

**A QUICK OVERVIEW of the SIGNIFICANT RULE and GAME CHANGES  
in the 2025-2028 RACING RULES OF SAILING**

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This is excerpted from Dave Perry's *Understanding the Racing Rules of Sailing through 2028*, available from the US Sailing Store, along with his other book on the rules: *Dave Perry's 100 Best Racing Rules Quizzes* ([www.ussailing.store](http://www.ussailing.store) or 1.800.877.2451).

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*The following is a list of the significant changes in the 2025-2028 edition of **The Racing Rules of Sailing** (RRS). These are changes from the 2021-2024 edition. NOTE: These brief summaries are not intended to be actual representations of the rules; nor is this a complete list of all the changes in the 2025-2028 RRS.*

- **Introduction** The Introduction to the RRS reminds that for a source of the nautical sense of a word, a reader may refer to *The Equipment Rules of Sailing*. The Introduction also reminds that guides and templates for writing a notice of race and sailing instructions are available, in various file formats, on the World Sailing website at [www.sailing.org/racingrules](http://www.sailing.org/racingrules).
- **Definition Committee** The term “committee” is now defined as the protest committee, the race committee or the technical committee. This saves having to repeat those three committees each time they are referred to in the rules.
- **Definition Continuing Obstruction** The term “continuing obstruction” which is used in rules 18.1(a)(4), 19.1 and 19.2(c) is now defined. When the boat with the shortest hull referred to in the rule using the term will pass alongside an “obstruction” for at least three of her hull lengths, it is a “continuing obstruction.” Boats do not need to be sailing alongside of an “obstruction” for it to be considered a “continuing obstruction;” it is a “continuing obstruction” based on its size relative to the boats that are about to be passing it. However, the following are not “continuing obstructions:” a vessel under way, a boat racing, or a race committee vessel that is also a mark. So a long race committee boat at the finishing line at an Opti regatta is never a “continuing obstruction.”
- **Definition Finish** A boat no longer needs to “start” in order to “finish.” This clarifies that if a boat is given a scoring penalty for being OCS, such as in a long distance race, she can still “finish.” The definition includes the previous rule 28.1 language, “After *finishing* [a boat] need not cross the finishing line completely,” and permits the sailing instructions to change the direction in which boats are required to cross the finishing line to finish.
- **Definition Mark-Room** The definition has been shortened with no significant change to the game intended. The phrase “as necessary to *sail the course*” has been removed as it was a misleading use of the defined term “sail the course,” which is merely a “string test” and not a qualification on the space needed to round or pass a mark. The previous reference to not touching the mark is found in the definition Room and Case 114. Mark-room now includes room to leave the mark astern. The misleading statement about mark-room including room to tack has been removed.

- **Definition Obstruction** Now an object, area or line can be designated as an "obstruction" in any "rule," such as the notice or race, sailing instructions, or other documents governing the event.
- **Definition Rule** The definition clarifies that the Basic Principles are not "rules." They never were. They are "principles" by which sailors are expected to behave. Because they were included in previous rule 86.1(a), it mistakenly suggested they were rules; reference to them in new rule 86.1(a) has been removed. The new preamble to the Basic Principles states they shall not be changed.
- **Definition Sail the Course** "Starting" and "finishing" are now components of the definition Sail the Course, and are no longer in rule 28.1, Sailing the Course. The same is true for the statement: "A *mark* that does not begin, bound or end the leg the boat is sailing does not have a required side."
- **Rule 14 (Avoiding Contact)** Added to rule 14 are the requirements to not cause contact between two other boats, and to not cause contact between a boat and an object that should be avoided (like a race committee vessel). The rule writers want even less contact!
- **Rule 17 (On the Same Tack; Proper Course)** The last sentence of previous rule 17 has been deleted. It read, "This rule does not apply if the *overlap* begins while the *windward* boat is required by rule 13 to *keep clear*." This will change the game in the Slam Dunk maneuver where a starboard-tack boat (S) tacks just as a port-tack boat (P) is ducking her. Now, if P becomes overlapped with S anytime after S has passed head to wind, P cannot sail above her proper course (usually close-hauled when beating to windward).
- **Rule 18.1 (When Rule 18 Applies)** The rule has been renumbered to give the last sentence its own number for easier reference. Rule 18.1(a)(4) states, "[Rule 18 does not apply] if the *mark* is a *continuing obstruction*, in which case rule 19 applies." Therefore, when a mark is a large object such as an island or a breakwater, rule 18 does not apply; i.e., there is no zone around the mark and rule 19.2 applies between the boats.
- **Rule 18.2 (Giving Mark-Room)** The rule has been restructured to make it more intuitive and shorter. New rule 18.2(a) has been separated into two rules based on whether the boats are overlapped or not when the first of them reaches the zone. If the boats are not overlapped, the boat that has not reached the zone yet has to give the other boat mark-room, even if the boat that has not reached the zone is clear ahead of the one who has. Simply put, if the boats are not overlapped, the first of two boats to reach the zone gets mark-room.
- **Rule 18.3 (Tacking in the Zone)** The significant change in new rule 18.3 is that anytime a boat tacks in the zone of a port-hand mark from port to starboard tack and is inside another boat, she is not entitled to mark-room under rule 18.2, Giving Mark-Room, even if the other boat has also tacked in the zone. The other subtle change is that the rule now applies when the other boat is "fetching" the mark, as opposed to the boat that is tacking in the zone, which serves to add more protection to that other boat.

