

Hailing – John Ball

Hailing helps avoid collisions and makes racing safer. Hailing reinforces the rules and enhances tactical sailing. Hailing can help you win in a protest and enable you to be successful if you ever need to request Redress. Surprisingly, there are only three places in the Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS) where a hail by a competitor is specified. How many of them can you come up with?

Those RRS hails are

- a) calling for “Room to tack”, under R 20;
- b) calling a protest under R 61; and
- c) calling “Boat out of Radio Control” under Appendix E 2.3.

There are also three RRS designated hails by the Race Committee for

- a) individual recall for over early, E3.5 and R 29.1;
- b) general recall, E3.6 and R 29.2; and
- c) hail by an observer for contact between boats or boat and mark, E5.

Then there are tactical hails, not actually in the RRS, used to draw attention to the presence of a ROW boat or a developing situation, e.g. hailing STBD to a port tacker or ‘Stay up’ to a weather overlapped boat, calling an overlap for Mark Room, and sometimes we may hear “Hold your course” to encourage a boat from lee bowing you or “No room (to tack)” can be a hail to help you overtake another boat as you approach the weather mark. And finally, there are some hails that can help you in a protest hearing.

Hails by the competitor

Calling for Room to tack at an Obstruction



This photograph by Miguel Salvador, is from the UK 2013 National Championship, Fleetwood. The blue boat on stbd, is approaching the bank and needs to tack on to port, but the two boats behind and to weather are on stbd and could collide if Blue suddenly tacks.

Of all the hails, the “Calling for Room to tack at an Obstruction” hail is the most complex, most misunderstood and most frequently done wrong! The most common mistake is hailing and tacking simultaneously.

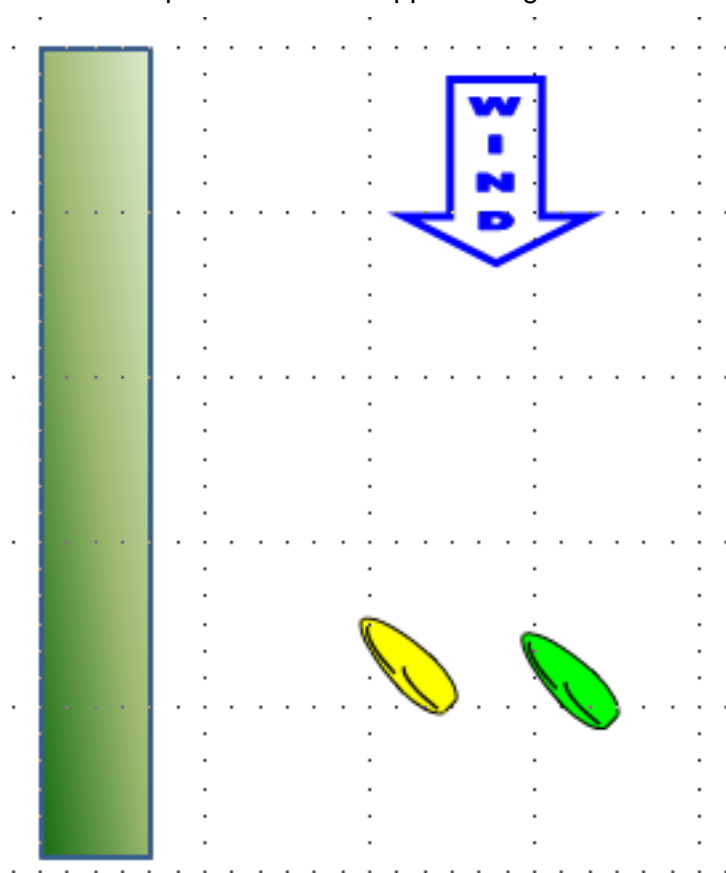
Definition of Obstruction.

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 other boats unless they are required to keep clear of her or, if rule 23 applies, avoid her. A vessel under way, including a boat racing, is never a continuing obstruction

On the race course we see several situations where R20 Calling for Room to tack at an Obstruction applies. The simple one is two boats approaching a shoreline. The second is where multiple boats are approaching a shoreline, and the third is where two (or more) boats on port are approaching a stbd tack boat.

The first situation is when two or more boats are sailing close hauled, on the same tack, towards a shoreline. R20 has three parts. 20.1 says that the boat may hail for room to tack and lists the conditions where she may not hail. 20.2 is about responding to the hail, and 20.3 is new and covers hailing multiple boats.

Yellow has a problem. She is approaching a shoreline and she cannot just tack without breaking R 13



