and remains inapplicable.

**Comment:** The critical moment determining whether 18.2b or 18.2c applies is when one of the boats reaches the two length zone. When rule 18.2c applies, it doesn't matter which tacks the boats are on. Once the two boat length zone is reached, a boat that passes head to wind must keep clear of the other boat.

(d) Changing course to round or pass

When after the starting signal rule 18 applies between two boats and the right-of-way boat is changing course to round or pass a *mark*, rule 16 does not apply between her and the other boat.

**Comment:** This is the only time rule 16 doesn't apply; so the outside boat can close the gap between her and the mark, forcing the inside boat to go behind.

(e) Overlap rights

If there is a reasonable doubt that a boat obtained or broke an *overlap* in time, it shall be presumed that she did not. If the outside boat is unable to give *room* when an *overlap* begins, rules 18.2(c) and 18.2(b) do not apply.

**Comment:** Other boats must be able to respond to an inside overlap; if they can't (for example there are three or four boats closely parallel to each other), then the inside boat can't force them anywhere.

### 18.3 Tacking at a Mark

If two boats were approaching a *mark* on opposite *tacks* and one of them completes a tack in the *two-length-zone* when the other is fetching the *mark*, rule 18.2 does not apply. The boat that tacked

- (a) shall not cause the other boat to sail above closehauled to avoid her or prevent the other boat from passing the *mark*, and
- (b) shall give *room* if the other boat becomes *overlapped* inside her, in which case rule 15 does not apply.

**Comment:** This rule is meant to make tacking at the mark more difficult, thus reducing confusion at the mark. Three conditions are required for rule 18.3 to apply: 1. two boats must have approached the mark on opposite tacks; 2. one of

the boats must complete a tack inside the two length zone; 3. when one boat completes her tack, the other boat must be fetching the mark (she can pass on the required side of the mark without tacking). When these conditions have been met, the tacked boat must not get in the way of the other boat, causing the second boat to sail above closehauled. So! Avoid approaching a mark on port tack when there is traffic.

#### 18.4 Gybing

When an inside *overlapped* right-of-way boat must gybe at a *mark* or *obstruction* to sail her *proper course*, until she gybes she shall sail no farther from the *mark* or *obstruction* than needed to sail that course.

**Comment:** The purpose of this rule is to produce orderly mark roundings. Once the boat gybes, rule 18.4 turns off and no longer limits her course.

#### 18.5 Passing a Continuing Obstruction

While boats are passing a continuing *obstruction*, rules 18.2(b) and 18.2(c) do not apply. A boat *clear astern* that obtains an inside *overlap* is entitled to *room* to pass between the other boat and the *obstruction* only if at the moment the *overlap* begins there is *room* to do so. If there is not, she is not entitled to *room* and shall *keep clear*.

**Comment:** Note there must be room at the time the overlap is established for the boat clear astern to sail between the continuing obstruction and the other boat. If not, she cannot attempt to pass between them. In rule 18.5, rule 18.2c does not apply.

### 19 Room to Tack at an Obstruction

19.1 When approaching an *obstruction*, a boat sailing closehauled or above may hail for *room* to tack and avoid another boat on the same *tack*. However, she shall not hail unless safety requires her to make a substantial course change to avoid the *obstruction*. Before tacking she shall give the hailed boat time to respond. The hailed boat shall respond by either

- a. tacking as soon as possible, in which case the hailing boat shall also tack as soon as possible, or
- (a) immediately replying “You tack,” in which case the hailing boat shall tack as soon as possible and the hailed boat shall give *room*, and rules 10 and 13 do not apply.

19.2 Rule 19.1 does not apply at a starting *mark* surrounded by navigable water or at its anchor line from the time boats are approaching them to *start* until they have passed them or at the *mark* that the hailed boat can fetch. When rule 19.1 applies, rule 18 does not.

## SECTION D – OTHER RULES

*When rule 20 or 21 applies between two boats, Section A rules do not.*

**Comment:** These are exceptions to the previous rules.

### 20 Starting Errors; Penalty Turns; Moving Astern

20.1 A boat sailing towards the pre-start side of the starting line or its extensions after her starting signal to *start* or to comply with rule 30.1 shall *keep clear* of a boat not doing so until she is completely on the pre-start side.

**Comment:** Rule 30.1 is optional, and the PYC has decided not to use it. However, the boat returning to the pre-start side of the starting line must still keep clear of all boats not doing so.

