

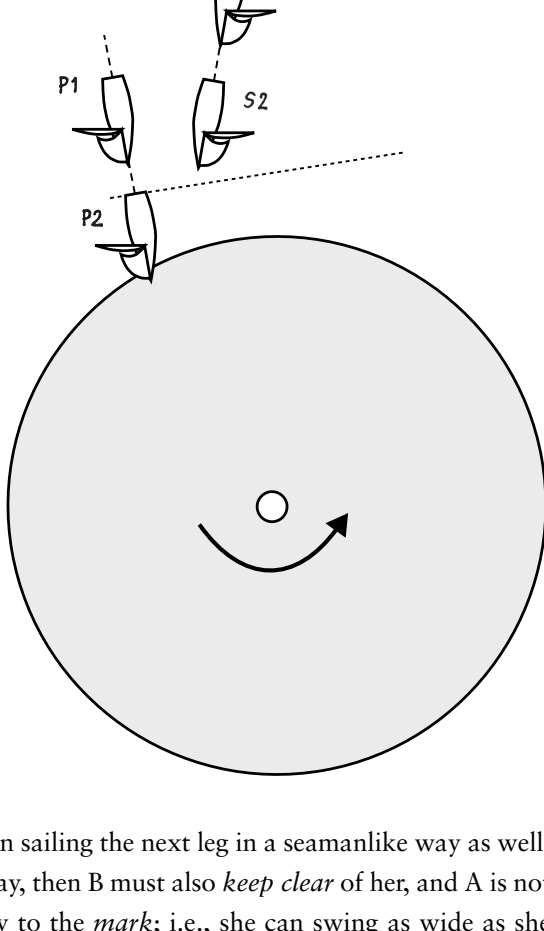
**RULE 18.2 — GIVING MARK-ROOM**

- (a) When the first of two boats reaches the zone,  
 (2) if the boats are not overlapped, the boat that has not reached the zone at that moment shall give the other boat *mark-room*.”

So, between two boats (A and B), if they are not overlapped when the first of them reaches the zone, and assuming the proper course for the one ahead (A) is to sail close to the mark (within a couple of feet or so), the one behind (B) must give A the space she needs to sail to the mark in a seamanlike way; and if it is a rounding mark, the space A needs to round or pass the mark as needed

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Before reaching the zone, S has right of way over P under rule 10. However, the moment P reaches the zone clear ahead of S, rule 18.2(a)(2) requires S to give P mark-room.



to round the mark and begin sailing the next leg in a seamanlike way as well. And, if A has the right of way, then B must also keep clear of her, and A is not “limited” to sailing directly to the mark; i.e., she can swing as wide as she pleases as long as she stays in the zone.

Note that rule 18.2(a)(2) does not shift the right of way from the boat clear astern to the boat clear ahead. If the boat clear ahead is the keep-clear boat, she is simply entitled to mark-room from the clear astern right-of-way boat.

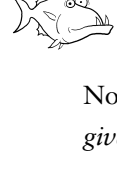
“How does the rule work at a leeward mark if when I reach the zone there is a boat clear ahead of me but outside the zone?”

The boat that is not in the zone has to give you mark-room. The idea is that you reached the zone first, so you get to round ahead of boats that haven’t reached the zone yet.



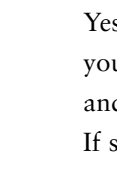
“What happens when the boat ahead is on port tack approaching a downwind finishing line with a boat on starboard tack right behind her, and the port-tack boat will pass through the zone about two lengths from the finishing mark on her port side?”

Good question. First of all, the port-tack boat (PA) is the keep-clear boat under rule 10 (On Opposite Tacks). This does not change just because she is in the zone of the mark. If when PA reached the zone, the starboard-tacker (SB) was not in the zone yet, PA is entitled to mark-room. However, because her proper course is to sail straight across the finishing line, and because she is two lengths away from the mark, her proper course is not to sail close to the mark. Therefore, she is not entitled to room to sail to the mark; only to the space she needs to leave the finishing mark on the required side (which she has plenty of). PA will need to keep clear of SB until she has finished and cleared the finishing line and marks, which she can easily do by either luffing, bearing away or gybing. And if she fails to keep clear, she breaks rule 10 and is not exonerated by rule 43.1(b) (Exoneration).



“What happens if the boat that was clear astern becomes overlapped on the inside of the other boat inside the zone?”

Note that rule 18.2(a) has a “lock-in” provision (“When a boat is required to give mark-room by this rule, she shall continue to do so for as long as this rule applies, even if later an overlap is broken or a new overlap begins”). So the boat that was clear astern when the other boat reached the zone is obligated to give mark-room for that mark rounding, even if she overlaps the other boat later during the other boat’s rounding or passing maneuver.



