

RULES 11 AND 12 — ON THE SAME TACK

Rules 11 and 12 are the basic rules for boats on the *same tack*. When boats are on the same *tack* they can either be *overlapped* or not *overlapped*. If they are *overlapped*, they are either a *windward* boat or a *leeward* boat. If they are not *overlapped*, they are either *clear ahead* or *clear astern*. See the discussion of the definition *Clear Astern* and *Clear Ahead; Overlap*.

RULE 11 — ON THE SAME TACK, OVERLAPPED

When boats are on the same *tack* and *overlapped*, a *windward* boat shall keep clear of a *leeward* boat.

When boats on the same *tack* are *overlapped*, rule 11 applies. When boats are on much different angles of sail, it is often difficult to know which is the *leeward* boat. The boat that will hit the other's *leeward* side or be hit on her own *windward* side is the *leeward* boat. As a good rule of thumb, the boat that is on the point of sail closer to the wind is typically the *leeward* boat; i.e., between a boat sailing downwind and a boat sailing close-hauled, the close-hauled boat is usually the *leeward* boat.



“I realize that when I’m the windward boat I have to keep clear of the leeward boat, but how far away do I need to stay?”

Far enough away so that while the *leeward* boat (L) is sailing on a straight line, you do not hit L or force L to take any avoiding action to miss you; e.g., have to change her course, ease her spinnaker pole forward or require any of her crew to duck or move to avoid being hit.

Furthermore, you need to be far enough away so that the *leeward* boat can change course in **both** directions without **immediately** making contact with you. If you allow yourself to get so close to L that she is physically unable to change her course without immediately hitting you, you are not *keeping clear* under the definition *Keep Clear* and are breaking rule 11. Note that the word “if” in the second part of the definition suggests that L does not need to actually hit you to prove she couldn’t change course without hitting you. If the protest committee decides that L couldn’t change course without immediate contact, then you have broken rule 11 simply by your extreme close proximity to L.

More importantly, **anytime** L cannot sail her course without a need to take action to avoid you, you have not *kept clear* and have broken rule 11. Therefore, you will be smart not to allow yourself to get so close that you will possibly interfere with L in the least. Notice also that when L is head to wind, it is quite possible that you will be required to go **beyond** head to wind (i.e., change *tacks*) in order to *keep clear*. If this is the case, you must do so. Also, if you are converging with L and both of you are sailing on what you each believe to be your *proper course*, rule 11 requires you to *keep clear* of L.