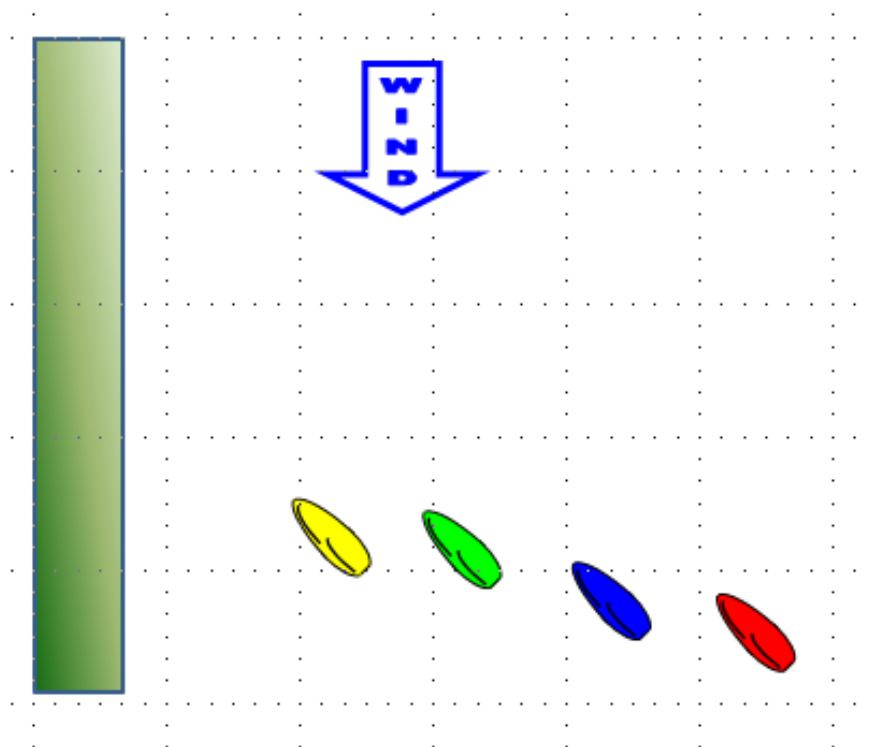
(tacking too close). So to avoid boats running aground and collisions, R 20 exists and allows Yellow to hail for 'Room to tack to avoid an Obstruction'. What happens next is important – Green MUST respond (even if she feels that the hail is not in accordance with the conditions listed in 20.1). The first item is that Yellow must allow Green TIME to respond – so hailing and tacking simultaneously would be a breach. These rules were originally written for full size boats and the concept of 'time' is to allow a crew to get ready and then safely tack a big boat. In RC sailing, the time allowance can be far less as we can respond must faster.

Green has two options, and SHALL either tack as soon as possible – or immediately hail back 'YOU TACK' – in which case, Green gives Yellow enough room to tack and avoids Yellow. Now Yellow must tack as soon as possible. Green CANNOT debate with Yellow about the hail. If Green thinks that the hail for room to tack was incorrect, she must still respond as in 20.2 and then promptly hail 'Protest' for a breach of R 20.1.

The situation becomes much more complex if three, four or more boats are involved. We see this frequently at sailing ponds like the Model Boat pond on Mission Bay in San Diego. This pond is a long, narrow rectangle and the wind tends to blow down the length of the pond. Most boats start on stbd tack, and quickly, a group of boats will approach the far shore, all stacked up on stbd tack.

There is an ISAF case #113 (in the ISAF Case Book) that covers this situation and simplifies it by saying that all boats hearing the hail by Yellow that are affected, MUST respond. In addition, a new rule, R20.3 has been added to the RRS 2013 – 2016 that also recognizes that Green or Blue or Red at this point does not need to hail for room to tack herself (does not meet the conditions of 20.1) and breaks no rule by passing on the chain of hails. These together make it clear that Yellow has to allow time for Green to hail Blue to hail Red and so on. But it goes further and simplifies the situation by saying that all boats hearing the hail by Yellow that are affected, MUST respond (either by tacking, or by hailing 'you tack' and staying clear).

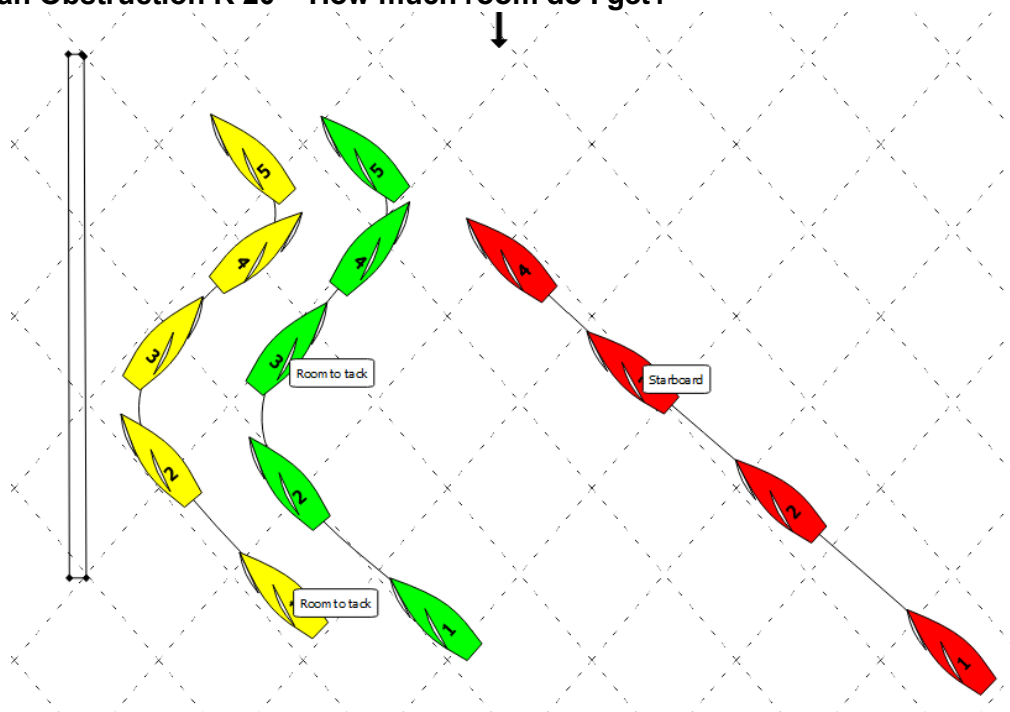
The ISAF Case Book is a great research resource and can be downloaded for free from



<http://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/20132016ISAFCaseBook-%5B14819%5D.pdf>
and saved on your computer for future reference.

