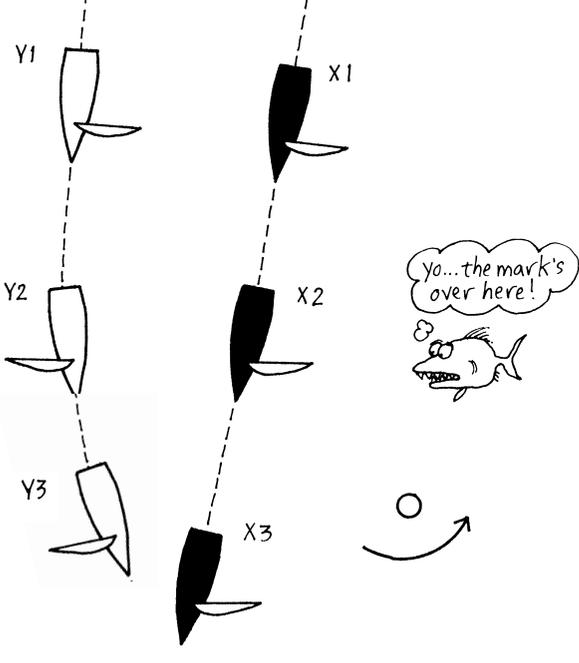


RULE 18.4 — GYBING IN THE ZONE

When an inside overlapped right-of-way boat must gybe at a mark to sail her proper course, until she gybes she shall sail no farther from the mark than needed to sail that course. Rule 18.4 does not apply at a gate mark.

First of all, rule 18.4 puts a “limit” on inside right-of-way boats; i.e., leeward boats and starboard-tack boats. Essentially, that “limit” is that whenever their proper course is to gybe at a mark, they must do so. Actually, the instruction in the rule is that up until she actually gybes, the right-of-way boat “shall sail no farther from the mark than needed to sail [her proper course].” This means that not only does she have to gybe when it is her proper course to do so, but she can’t luff (turn) away from the mark prior to gybing if that takes her farther from it than necessary to sail her proper course. This applies even when the outside/windward boat initially obtained the overlap to windward such that L would otherwise have the right to sail above her proper course. (See Case 75.)

Note that rule 18.4 has a clear “shut off” time built in. The rule no longer applies once the inside boat gybes (i.e., the boom crosses the centerline). After that, the inside boat is not limited by rule 18.4, though she will continue to be entitled to mark-room under rule 18.2(a) (Giving Mark-Room).



When boats are sailing below ninety degrees to the true wind or when rule 18 applies, the term “overlap” applies to boats on opposite tacks. Therefore, X and Y are “overlapped” at the mark. When the inside boat has the right of way and when she must gybe to sail her proper course, rule 18.4 requires her not to sail any farther from the mark than needed to sail her proper course until she gybes. By sailing past where her proper course was to gybe, X breaks rule 18.4.

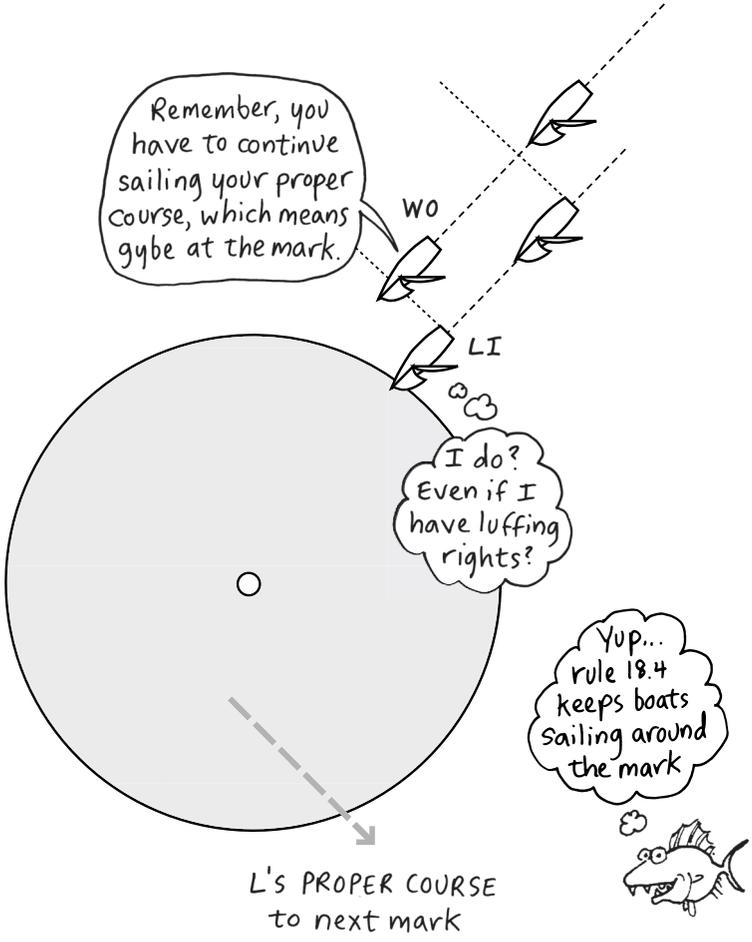
The situation will commonly arise at gybe marks and leeward marks to be left to port when the leeward/inside boat or the starboard-tack/inside boat will be required to gybe in order to round the mark. Notice that a boat’s proper course is the course she thinks will get her to the next mark as quickly as possible. Therefore, especially if there are boats just ahead of her, she can certainly swing wide to set up for a “tactical” swing-wide/cut-close rounding.

