

What the Sailing Words Mean

In order to understand the Racing Rules of Sailing, you have to understand the words. The Rules in Brief from AMYA is an excellent interpretation of the rules in less than one page. It is very condensed and complete for us who only want to have fun racing R/C sailboats. Before reading it, please understand these weird words:

Starboard Tack/Port Tack- A boat is either on Starboard tack, on Port tack, or in the process of Tacking, i. e. changing tacks. A boat is on starboard tack when the wind is coming from her right (starboard) side. The main sail boom is then on the left side of the boat. When the wind is coming from the left (port) side she is on port tack, and the main sail boom is on the right side.

Tacking – A boat is in the process of tacking from the time her bow crosses the wind, until she is on a new close hauled course.

Windward/Leeward- The boat that is located closer to where the wind is coming from is the Windward boat. The other boat in the comparison is called Leeward boat.

Astern/Ahead/Overlap-You need a drawing triangle to figure this one out. Start with the lead boat and draw a line perpendicular to its centerline starting at its back end going both left and right. If the following boat's bow is not ahead of this line it is Clear Astern, and the leading boat is Clear Ahead. If it is ahead of this line, the boats are Overlapped. Note that a change of course by the lead boat can change the situation quickly.

Keeping Clear-If you do not force another boat to maneuver to avoid a collision with you, you are keeping clear. You may not necessarily have to keep clear if you have the right of way according to the rules; the other boat may need to keep clear of you. The rules are written to prevent collisions, so if one occurs, some boat has violated a rule.

Proper Course- This is the course you would normally sail to try to win the race. Obviously, this is a very subjective thing, since sailors may have different opinions about how to win races. Isn't this why we race?

Gybes/Tacks- A Gybe is a maneuver when going downwind when the main sail boom goes from one side of the boat to the other. A Tack is the same thing when going upwind.

Penalty Turn: After getting away from other boats do one tack and one gybe. A 360 degree turn is one tack and one gybe. In R/C sailing all penalties are only one turn.

Fetching – A boat is fetching a mark when she does not need to tack to make the mark.

Room – Room is the space a boat needs to maneuver in a seamanlike manor and to comply with the rules.

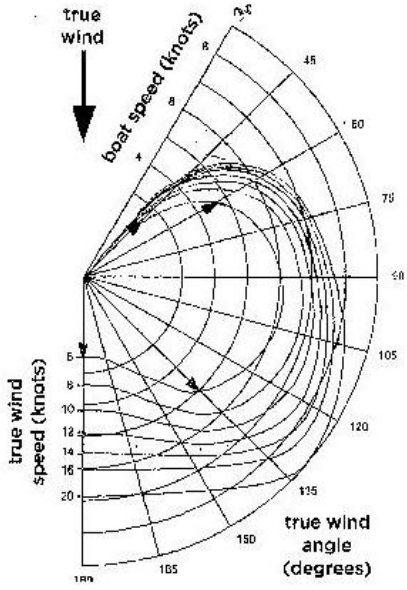
Mark-Room – Room for a boat to sail to a mark and round it, but not necessarily room to tack.

Protest – An allegation by a boat (or committee) that another boat has broken a rule. (It has nothing to do with emotions, or politics. It the equivalent of calling a ball "out" in tennis.) Almost all protests are settled on the water by the offending boat taking a penalty turn.

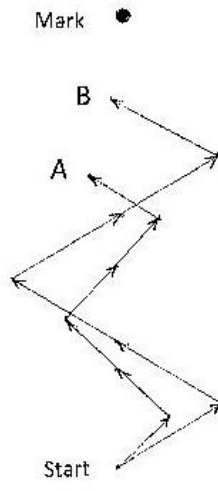
Zone – For R/C sailing, this is the area around a mark within four hull lengths. A boat is in the zone when any part of her hull is in the zone. Some special rules apply in this area.

Sailboat Performance

Typical Sailboat Polar

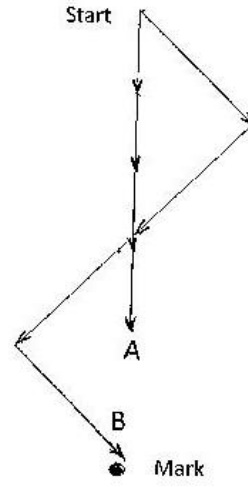


Sailing to windward
6 knot wind



Boat A - 45 deg course
Boat B - 60 deg course

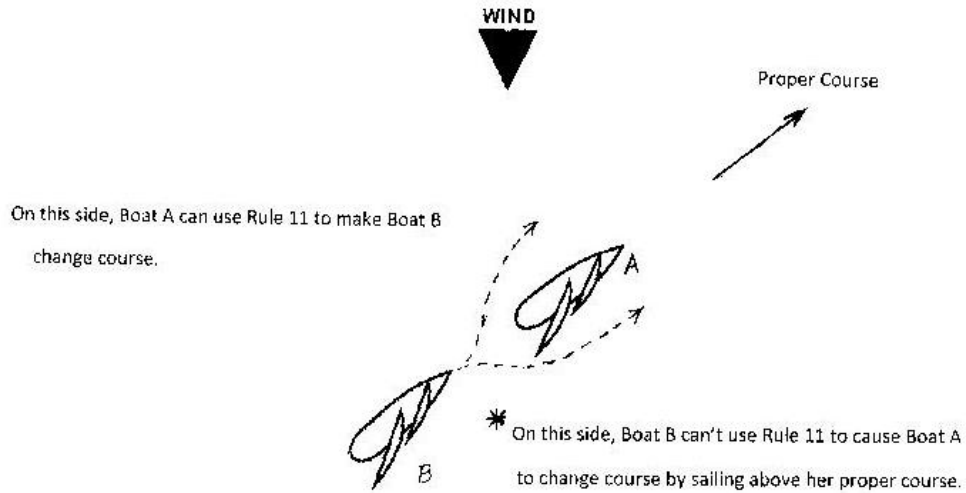
Sailing downwind
6 knot wind



Boat A - 180 deg course
Boat B - 135 deg course

Rule 12 On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped

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



* Rule 17

Rule 13 Right of Way While Tacking

After a boat passes head to wind, she shall keep clear of other boats until she is on a close hauled course.