“Hailing for Room to Tack” at an Obstruction R 20 – How much room do I get?

Imagine two close hauled boats on Stbd tack are approaching an obstruction, and the inside boat YELLOW, calls for room to tack. The outside boat GREEN, tacks, and the inside boat also tacks. Look at the following diagram – but just look at YELLOW and GREEN between positions 1, 2 and 3. So far, so good. But sometimes there is a third boat (RED), further away, also close hauled on Stbd, and after the tack, the first two boats, YELLOW and GREEN, now on Port, converge with RED. YELLOW yells out “Hey, I hailed for Room”, while RED calls back “STBD”.

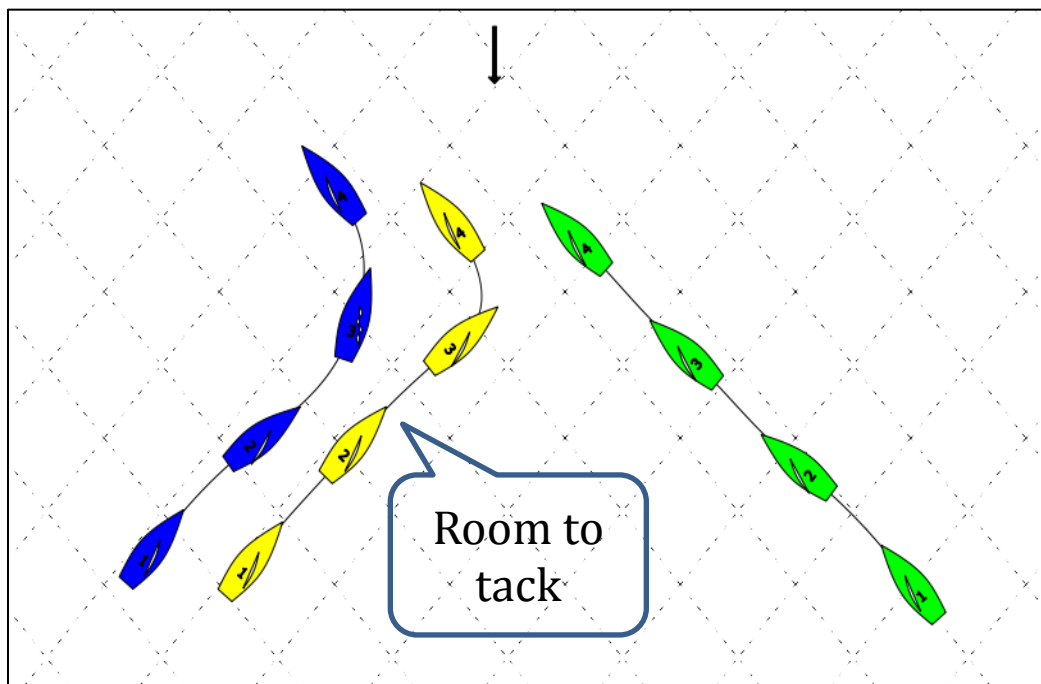


The question is “Who has ROW and who must keep clear?” To put it another way, “When I call for room to tack, how much room is required and when does my call for room expire?”

At Pos 1, YELLOW is approaching an obstruction and under R 20, hails for “Room to Tack”. GREEN responds to the hail by tacking to port (between Pos 2 and Pos 3), and YELLOW immediately tacks too. RED is not required to do anything as she is far enough away that both GREEN and YELLOW can complete their tacks. As RED is further away, she is not involved in the original hail by YELLOW. Now GREEN, after completing her tack to Port has a new problem. She is now on Port, approaching RED on STBD, and so RED is now a new obstruction to GREEN. RED hails STBD. GREEN hails YELLOW for room to tack under R20 at Pos 3, and YELLOW tacks between Pos 4 and 5, and GREEN also tacks. The important point to note is that when YELLOW hails for room to tack, she is entitled to room ONLY to complete her tack. Once her tack is completed, that situation ends, and now the new situation involving RED begins. If RED had been closer, such that she would have prevented GREEN from having room to tack, then RED would have been involved in the original situation, and would have been required to respond to the original hail by YELLOW. Finally, at Pos 5, YELLOW is now approaching an obstruction and hails again for “Room to Tack”, and this time, both GREEN and RED are so close that they must both respond.