- **Rule 19.2(a) (Giving Room at an Obstruction)** The rule clarifies that the term “side” in rule 19.2(a) means the side of the boat, not the obstruction. The rule also adds a requirement that when a right-of-way boat changes course when choosing on which side to pass the obstruction, she needs to give the other boat room to keep clear. Note, although this rule appears to be redundant to rule 16.1 (Changing Course), it is not. If the right-of-way boat does not give the other boat room to keep clear under this rule, she is not exonerated for that breach, because rule 19.2(a) is not included in rule 43.1(b), Exoneration, whereas rule 16.1 is.
- **Rule 20.1 (Room to Tack at an Obstruction: Hailing)** Rule 20.1 now provides a specific hail (“Room to tack”) that a boat should use when she wants to call for room to tack at an obstruction.
- **Rule 28.1 (Sail the Course)** The previous components of this rule about starting and finishing, and correcting errors in sailing the course, etc. have been moved into the definition Sail the Course.
- **Rule 40.1 (Personal Flotation Devices: Basic Rule)** Rule 40.2 now permits class rules to put this rule into effect.
- **Rule 44.3 (Scoring Penalty)** The scoring penalty is now based on a boat’s “points” in a race (not her “place”), and is to be rounded to the nearest tenth of a point (0.05 rounded upward).
- **Rule 50.1 (Competitor Clothing and Equipment)** The rule now refers to “crew harnesses” as defined in *The Equipment Rules of Sailing*. They must have positive buoyancy in fresh water. A crew harness is required to allow the competitor, at any time, to easily disconnect the harness from the trapeze or attachment to the boat.
- **Rule 56.3 (Fog Signals and Lights; Traffic Separation Schemes; Tracking Systems)** This new rule states, “When a *rule* requires a boat to be equipped with an Automatic Identification System transponder or any other tracking device, it shall not be turned off or its effectiveness intentionally reduced.”
- **Part 5 (Protests, Redress, Hearings, Misconduct and Appeals), Sections A and B (rules 60-65)** These rules have been completely rearranged and renumbered to provide a better organization of the rules but with no significant changes. The new structure is this:
  - Section A, Protests; Redress; Support Persons**
    - Rule 60, Protests
    - Rule 61, Redress
    - Rule 62, Support Persons
  - Section B, Hearings and Making Decisions**
    - Rule 63, Conduct of Hearings
    - Rule 64, Discretionary Penalties
    - Rule 65, Legal Liability and Costs
- **Rule 60.1 (Right to Protest)** The technical committee is no longer required to protest a boat if it decides that a boat or personal equipment does not comply with the class rules or with rule 50 (Competitor Clothing and Equipment).

- **Rule 60.2(b) (Intention to Protest)** If a boat is not within hailing distance at the time of the incident, the boat intending to protest does not need to hail or display a red flag (for boats 20 feet or longer). She only needs to inform the protestee of her intention to protest at the first reasonable opportunity.
- **Rule 60.3 (Delivering a Protest)** A protest now need only identify the protestor, the protestee and the incident.
- **Rule 63.1 (Rights of Parties)** When a boat requests redress, the US Sailing prescription to this rule requires a protest committee to call a hearing to hear the request for redress and to consider redress for any other boats that participate in the hearing, or request in writing to do so before the hearing begins, thereby making them “parties” to the hearing (see the definition Party).
- **Rule 63.7(b) (Reopening a Hearing)** This rule now states that if a party does not request a reopening of a hearing in writing within the time limit in rule 63.7 (24 hours after being informed of the decision with some exceptions), the request is “invalid,” meaning the protest committee is required to close the hearing (see rule 63.4(a)(1)).
- **Rule 65 (Legal Liability and Costs)** The rule now reads, “Questions of legal liability arising from a breach of a *rule*, including any claims for monetary damages, shall be governed by prescriptions, if any, of the national authority.” The US Sailing prescription to rule 65.1 clarifies that the term “damages” used in the prescription refers to “monetary” damages.
- **Rule 78 (Compliance with Class Rules; Certificates)** When a rule provides that the penalty for a breach of a class rule may be less than disqualification, the same penalty will apply to a breach of rule 78.
- **Rule 89.2 (Notice of Race; Appointment of Race Officials)** Organizing authorities are now required to publish a notice of race that conforms to rule J1 in writing.
- **Appendix R (Procedures for Appeals and Requests), rule R3, Fees** US Sailing has removed the fee for members to file an appeal to the US Sailing Appeals Committee, and for clubs and other organizations affiliated to US Sailing to request an interpretation of the rules under rule 72 and rule R1.4.
- **Race Signals, Abandonment Signals** The signals for abandonment involving flag N apply to races that are in progress at the time the signal is made.