

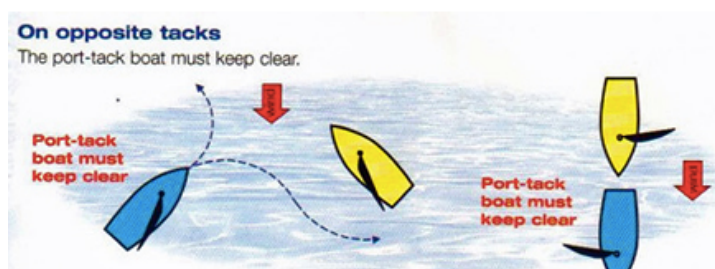


Some basic racing rules for those new to racing

The purpose of this guide is to explain some of the basic rules of sailing, governing rights of way under different circumstances. The full list of sailing rules is published by the IYRU and is very long and detailed. This document is written to give you a 'starter' and contains the basics which will hopefully help you navigate your way around the course with confidence, a better understanding of what to do, and why some people might use terms like 'starboard', 'water at the mark' or 'windward boat' when communicating with other boats on the water.

Avoiding collisions. This is the guiding principle behind most of the rules we will explain here. It should be everyone's primary concern to avoid a collision in the first place, something which may result in damage to boats or people. Just because you have right of way in a situation, does not remove responsibility on you to avoid a collision if all else fails.

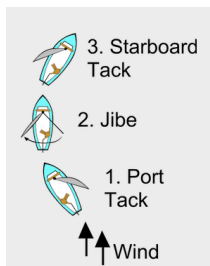
'Starboard!' The most common cry on the water and most often when sailing into the wind (beating), with boats on opposite tacks are criss-crossing each other many times on the way to the windward mark. The simple rule here is the boat on starboard tack has right of way. The boat on port must take avoiding action, for example by bearing away from the wind and passing behind the starboard boat, or by tacking onto starboard as well, below the boat starboard.



How do I know if I am on starboard? Something that can confuse when first racing. A simple guide is that you are on starboard when...

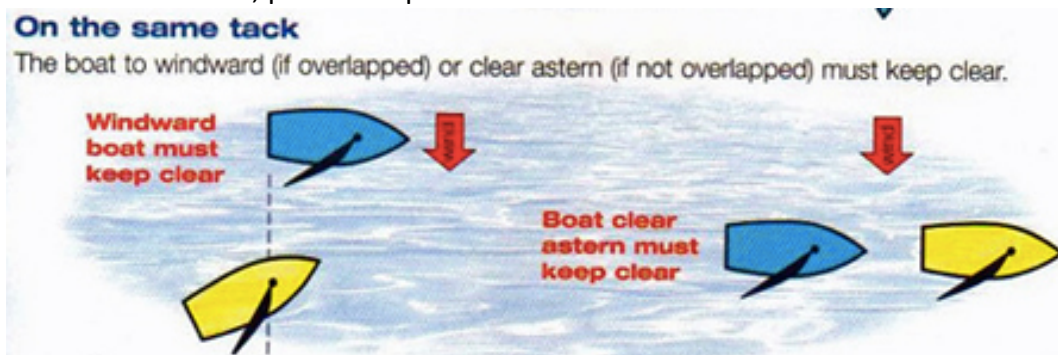
- The boom is on the port side of the boat
- And/or the helm can see the starboard side of the boom
- And/or the helm is sitting on the starboard side

One good tip is to put a piece of tape along the right hand side of the boom. If the helm is able to see the tape, then you are probably on a starboard whether that is on beat, a reach or run.



Starboard boats also have right of way when two boats are on different legs of the course. For example a boat coming down the course on a run on starboard has right of way on port tack boats coming up on the beat. Similarly, boats beating into the wind on starboard have right of way over boats coming down the run on a port run.

“Windward boat!” So, what happens when two boats are heading towards each other, both on starboard, or both on port. This can happen easily on our river, for example when one boat is running with the wind on port, and another boat is beating/close hauled also on port. Whether port-and-port, or starboard-and-starboard, the same rule applies, the boat closest to where the wind is coming from must keep clear. So you might be coming down the river on a starboard run, and a boat coming towards you on a beat (also on starboard) might shout ‘windward boat’ to you. That is the request to you to alter your course and keep clear. A cry of “windward boat” is translated as: “Hey, we are both on the same tack but you are closest to the wind, please keep clear of me.”