Approaching a boat that is an obstruction

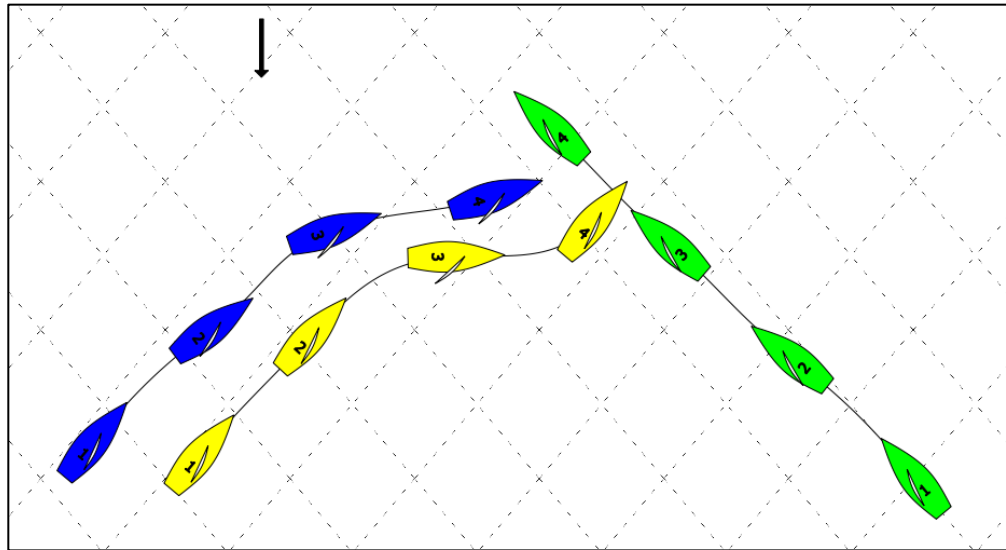
The other frequent situation where R 20 hailing applies is when two (or more) boats close hauled on port tack, approach a converging stbd tack boat. As the stbd boat is an obstruction to the port tack boats, we have to start with R 19, which says that the port tack boat with right of way, in this case, Yellow to leeward of Blue (under R 11) gets to choose which side of the stbd tack Green boat to pass – either stay on Green’s leeward side by tacking or cross to its weather side by ducking behind it.



If Yellow chooses to tack, then R 20 applies and Yellow calls for room to tack and Blue MUST respond. This is now very much like the shoreline situation above. At position #2, Yellow calls for Room to tack, and Blue responds by tacking, and as soon as Blue has tacked, Yellow tacks. If Yellow hails Blue, and Blue tacks, and then Yellow changes her mind and goes behind Green, then Yellow breaks R 20.2.d (by not tacking immediately after Blue tacks) and Blue should protest.

Ducking Stbd.

Under R 19, Yellow as ROW over Blue, may choose to duck Green. No hail is required by Yellow. All she has to do is bare off to pass behind Green – BUT – under R 19, she MUST also leave room for Blue to pass astern of Green too. Blue does not have to follow Yellow; she can tack away if she chooses. If room is not given to Blue to clear Green's transom, Blue can protest Yellow under R 19.2.b.



R 19 in action (Nothing good happens on the Port lay line!)

Look at this picture from the Canadian IOM Nationals on Salt Spring Island in 2013. The dark yellow boat on stbd is 66. Note that 99 is close hauled on Port and that 7 and 36 are close reaching to pass behind 66. #66 hailed "Don't go in there" to dissuade the port tackers from attempting to tack inside him. #36 hailed for 7 to 'stay up'. #36 is sailing to pass astern of 66 and so R 19 applies and 36 must give room to 7 also to pass astern of 66.



QUIZ. What happened next was that 7 eased her sails to slow down and contacted 36. When she eased her sails, she came upright and also tangled the top of the rig of 66. Both 36 and 66 protested 7. You are on the Protest Committee. What is your finding and which rules apply to support your decision?

SPOILER – Here is my answer.

Here are my FACTS. #7 to weather and 36 to leeward were close reaching into the weather mark on port tack, slightly overlapped when they reached the zone, with 7 three quarters of a boat length ahead and a quarter of boat length to weather of 36. Both boats were below the stbd tack lay line. #66 was on the stbd tack lay line and about one boat length from the mark and 66 hailed "Don't think of going there". #36 hailed for 7 to "Stay up". #7 eased her sails. Contact occurred between 7 and 36. Contact occurred between the top of the masts of 7 and 66. Both 66 and 36 protested 7.

Conclusion and decision. When 7 and 36 entered the zone of the weather mark close reaching, 7 was inside and entitled to mark room under R 18. R 20 does not apply as under R 20.1.b, 36 cannot hail for room to tack to avoid 66, (the obstruction on stbd), as she is sailing below close hauled. (Note – if 36 did hail for room to tack under R 20, then 7 would have to comply with the hail but would then protest 36 for an improper hail). As 7 & 36 converged with 66 on STBD, 36 has to pass astern of 66, and under R19.2.b 36, must also give room to 7 also to pass astern of 66. To avoid contact with 66, 7 eased her sails in an attempt to slow down, but as a result, contacted 36 to leeward and came upright and the top of her mast contacted the rig of 66.

As Protest Committee, with these ‘facts’, I would find that 7 breaks R10 (P/S) against 66 and 7 breaks R 11(W/L) against 36. #36 breaks R 19.2.b for failing to provide room to 7 to pass astern of 66. I would DSQ 36 under R 19.2.b and I would exonerate 7 for her breach of R 10 and R 11 under R 14 and R 64.1.a as the contacts were caused by 36 failing to provide room as required by R 19.2.b. How did you make out?

Hailing Protest

This should be the easy one

E2.1 Hailing Requirements

- (a) A hail shall be made so that the competitors to whom the hail is directed might reasonably be expected to hear it.*
- (b) The individual digits of a boat’s sail number shall be hailed; for example ‘one five’, not ‘fifteen’.*

E6.3 Informing the Protestee

Rule 61.1(a) is changed to:

A boat intending to protest shall inform the other boat at the first reasonable opportunity. When her protest concerns an incident in the racing area that she was involved in or saw, she shall hail twice ‘(Her own sail number) protest (the sail number of the other boat)’.

So a prompt loud hail of SEVEN NINE PROTEST ONE SIX and repeated - fits the requirements.

If you fail to meet any of the requirements of the hail, then a protest committee could dismiss your protest on that technicality. And remember to notify the Race Committee of your Protest as soon as you finish and before the time limit expires.

