

The Racing Rules of Sailing – 2009 ‘thru 2012 and how some of the changes may affect you!



Changes to the
RACING
RULES OF
SAILING
2009 - 2012

At the end of each Olympic year, the Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS) are updated for the next four years to include the next Olympiad. The next set of rules run for the period 2009 – 2012.

So what's new for 2009?

- Many minor changes that:
 - Usually clarify a rule
 - Sometimes change a rule
 - Sometimes change a rule number
- A complete rewrite of Section C of Part 2 (rules 18, 19 and now 20) dealing with marks and obstructions.
- But few real game changes

Rules 1.2 and 40. We no longer have Life-Jackets or Buoyancy Aids, they are now defined as Personal Flotation Devices. Sailing instructions should reflect the new terminology. There is a minor addition to the wording at the end of rule 40 (and others relating to PFD's) – “except briefly while changing or adjusting clothing or personal equipment”.

For those using a trapeze harness, the rule that was to come into force on the 1st January 2009 about having to have a quick-release mechanism (Rule 40.2) is being deleted. This requirement is no longer going to be mandatory, although advised.

The rules for taking a penalty at the time of an incident (Two turns for breaking a 'When Boats Meet' rule of part 2, and one for touching a mark) have been reorganised to be much clearer but nothing has changed. (Rule 44)

A protest committee may now act on a report from a representative of a boat admitting a rule breach. (Rule 60.2(a) and 60.3(a)).

Rule 63.7 says that if there is a conflict between the Notice of Race and the Sailing Instructions, the protest committee shall apply the rule that it believes will provide the fairest result for all boats affected. This is of particular relevance to those going to open meetings.

Not that many sailors knew it existed, but the old rule 17.2 has been deleted, which now allows a windward boat to sail below her proper course without having to gybe.

SECTION C CHANGES

The most significant changes occur in Section C, where there are now 3 rules instead of two previously. Rule 18 for *marks*; rule 19 for *room* to pass *obstructions* and rule 20 (previously rule 19) for *room* to tack at *obstructions*.

Section C rules do 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. When rule 20 applies, rules 18 and 19 do not.

Rule 18 applies when either boat reaches the zone, not when boats are “about to round”, rule 18.1 tells you when rule 18 applies.

The size of a “zone” at a mark has been increased from two to THREE boat lengths. This is not called a ‘three length zone’ but just a ‘zone’ which is defined as ‘*The area around a mark within a distance of three hull lengths of the boat nearer to it. A boat is in the zone when any part of her hull is in the zone.*’. However, sailing instructions may change to ‘two’ or ‘four’ the number of hull lengths determining the zone around marks, providing the number is the same for all boats using those marks and for all marks on the course. For those into team and match racing, the zone is altered in the relevant appendices (C and D) to two lengths as standard.

There is a new definition called ‘*mark-room*’ and with it comes a complete re-write of rule 18 (which used to be Rounding and Passing Marks and Obstructions). One of the changes is that as soon as the first boat is in the zone (three hull lengths) the outside boat must give sufficient room for the inside boat to ‘sail to the mark’ in a seamanlike manner. Then, at that moment, the outside boat must give room to the inside boat to sail her proper course around the mark.

This obligation normally starts when either boat has reached the zone. There is an important exception. If the boats are overlapped and the outside boat will have to change course before the zone in order to give room, then she must do so; she can’t wait until she reaches the zone and claim there was not enough distance for her to change course and give room.

Another important change is that the mark-rounding rules do not apply between a boat that is leaving the mark and one that is approaching it – the normal right of way rules apply. Please read rule 18 Mark-Room for the full text. Rule 18.2 tells you when a boat has to give *mark-room*.

Rule 19 deals with Room to Pass an Obstruction; rule 20 goes on to deal with Room to Tack at an Obstruction.

These are probably the major changes that will probably affect the average club sailor. Those sailing on the open circuit and at National and International level would be well advised to study the rules more fully. The RYA publish the Racing Rules of Sailing in publication YR1/09 at a cost of £7.99 (less 10% if you are an RYA Member) available on line from the RYA Bookshop. Changes are sidelined to make it easy to spot them.

The new edition has been printed on waterproof paper, so it should last in the bottom of your sailing bag or trouser pocket for a lot longer.

If you have questions that you would like answered as you start sailing to the new rules, you can send your question to me, via the RYA Rules Advisory Service (of which I am Chairman) on the RYA Web Site, under Knowledge Base, Racing Rules or directly to me at Martin@Smethers.co.uk

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November 2008

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