

A LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO THE RACING RULES

This guide is not a substitute for the Racing Rules, but aims at explaining your rights and obligations in certain situations and covers the acceptance of penalties and lodging of protests for this event.

By entering the Round the Island Race, which is governed by the Racing Rules of Sailing, you agreed to some basic principles and fundamental rules:

- you agreed to compete in compliance with recognised principles of sportsmanship and fair play
- you agreed that when you break a rule you would promptly take a penalty, which, if you cause serious damage or injury, may be to retire.
- you agreed to accept the penalties imposed by a protest committee and any other action taken under the rules. The rules in this context also include those in the Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions.
- you agreed to give all possible help to any person or vessel in danger. This means that you must stop to help in, for instance, a man overboard situation. You should stand by until the person is either back on his boat or if necessary recover them onto your own boat. Make a note of the length of time that you were forced to stop racing, and when you have finished go to the protest desk at the CCC Regatta Centre and fill in a Request for Redress form. The Protest Chairman will ask you some questions and, if they agree, you will have the time you spent assisting deducted from your elapsed time.
- you agreed to avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible. It is important to remember that this applies to the right-of-way boat as well as the give-way one.

The Racing Rules are re-issued every 4 years and the new 2021 - 2024 edition (with a few changes) came into force in January 2021. The Rule Book is a daunting read for many people but everyone taking part in the Race should have, at least, read the rules of Part 2 (When Boats Meet).

The Rules of Part 2 apply between you and any other boat in the Race. If you meet a boat that is not racing in the Round the Island Race but is obviously racing in another race, they also apply.

If you meet a boat that is just cruising then the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (the Col Regs.) apply - you do not have any rights over them because you are racing. Please be aware that you are likely to meet several boats that are not racing as you go round and, quite apart from your obligations under the rules, you should accord them every courtesy. We all have equal rights of enjoyment on the water and we expect you, as a competitor, to respect these rights.

One of the more difficult aspects of the Race for competitors to come to terms with is the huge diversity of sizes and design types of boats entered. The majority are monohull racing or cruising yachts, of differing sizes, but with similar angles of sail, however, you must also be prepared to meet multihulls and sportsboats which sail at different angles, particularly those with asymmetric spinnakers, and some Classics and Old Gaffers which do not manoeuvre as easily. This means that if you are not sure of exactly how a boat is able to respond you should be very careful when changing course or acquiring right-of-way and make sure that the "room" you give them is adequate in all conditions. "Room - the space a boat needs in the existing conditions, including space to comply with her obligations under the rules of Part 2 and 31, while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way."

Rule 10 On Opposite Tacks (Port and Starboard rule)

"When boats are on opposite tacks, a port-tack boat shall keep clear of a starboard-tack boat." The obligations of the port-tack (give-way) boat are clear but the starboard-tack (right-of-way) boat also has some obligations. In a cross tacking situation you are expected to hold your course, keep a good lookout, and to take avoiding action if it becomes clear that the other boat is not keeping clear. A hail of "starboard" is not required but is helpful. The port-tack boat must remember that, even if she thinks there will not be a collision, but the starboard-tack boat has doubt, changes her course and protests, the starboard-tack boat will very likely win her protest. A port-tack boat in this situation might well be wise to take her yellow flag time penalty.

Rule 11 On the Same Tack, Overlapped (Windward/Leeward rule)]

"When boats are on the same tack and overlapped, a windward boat shall keep clear of a leeward boat." Here the windward boat is the give-way boat and has to keep clear. However, the leeward boat, although she is the right of way boat, cannot change her course without giving the windward boat room to keep clear - so be careful when luffing and watch spinnakers when sailing downwind.

Rule 12 On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped (Clear ahead, Clear astern rule)

“When boats are on the same tack and not overlapped, a boat clear astern shall keep clear of a boat clear ahead.” If you are the boat that is clear astern you are the give-way boat and should not sail so close that you might run into the boat clear ahead if she happens to be “stopped” by a wave. Note the words “on the same tack”. If the boats are on opposite tacks, the Port and Starboard rule applies, NOT this one.

Rule 20 Room to Tack at an Obstruction

There are several areas of the course (such as Cowes Green and Ryde Sands) where the shoreline, and lack of water depth, becomes a continuing obstruction for boats racing and our competitor feedback tells us that not all of you understand how you should respond when another boat asks for room to tack. When boats are on the same tack on a beat and come to such an obstruction the leeward boat gets to decide which way they are going to pass it. If the leeward boat hails for “Room to Tack” the other boat must give it to her but the leeward boat must give the other boat time to respond before she tacks. If the other boat believes that the call is unjust she cannot just ignore the hail but may reply “You tack” and then give room for the leeward boat to tack and avoid her.

Going Aground and Outside Assistance

If you are unfortunate enough to go aground, perhaps on Ryde Sands, which is a trap for many, then there are some rules you should be aware of. You may get clear by using force from your own crew and any equipment other than a propulsion engine, and then continue racing (rule 42.3 (h)). If, however, you accept a tow from another vessel then this becomes accepting outside help (rule 41) and you must retire. If you use your engine to get clear then this breaks rule 42 and you must retire.

Penalties

Penalty turns do not apply in this event. Make sure you have a yellow penalty flag on board. If you have an incident involving the rules of Part 2 (When Boats Meet) and believe you may have been at fault then, provided you have not caused serious damage or injury, it is wise to take your alternative penalty. This entails displaying your yellow flag straight away, which tells the boat, and others in the Race, that you have infringed and are accepting a penalty (an addition of 2% of your elapsed time) and that they do not need to protest you. Then you must inform the Race Committee as soon as possible (but not before 0930), and go to the CCC Regatta Centre to fill in a special form which must be within two hours of your finishing time. If you believed you were in the right when you were on the water but later decided that you had been at fault then you can still take a slightly higher penalty (5%) ashore after the Race and get a finishing position. If you take neither penalty and find yourself the subject of a protest then, if you were at fault, you will be disqualified from the Race.

If you touch a mark (rule 31) during the Race you should follow the yellow flag instructions above.

Protests

No one likes having to protest but it is important not to allow those who disregard the rules to get away with it.

Make sure you have a red protest flag on board. If you have an incident and believe you are in the right then you must do three things. You must immediately both display your protest flag and hail the word “protest”. The protest committee will almost certainly rule your protest invalid if you have to take time to go below to get the flag out of a locker - so have it handy and show it quickly. Then you must inform the Race Committee as soon as possible (but not before 0930) that you intend to lodge a protest. They will broadcast this information by VHF radio so that the other boat knows she is being protested (see Sailing Instructions for transmission times). After the Race, if you intend to go ahead with lodging the protest, you will need to go to the CCC Regatta Centre where you will be guided through the procedure and given a time for the hearing. The written protest must be lodged at the Regatta Centre within two hours of your finishing time.

Enjoy your Race - Please sail safely and responsibly and obey the Racing Rules of Sailing