One variation on when to hail PROTEST, is when you see a boat miss a mark, sail around the wrong mark, or round a mark the wrong way. What they have done is broken R 28 Sailing the Course (sometimes referred to as the string rule). But when should you hail? As soon as they do it? – If you do it straight away, are you giving them outside help? Should you wait until they are clearly not correcting the error – e.g., when they round the next mark? Or should you wait until they are about to finish, as only then is it clear that they are not going back to correct the error? The answer is in a new rule R 61.1.a.3. You can hail protest to another boat before she finishes, or at the first opportunity after she finishes. You don’t have to tell them the reason for the protest – let them figure it out for themselves. But this rule makes it clear that the hailing boat is not giving outside assistance as the hail is allowed. (and of course, we do not have to fly a protest flag)

From new rule R61.1.a.(3)

if the incident was an error by the other boat in sailing the course, she need not hail or display a red flag but she shall inform the other boat before that boat finishes or at the first reasonable opportunity after she finishes;

Responding to a hail of Protest!

There is nothing in the rules about responding to a Protest hail. If you caused the foul, it may take a few moments for you to get clear to take your penalty turn. Meanwhile the other skipper starts hailing again and frustration levels rise. So I think it is a good idea to let the other boat know that you acknowledge their hail. For example “Sorry – my fault – I’ll take a penalty”. That should cut off any bickering. And hail again once you have completed your penalty as that helps inform the other skippers and any race observer. If you think that the other skipper caused the foul, then either acknowledge their hail and then remain silent, and go to a protest hearing; but better yet, make a prompt counter protest – and if they don’t take a penalty – again go to a protest hearing. The problem we hear (far too often) is bickering between the skippers – “You hit me!”, “But I was on STBD”, “But you tacked right in front of me!” Does this sound familiar? If they try to bicker, remain silent – the control area is not the place for an impromptu protest hearing.

Hailing “Out of Radio Control”.

This is easy. Here is the rule.

E2.3 Boat Out of Radio Control

A competitor who loses radio control of his boat shall promptly hail and repeat ‘(The boat’s sail number) out of control’ and the boat shall retire.

Once you have hailed “Out of radio control”, boats still racing should treat you as an obstruction. Be sure to report to the race recorder at the finish line that you retired to help keep the score sheet in order and keep the regatta moving.

Hails by the Race Committee

Individual Recalls

Appendix E3.5 modifies R 29.1. When the RC hails a boat for over early, the correct call is RECALL SEVEN NINE and repeat. For the Race Committee, if there are several boats over early, then I recommend a hail such as RECALL ONE FOUR, RECALL SEVEN. This is not covered in the rule which is a bit ambiguous for recalling multiple boats. The problem was created by two new changes in Appendix E. The first change was the formalization of the hail (E2.1.b.) to individual digits (one four, not fourteen), combined with the change to sail numbers in the range 00 to 09 (E8.b.3) which are now displayed by dropping the leading zero. So a hail by the RC of RECALL ONE FOUR SEVEN could mean three boats (1 and 4 and 7), or two boats (1 and 47 or 14 and 7), or even one boat (147). Inserting RECALL between each boat’s sail numbers removes any ambiguity. As we do not use flag signals, the RC must hail that a recalled boat is clear, once they have correctly returned to the prestart side of the line or its extensions. (E3.8.b and also R30.1 if it is in effect).

General Recall

Appendix E3.6 modifies R 29.2. The RC should hail “GENERAL RECALL” and make two sounds signals.

Black Flag Recall

Appendix E3.7. When a boat breaks R30.3, and the RC hails her, she SHALL leave the racing area immediately.

Hails by an Observer

This is an easy one. From Appendix E.5.1,

(b) Observers shall hail the sail numbers of boats that make contact with a mark or another boat and shall repeat the hail as appropriate.

When an observer hails ‘Contact’ between two boats and hails their sail numbers – one boat had broken at least one rule and should take a penalty. However, just because the observer hailed ‘Contact’ does not

relieve the ROW skipper from hailing 'Protest' for the same incident. This may help the 'keep clear' boat realize that they are the one that should be taking the penalty turn.

Tactical Hails

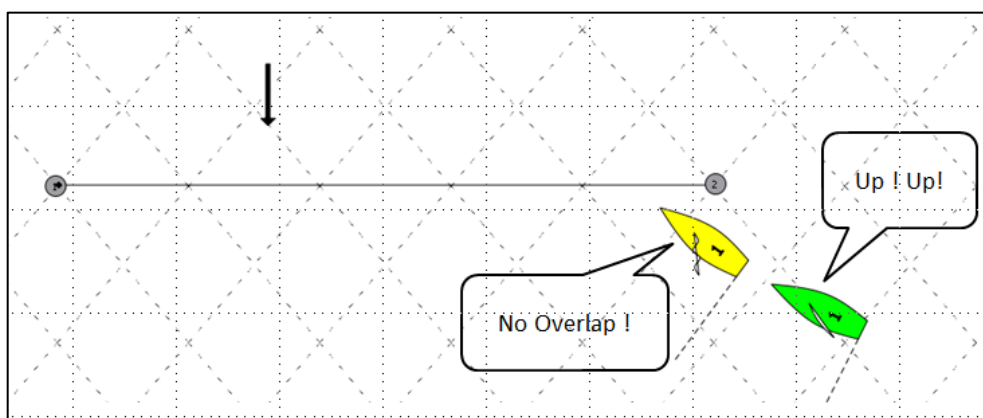
There are a number of hails that are not included in the rule book but serve to keep racing safe and free from collisions. They may also be used to influence the course of another boat so that you may gain a positional advantage over them. Where a sail number is hailed, it should follow the format of individual digits (E.2.1.b).