Note that rule 18.4 applies any time boats are overlapped. Therefore, if the boats are not overlapped when the boat ahead enters the zone, but the boat astern obtains an outside overlap later, rule 18.4 applies. Similarly, if the boats are overlapped as the boats enter the zone and then the overlap is broken at any time during the rounding, rule 18.4 does not apply.

“Does this apply at a gate mark as well?”

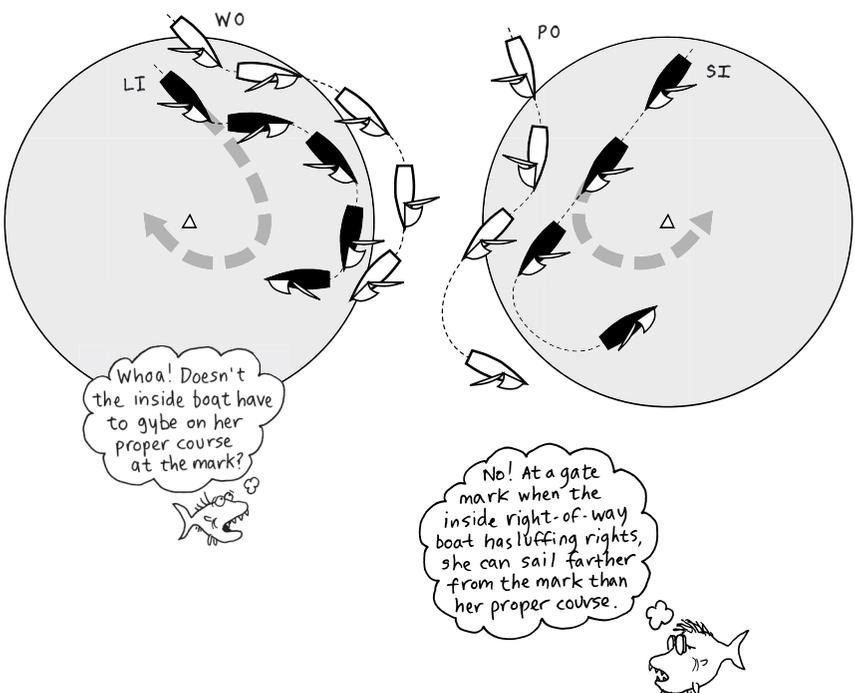


Good question! Rule 18.4 does not apply at a gate mark. A “gate” is two marks



set close to each other, typically at the end of the downwind leg. The boats are required to sail between the marks, and then can choose to exit the gate around one mark or the other (see rule 28.1, Sailing the Course, and the definition Sail the Course (b)(3)).

When inside right-of-way boats are sailing to round a gate mark, rule 18.4 does not apply, meaning an inside right-of-way boat is not “limited” to sailing no farther from the mark than her proper course. She can sail as far as she pleases from the mark, force a windward/outside boat outside the zone if she pleases, then gybe and round the mark. Outside keep-clear boats are well advised to not remain overlapped with inside right-of-way boats when approaching gate marks.



However, if the inside right-of-way boat became overlapped from clear astern, then she is subject to rule 17 (On the Same Tack; Proper Course), and she is not allowed to sail above her proper course for as long as the boats remain overlapped. Therefore, at a gate mark, even though rule 18.4 does not apply, the inside boat is required by rule 17 to gybe at the mark if that is her proper course at the time. If she goes farther from the mark, she is sailing above her proper course and is breaking rule 17. Note that the outside keep-clear boat must still keep clear and protest.