“So if I’m entitled to mark-room at a leeward mark, can I go head to wind to ‘close the door’ on a boat trying to sneak inside of me?”

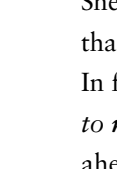
Yes, but you have to be careful! First of all, the boat trying to sneak inside of you owes you mark-room, which is the space you need to round the mark and head up to a close-hauled course (see Cases 25 and 118 and Appeal 3). If she hits you, or prevents you from sailing up to close-hauled, she has not given you mark-room and has broken rule 18.2(a). And if you break rule 16.1 (Changing Course) while sailing up to close-hauled, you are exonerated by rule 43.1(b) (Exoneration) because you are sailing within the mark-room to which you are entitled.

However, when rounding a leeward mark to start a beat, once you’ve sailed up to a close-hauled course, and can sail between the mark and any outside boat without breaking a rule, and can leave the mark astern, you’ve been given mark-room and rule 18 ceases to apply (see rule 18.1(b)). Therefore, if you choose to sail above close-hauled, you are no longer sailing within the mark-room you are entitled to, and you are not exonerated if you break rule 16.1. So if when you luff above close-hauled, the windward boat cannot keep clear of you or she is forced to touch the mark because she is stuck between you and the leeward mark, you will break rule 16.1. And you get no room to tack, so if you sail past head to wind, you risk breaking rule 13 (While Tacking). However, if by sailing up to head to wind you force the windward boat to the wrong side of the mark without forcing them to foul any other boats, you have not broken rule 16.1 and you have successfully “shut the door.”

Let’s look at some examples of this rule 16 (Changing Course) exception in action:

- A and B, two port-tack boats not overlapped, are approaching a leeward mark to be left to port. A reaches the zone clear ahead of B. As A swings wide to make a “tactical” (swing wide-cut close) rounding, B puts her bow in between A and the mark. As A changes course to round the mark, B yells that A must give her room to keep clear under rule 16.1 (Changing Course) and that B can’t keep clear of A due to the proximity of the mark on her port side. B is wrong. Rule 18 applies and B is required to give A mark-room under rule 18.2(a)(2). Therefore, A is free to round the mark and if in doing so she fails to give B room to keep clear of her, she is exonerated by rule 43.1(b) (Exoneration).
- L and W, two overlapped starboard-tack boats, are approaching a gybe mark to be left to port. They enter the zone overlapped. L then bears away to gybe around the mark and her transom hits W’s leeward side with no damage or injury. Again, rule 18 applies and L is entitled to mark-room. W is wrong for breaking rules 11 and 18.2(a)(1), and L is exonerated for her breach of rule 16.1. Note that L has broken rule 14(a) (Avoiding Contact), but she is also exonerated by rule 43.1(c) for her breach of rule 14(a) unless the contact causes damage or injury (see the discussion of rule 14 in chapter 7).
- PL and SW, two opposite tack close-hauled boats, are approaching a windward mark to be left to port. PL safely lee-bows SW (i.e., tacks to leeward of SW) outside the zone. As the boats enter the zone PL realizes she will not make the mark without luffing up to head to wind. When near the mark, PL luffs and collides with SW with no damage or injury. As PL was changing course to round the mark, SW breaks rules 11 and 18.2(a)(1) as above, and PL is exonerated if she breaks rule 16.1.