“Starboard!”

Hailing STBD to a converging port tack boat, or when running down wind on opposite gybes is straight forward and serves to draw the attention of the port tacker to an impending incident. The STBD tack boat can assume that the port tack boat will follow the rules and will stay clear. Stbd only needs to begin to stay clear when it becomes obvious that the Port tack boat is not keeping clear (R 14) – and then Stbd should protest.

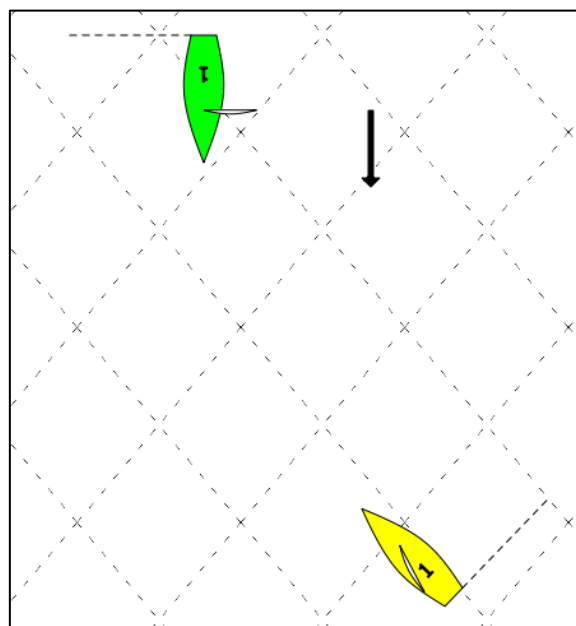
“Stay Up”

Hailing to a windward boat to stay clear (R 11) should be clear, but is sometimes used incorrectly when an overlap does not yet exist. For example, two boats are approaching the starting line just before the start signal, and the boat behind, trying to push the lead boat over early, starts calling for the lead boat to stay up! This is not a valid hail, as there is not yet an overlap – at this point, the boat ahead is ROW and the boat astern has to keep clear under R 12.



The hail “Windward Boat keep clear’ is also heard (correctly) when a boat beating upwind converges with another boat (on the same tack/gybe) running downwind on another leg of the course. Both boats shown in the diagram are on stbd so hailing STBD is not correct. Green is windward boat, so Yellow hails “WINDWARD KEEP CLEAR”! For R 11 to apply these boats must be overlapped. What may be hard to get your head around is that under the rules, these two boats are overlapped! To understand this we have to look at the definition of Clear Astern and Clear ahead: Overlapped.

Clear Astern and Clear Ahead; Overlap. One boat is clear astern of another 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 always apply to boats on the same tack. They do not apply to boats on opposite tacks unless rule 18 applies or both boats are sailing more than ninety degrees from the true wind.



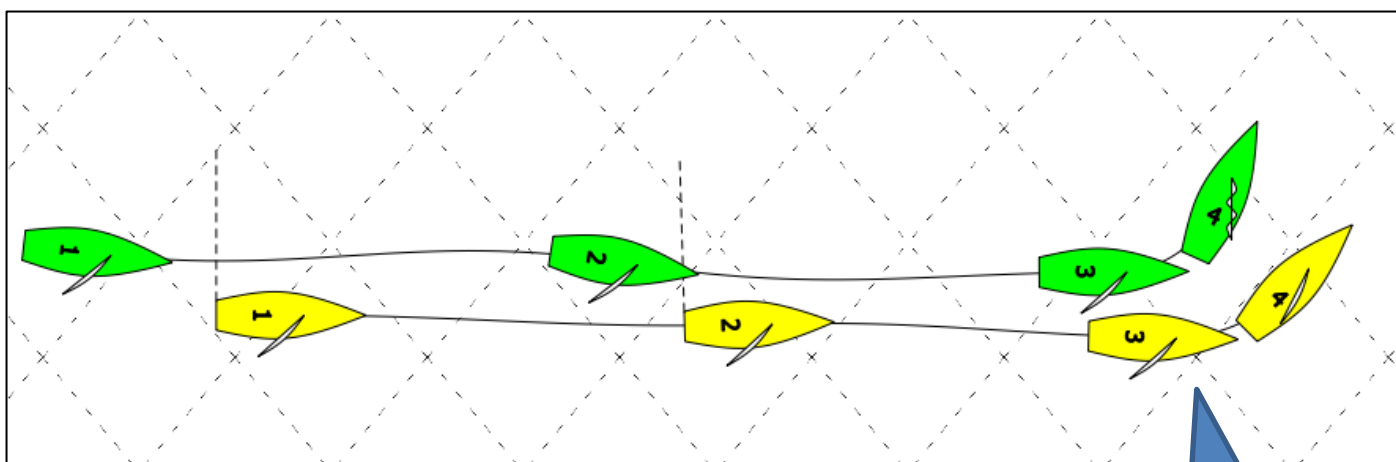
To make sense of this, first look at Yellow. Is Green behind the line on Yellow's transom? No. Now look at Green. Is Yellow behind the line on Green's transom? No. Then they are not Clear ahead/clear astern of each other – so they are overlapped. (Backwards logic?).

Overtaking to Weather and Hailing 'Stay up' during overtaking

If two boats are on the same tack, and Green is going faster and establishes an overlap to weather of Yellow, the rules should be quite straight forward but frequently are not understood. Yellow is ROW, both while Green is clear astern (R 12), and then as Green becomes overlapped to weather (R11). Yellow can luff all the way to head to wind. R 16 applies to Yellow between position #3 and #4, and she must give room for Green to keep clear.