Boat astern keeps clear. Also referred to as the overtaking boat rule, the boat astern trying to pass must keep clear of the boat it is trying to pass.

Manoeuvring before the start. During pre start manoeuvres, the same basic port/starboard rule applies. Boats sailing along the line on port should manoeuvre round boats on starboard tack. Similarly as the 'windward boat' you have to keep clear of boats on the same tack beneath you, usually done by luffing up. Even if this means you get pushed over the start line, the boat below you has the right to luff you, if on the same tack, since you are the 'windward boat'.

Very importantly, boats on a second start must keep clear of the start line for the first start. Stay downwind of the startline until the first start has sailed off.

Starting too early. If you are over the line at the start, you will be disqualified from the race, unless you safely cross back over the line and start again from behind the line. This can be difficult to do on a crowded start line, and please bear in mind that while you are trying to manoeuvre your boat back across the start line again, you have no right of way over boats which have started correctly (even if you are on starboard). Keep clear and find a safe gap to go back through the line to re-start.

Rules at the windward mark. This applies to the race buoy at the end of the beat, usually but not always, the mark closest to Jenkins' Quay (when the wind is blowing from the sea). At this mark, the main rule to consider is port/starboard. Starboard boats have right of way. Experienced sailors will always try to be on starboard in good time for the approach to the windward mark. Coming into this mark on port, then suddenly finding a queue of starboard boats sailing across you makes it very hard to round the mark, you have no right of way and cannot barge in.

Rules at the downwind marks, after a run or a reach. **'Water at the mark!'** So what does it mean if someone says this to you? Key to understanding this rule on the water is to imagine a circle drawn around the buoy, at three boat lengths from the mark. If at the point of three boat lengths two or more boats are overlapping, then the boat on the inside (passing closest to the mark) can call 'water at the mark' and the outside boats must keep clear and avoid a collision.

An overlap starts when one boat's bow overlaps another's stern, they do not need to be fully alongside.

Any boat coming in faster and establishing an overlap after three boat lengths does not have any right of way and must keep clear. Water at the mark is only established at the point of the three boat lengths circle.

Three boat lengths is defined by the length of the largest boat in the overlapped group.

'Water to tack please'. This applies most often on the beat, tacking into the wind, especially when working against the tide, when you are trying to sail close to the shore. If two boats are on similar courses toward the shore, the boat closest to the shore can ask for water to tack to avoid running aground. The other boat must adjust course in some way to enable the other boat to tack away from the shore. Most often the other boat tacks first allowing the inside boat space to tack away from the shore. You cannot run another boat aground.

CHANGE TO LOCAL BANTHAM RULES 2022. Hitting a race mark/buoy. You must not hit any part of the race buoy with any part of your boat (or people the in it). If you do, you must make amends. Until 2021, the local Bantham rule was you had to go round that mark again. This was changed in 2022 to adopt the more common standard used by all other RYA racing clubs, namely if you hit a mark, you must to a 360 degree turn, on the next leg of the course, when it is safe to do so. You have no rights of way when doing your 360, so plan carefully when and how you will perform this move. Gybe round or tack round, it is up to you. But the 360 degree turn has to be performed before you get to the next race buoy. This is generally acknowledged as being much safer than trying to find a gap to re-round a mark, especially when it is crowded.

When performing your 360 degree turn, keep clear of other boats, you have no right of way when doing your penalty.

‘Please do some turns’. If you infringe a rule, resulting in a right-of-way boat being disadvantaged or causing a collision which was avoidable, then you should also perform a 360 degree turn, either gybing or tacking it does not matter which. Again you have no rights of way when performing your turns, so pick your spot well.

(Note the 360 degree penalty is a Bantham SC local adaptation on the full IYRU rules, which require a 720 degree turn).

Why are people hailing? Being polite. The main purpose of hailing ‘starboard’, ‘windward boat’, or ‘water at the mark’ or whatever, is really to get the attention of the other boat. Don’t assume the other boat has seen you, communicate with them by hailing and drawing their attention to the situation. Calling ‘starboard’ for example is like saying: “Hey there, have you seen me, I am on starboard and I have right of way”. In other words it is the first step in avoiding a collision. As such, please make your hails clear and reasonably loud. But be polite and do try to avoid shouting and seeming aggressive. Things can sometimes get tense in racing, but calling right of way on another boat can still be polite and civilised.