20.2 A boat making a penalty turn shall *keep clear* of one that is not.

20.3 A boat moving astern by backing a sail shall *keep clear* of one that is not.

### 21 Capsized, Anchored or Aground; Rescuing

If possible, a boat shall avoid a boat that is capsized or has not regained control after capsizing, is anchored or aground, or is trying to help a person or vessel in danger. A boat is capsized when her masthead is in the water.

### 22 Interfering With Another Boat

22.1 If reasonably possible, a boat not *racing* shall not interfere with a boat that is *racing*.

**Comment:** Remember, after finishing a race keep the boat's wind shadow off the course. Do not hinder or impede a boat that is still racing.

22.2 A boat shall not change course if her only purpose is to interfere with a boat making a penalty turn or one on another leg of lap of the course.

## PART THREE – CONDUCT OF A RACE

### 30 Starting Penalties

### 31 Touching a Mark

31.1 While *racing*, a boat shall not touch a starting *mark* before *starting*, a *mark* that begins, bounds or ends the leg of the course on which she is sailing, or a finishing *mark after* finishing.

31.2 A boat that has broken rule 31.1 may, after getting well clear of other boats as soon as possible, take a penalty by promptly making one turn including one tack and one gybe. When a boat takes the penalty after touching a finishing *mark*, she shall sail completely to the course side of the line before *finishing*. However, if a boat has gained a significant advantage in the race or series by touching the *mark* her penalty shall be to retire.

**Comment:** A boat doesn't need to make a complete turn, but must make a tack and gybe in the same direction.

## PART 4 – OTHER REQUIREMENTS WHEN RACING

Part 4 rules apply only to boats *racing*.

### 40 Personal Buoyancy; Harnesses; Life-Saving Equipment

40.1 When flag Y is displayed with one sound before or with the warning signal, competitors shall wear life-jackets or other adequate personal buoyancy. Wet suits and dry suits are not adequate personal buoyancy.

***US Sailing prescribes that every boat shall carry life-saving equipment conforming to government regulations.***

40.2 A trapeze or hiking harness shall have a device that can quickly release the competitor from the boat at any time while in use.

### 42 Propulsion

#### 42.1 Basic Rule

Except when permitted in rule 42.3 or 45, a boat shall compete by using only the wind and water to increase, maintain or decrease her speed. Her crew may adjust the trim of sails and hull, and perform other acts of seamanship, but shall not otherwise move their bodies to propel the boat.

#### 42.2 Prohibited Actions

Without limiting the application of rule 42.1, these actions are prohibited:

- (a) pumping: repeated fanning of any sail either by pulling in and releasing the sail or by vertical or athwartships body movement;
- (b) rocking: repeated rolling of the boat, induced by
  - (1) body movement,
  - (2) repeated adjustment of the sails or centerboard, or
  - (3) steering;
- (c) ooching: sudden forward body movement, stopped abruptly;
- (d) sculling: repeated movement of the helm that is either forceful or that propels the boat forward or prevents her from moving astern;

- (e) repeated tacks or gybes unrelated to changes in the wind or to tactical considerations.

### 42.3 Exceptions

- (a) A boat may be rolled to facilitate steering.
- (b) A boat's crew may move their bodies to exaggerate the rolling that facilitates steering the boat through a tack or gybe, provided that, just after the tack or gybe is completed, the boat's speed is not greater than it would have been in the absence of the tack or gybe.
- (c) Except on a beat to windward, when surfing (rapidly accelerating down the leeward side of a wave) or planing is possible, the boat's crew may pull the sheet and the guy controlling any sail in order to initiate surfing or planing, but only once for each wave or gust of wind.
- (d) When a boat is above a closehauled course and either stationary or moving slowly, she may scull to turn to a closehauled course.
- (e) A boat may reduce speed by repeatedly moving her helm.
- (f) Any means of propulsion may be used to help a person or another vessel in danger.
- (g) To get clear after grounding or colliding with another boat or object, a boat may use force applied by the crew of either boat and any equipment other than a propulsion engine.

*Note: Interpretations of rule 42 are available at the ISAF website ([www.sailing.org](http://www.sailing.org)) or by mail upon request.*

## 44 Penalties for Breaking Rules of Part Two

### 44.1 Taking a Penalty

A boat that may have broken a rule of Part 2 while *racing* may take a penalty at the time of the incident. Her penalty shall be a Two-Turns Penalty unless the sailing instructions specify the use of the Scoring Penalty or some other penalty. However, if she caused injury or serious damage or gained a significant advantage in the race or series by her breach her penalty shall be to retire.