16 CHANGING COURSE

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



R 15 does not apply in this situation. Rule 15 applies only when a boat initially acquires right of way, and not when the rule under which she continues to hold right of way changes. (more on this later).

Stay up

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.

R17 and its proper course limitation don't apply as the overlap was established to weather, not to leeward (more on this later).

How close is too close?

In the above diagram, look at position 2. If Green establishes the overlap very close to Yellow, Green may be in breach of R 11 and the definition of Keep Clear even if there is no contact. Yellow must be able to alter course in BOTH directions.

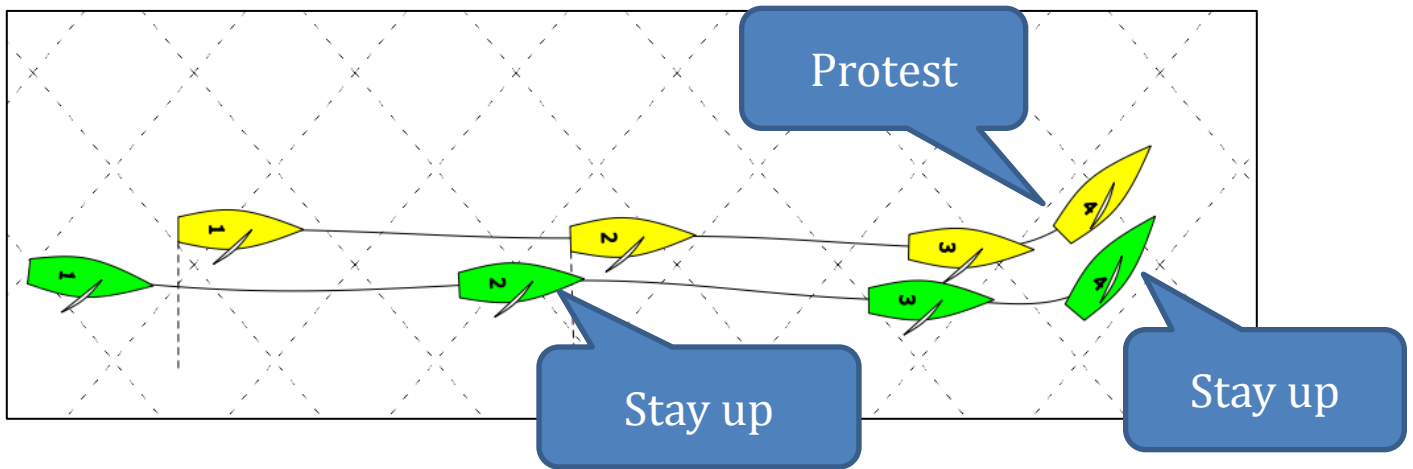
Keep Clear A boat keeps clear of a right-of-way boat

- (a) if the right-of-way boat can sail her course with no need to take avoiding action and,
- (b) when the boats are overlapped, if the right-of-way boat can also change course in both directions without immediately making contact.

Overtaking to Leeward and hailing 'Stay up'

If two boats are on the same tack, and Green is going faster and establishes an overlap to leeward of Yellow, Green may want to hail "Stay up" for the other boat to keep clear. But there are restrictions on

Green and she has to be realistic about the ability of the other boat to manoeuvre. In this situation, the definition of Room applies, and R 15 applies as the ROW changes from Yellow (clear ahead) to Green (becomes leeward overlapped). And then R 17 applies too.



17 ON THE SAME TACK; PROPER COURSE

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 on the same tack and 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.

In the above diagram, Green SHALL NOT sail above her proper course, so she is fine up to position #3 and Yellow stays clear, but Green is not allowed to luff above her proper course. Green luffs and Yellow stays clear but protests Green. The Protest Committee will have to decide what was Green's proper course and if she went above it, she will be DSQ under R 17.

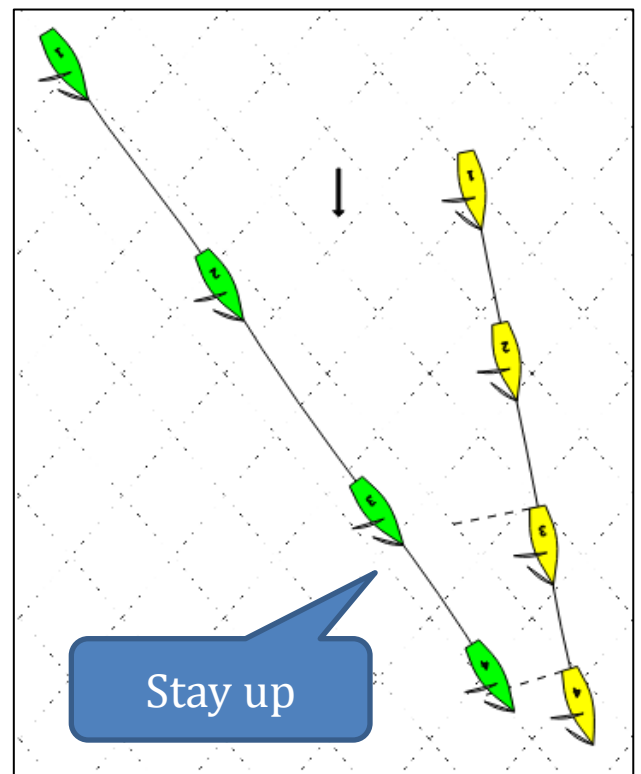
Now look at this diagram - right. When two boats are converging, sailing downwind on the same tack (gybe), it is the proper course of the leeward boat that applies and the weather boat must keep clear. Green is travelling faster and is overtaking, so she should be able to satisfy the Protest Committee that her proper course was valid and Yellow will be DSQ under R 11. This is covered in the ISAF Case Book.