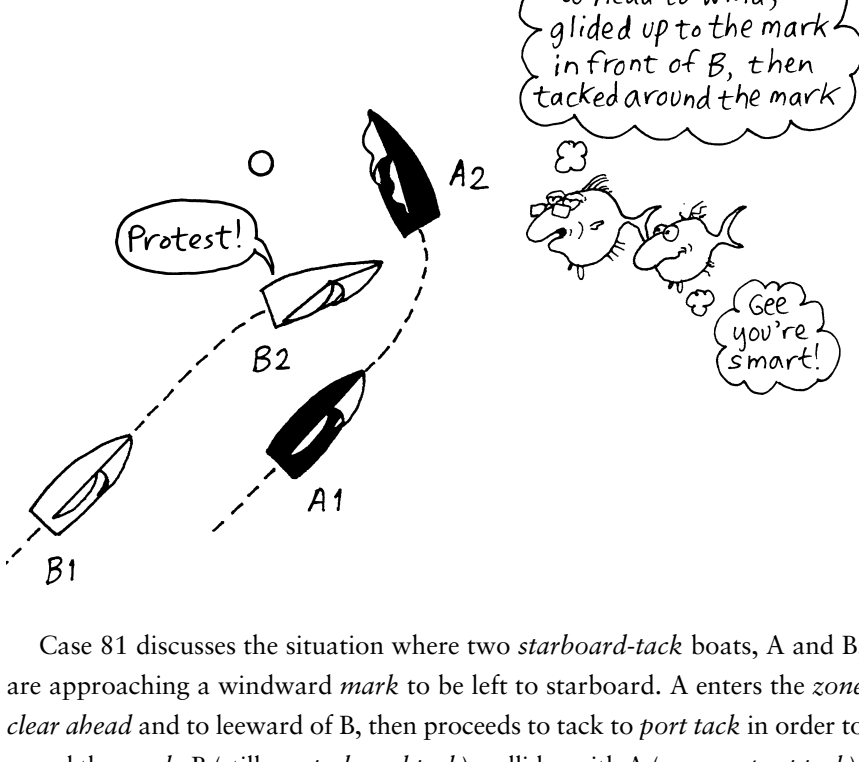
In the same scenario, SW does keep clear of PL’s luff, but as PL begins to pass the mark she bears away to round the mark and her transom swings up and hits the leeward side of SW, again with no damage or injury. Same answer as above. SW must keep clear (as well as give mark-room), PL is rounding the mark, and therefore PL is exonerated if she breaks rule 16.1.



“What if the boat ahead wants to tack around the mark?”

She must be very careful! A boat that is clear ahead when she reaches the zone that tacks around a mark gets no protection from rule 18.2(a) what-so-ever. In fact, rule 18.2(b) says, “Rule 18.2(a) no longer applies if the boat entitled to mark-room passes head to wind...”. In other words, the moment the boat ahead passes head to wind, rule 18.2(a) instantly shuts off, and the boat is subject to the rules in Sections A and B thereafter, beginning with rule 13 (While Tacking). This can happen at a windward mark when the boats need to tack to round the mark; or at or just after a leeward mark when the boats are beginning the beat.

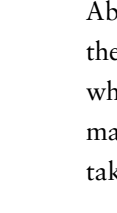
Notice also that at the windward mark the boat clear astern can sail above close-hauled to make it more difficult for the boat clear ahead to tack. Let’s say you (A) and another boat (B) are sailing close-hauled on port tack into the windward mark to be left to port, not overlapped. You thought you were allowed to just tack around the mark. After you had passed head to wind but before you were close-hauled, B had to bear away to miss your transom. You have fouled B by breaking rule 13 (While Tacking). Notice, though, that you can luff up to head to wind just prior to tacking around the mark, which will make it difficult for a boat close astern to prevent you from tacking. Tactically speaking for a moment, in this situation your best move is to luff to head to wind, glide up to the mark, then tack around the mark making it difficult for a boat close astern to prevent you from tacking.



Case 81 discusses the situation where two starboard-tack boats, A and B, are approaching a windward mark to be left to starboard. A enters the zone clear ahead and to leeward of B, then proceeds to tack to port tack in order to round the mark. B (still on starboard tack), collides with A (now on port tack), causing no damage or injury. The Appeals Committee said, “...from the time A reached the zone until she passed head to wind, rule 18.2(a)(2) applied, requiring B to give A mark-room. B fulfilled [this obligation]. Shortly before position 5, when A passed head to wind, rule 18.2(a) ceased to apply (see rule 18.2(b)). At that time B acquired right of way and A became obligated to keep clear of B, first by rule 13 and later, after A was on a close-hauled course, by rule 10. Rule 15 did not apply because B acquired right of way as a result of A’s tack.”

“What if a boat that is entitled to mark-room in the zone sails out of the zone before rounding the mark; when she re-enters, does she retain her original rights or is it a whole new ball game?”

It’s a whole new ball game. Rule 18.2(b) says, “Rule 18.2(a) no longer applies if the boat entitled to mark-room...leaves the zone.” Note, it doesn’t matter why she left the zone. She could have been giving mark-room to several boats inside her, or she could have been carried out by the current, or she may have lost control of her boat. In every case where she leaves the zone, she does not carry back in any rights or obligations she had before she left; it is a whole new situation.



“Now I understand when I can and cannot be entitled to ‘room.’ But what if an outside boat leaves enough space between her and the mark; is it a foul to sneak in there?”

Absolutely not, as long as you don’t hit the mark or the outside boat or force the outside boat to change course to avoid hitting you. Case 63 is clear: “... when a boat voluntarily or unintentionally makes space between herself and a mark available to another that has no right to such space, the other boat may take advantage, at her own risk, of the space.” (See Appeal 5.)