### 44.2 Two-Turns Penalty

After getting well clear of other boats as soon after the incident as possible, a boat takes a Two-Turns Penalty by promptly making two turns in the same direction, including two tacks and two gybes. When a boat takes the penalty at or near the finishing line, she shall sail completely to the course side of the line before *finishing*.

**Comment:** A boat must do the turns as soon as possible; can't wait until a later time further down the leg.

**Comment:** Rules are not supposed to help you win the race, they were created to help avoid collisions and give everyone a fair chance.

## DEFINITIONS

*Abandon* A race that a race committee or protest committee abandons is void but may be resailed.

*Clear Astern and Clear Ahead: Overlap* One boat is *clear astern* of another boat when her hull and equipment in normal position are behind a line abeam from the aftermost point of the other boat's hull and equipment in normal position. The other boat is *clear ahead*. They *overlap* when neither is *clear astern*. However, they also *overlap* when a boat between them *overlaps* both. These terms do not apply to boats on opposite *tacks* unless rule 18 applies.

*Finish* A boat *finishes* when any part of her hull, or crew or equipment in normal position, crosses the finishing line in the direction of the course from the last *mark*, either for the first time or after taking a penalty under rule 31.2 or 44.2 or, under rule 28.1, after correcting an error made at the finishing line.

*Interested Party* A person who may gain or lose as a result of a protest committee's decision, or who has a close personal interest in the decision.

*Keep Clear* One boat *keeps clear* of another if the other can sail her course with no need to take avoiding action and, when the boats are *overlapped* on the same *tack*, if the *leeward* boat can change course in both directions without immediately making contact with the *windward* boat.

*Leeward and windward* A boat's *leeward* side is the side that is, or when she is head to wind, was away from the wind. However, when sailing by the lee or directly downwind, her *leeward* side is the side on which her mainsail lies. The other side is her *windward* side. When two boats on the same *tack overlap*, the one on the *leeward* side of the other is the *leeward* boat. The other is the *windward* boat.

*Mark* An object the sailing instructions require a boat to leave on a specified side, and a race committee boat surrounded by navigable water from which the starting or finishing line extends. An anchor line and objects attached temporarily or accidentally to a *mark* are not part of it.

*Obstruction* An object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially, if she were sailing directly towards it and one of her hull lengths from it. An object that can be safely passed on only one side and an area so designated by the sailing instructions are also *obstructions*. However, a boat *racing* is not an *obstruction* to the other boats unless they are required to *keep clear* of her, give her *room* or, if rule 21 applies, avoid her.

*Overlap* See *Clear Astern* and *Clear Ahead; Overlap*.

*Party* A *party* to a hearing; a protestor; a protestee; a boat requesting redress; a boat or a competitor that may be penalized under rule 69.1; a race committee or an organizing authority in a hearing under rule 62.1(a).

*Postpone* A *postponed* race is delayed before its scheduled start but may be started or *abandoned* later.

*Proper Course* A course a boat would sail to *finish* as soon as possible in the absence of the other boats referred to in the rule using the term. A boat has no *proper course* before her starting signal.

*Protest* An allegation made under rule 61.2 by a boat, a race committee or a protest committee that a boat has broken a *rule*.

*Racing* A boat is *racing* from her preparatory signal until she *finishes* and clears the finishing line and *marks* or retires, or until the race committee signals a general recall, *postponement* or *abandonment*.

*Room* The space a boat needs in the existing conditions while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanship way.

#### *Rule*

- (a) The rules in this book, including the Definitions, Race Signals, Introduction, preambles and the rules of relevant appendices, but not titles;
- (b) ISAF Regulation 19, Eligibility Code; Regulation 20, Advertising Code; and Regulation 21, Anti-Doping Code;
- (c) The prescriptions of the national authority, unless they are changed by the sailing instructions in compliance with the national authority's prescription, if any, to rule 87;
- (d) The class rules (for a boat racing under a handicap or rating system, the rules of that system are 'class rules');
- (e) The notice of race;
- (f) The sailing instructions; and
- (g) Any other documents that govern the event.

*Start* A boat *starts* when, having been entirely on the pre-start side of the starting line at or after her starting signal, and having complied with rule 30.1 if it applies, any part of her hull, crew or equipment crosses the starting line in the direction of the first *mark*.

*Tack, Starboard or Port* A boat is on the *tack, starboard* or *port*, corresponding to her *windward* side.

*Two-Length Zone* The area around a *mark* or *obstruction* within a distance of two hull lengths of the boat nearer to it.

*Windward* See *Leeward* and *Windward*.

**“You haven’t won the race, if in winning the race, you’ve lost the respect of your competition.” Paul Elvestrom**

CA 6/16/08