CASE 14

When, owing to a difference of opinion about a leeward boat's proper course, two boats on the same tack converge, the windward boat must keep clear. Two boats on the same leg sailing near one another may have different proper courses.

CASE 46

A leeward boat is entitled to sail up to her proper course, even when she has established a leeward overlap from clear astern and within two of her hull lengths of the windward boat.



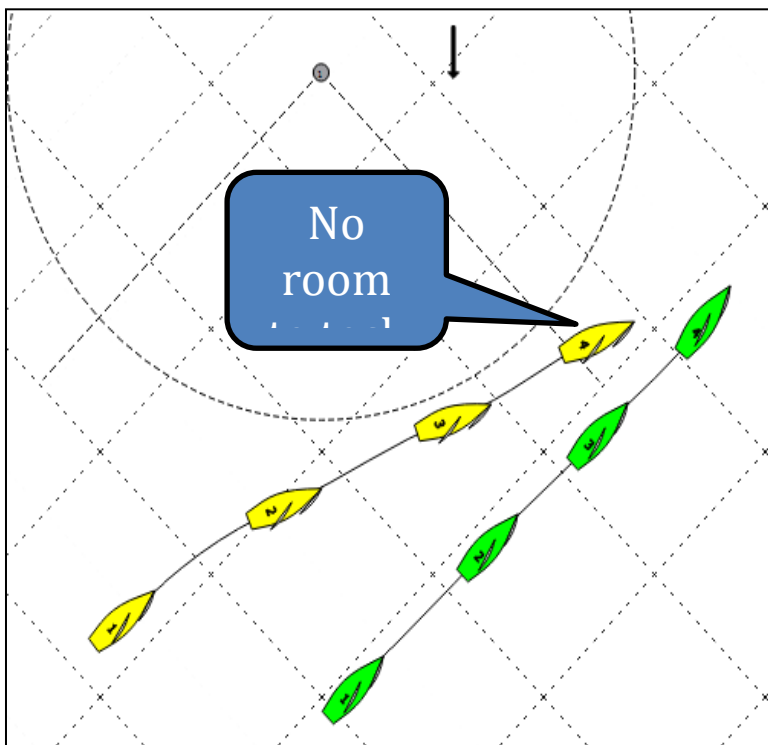
Hailing at a mark “Mark room”, “No room”, “overlap”, “No overlap”

Calling an overlap or calling for Mark Room as you approach the zone is not covered in the rule book. All it says is in R 18.2.d is if there is reasonable doubt that a boat obtained or broke an Overlap in time, it shall be presumed that she did not. So a boat claiming an overlap, or a boat claiming that an overlap was broken has the burden of proof.

What I try to do is make a hail of ‘Overlap’ or ‘Mark Room’ before reaching the zone. That way a picture of the situation is frozen in time. If the other boat does not refute my hail, I have established that an overlap probably exists as we enter the zone and I am entitled to mark room. Conversely, if I hail ‘overlap’ prior to the zone and the other boat hails back “No you don’t” and I do not challenge that reply, then I am agreeing with them, and I am not entitled to mark room. If you are the lead boat and feel that a trailing boat has no overlap, then hail “No overlap” before you reach the zone – again you are establishing a snap shot of the position just before the zone. Waiting until you are in the zone and then hailing for “Mark room” or “No overlap” places the burden of proof on you.

“No Room (to Tack)” and R 13

This hail can help you overtake another boat, or at least make sure that you lead them around the upcoming mark. At position 1, Yellow may be in trouble if she just sails up to the lay line, as Green will get there first, and once Green tacks to stbd, at position 4, Yellow may be forced to duck behind Green, and follow her around the mark. So Yellow eases her sails to a close reach to move forward on Green, while closing the gap between them. Now at position 4, Yellow can prevent Green from tacking at the lay line (Green would break R 13 – Tacking too close), such that Yellow is able to tack first, and Green has to follow around the mark.



“Hold Your Course”

If a Stbd tack boat is on a beat and approaches a port tack boat, there may be a strong strategic reason for STBD to want to carry on to the left side of the course (eg more wind), and does not want the port tack boat to tack ahead and to leeward of them (a lee bow attack). So STBD hails ‘Hold your course’. The implication is the STBD tack boat will stay clear and may even duck a little to encourage Port to continue across to the right side of the course.

“Tack or duck?”

The other side of the above scenario (see the following diagram) is that as the boats converge, Port hails ‘Tack or Duck?’. This is a question or invitation from Port to Stbd “Do you want to tack or are you going to duck and go behind me?” The implied threat is that if STBD does not tack or duck behind Port, then Port will tack and lee bow Stbd. Probably the worst thing Stbd can do here is get sucked in and tack, as now Port will be to weather and has you locked outside and can control when you can tack back for the mark. This hail is a total bluff! Port has no rights. The best defense for Stbd is either to say nothing or even hail back ‘STBD’ and force Port to make a decision, either to tack early, or to duck behind you.

In the left scenario, Green gets bluffed into tacking and Yellow controls when they next get to tack. In the right scenario, Green calls the bluff, and Yellow is forced to tack, leaving Green in control of when to tack back.

