

MARK-ROOM**Room for a boat**

- (a) to sail to the *mark* when her *proper course* is to sail close to it,
- (b) to round or pass the *mark* on the required side, and
- (c) to leave it astern.

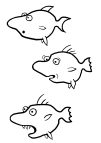
This definition is central to applying rule 18 (Mark-Room). It describes the “space” (see definition *Room*) a boat needs to give another boat when one of them is in the *zone*. The definition describes two different points in time: first, while the inside boat is sailing “to” the *mark*; and then while the inside boat is rounding or passing the *mark*. Let’s look at the first part of the definition first.

Rule 18 begins to apply when the first of the boats involved reaches the *zone* (rule 18.1(a), When Rule 18 Applies), which is normally when she is three of her hull lengths from the *mark*. From that point, the outside *overlapped* boat or the boat that has not reached the *zone* yet must give the other boat *mark-room*. If the *proper course* of the boat entitled to *mark-room* is to sail close to the *mark* (within a couple of feet or so), which will certainly be the case when the boat is rounding the *mark*, then *mark-room* includes the *room* (i.e., the space) the boat needs to sail to the *mark* in a “seamanlike way,” which means handling her boat in a normal way without risk of touching the boat giving her *mark-room* or the *mark*. Allowing her this space is to prevent an outside boat with luffing rights from luffing an inside boat inside the *zone* before she gets to the *mark*. Note, however, the use of the term “*proper course*” in the definition is purely a test for whether the boat is entitled to “*room*” to sail to the *mark*; it does not mean that the boat is entitled to space to actually sail her “*proper course*” to the *mark*.

Say, for instance, the inside boat was leaving the *mark* to port. Clearly, it would not be “seamanlike” to sail a course that will result in touching the *mark* or leaving the *mark* to starboard. Therefore, to sail “to” the *mark*, P will sail a course that will bring her slightly to the right of the *mark* in anticipation of her rounding or passing maneuver at the *mark*. See the discussion of the definition *Room* for a discussion on how far from the *mark* it is “seamanlike” to sail.

An example of a boat in the *zone* whose *proper course* is **not** to sail close to the *mark*, is a boat approaching the finishing line a couple lengths from one of the finishing *marks*. Clearly the boat is in the *zone* of the finishing *mark*, but her *proper course* will be to cross the finishing line as soon as possible, which may mean she will get no closer than two lengths to the actual *mark*. In that case, *mark-room* does not include space for her to sail “to” the *mark* (see the discussion of rule 18.2(a) in Chapter 8 to understand why this is important).

“OK, I understand that when I’m a keep-clear boat and I’m approaching a rounding mark, I get room to sail “to” the mark in a seamanlike way. But how much room do I get when I am rounding or passing the mark?”



“Mark-room” is the “room” you need to round or pass the *mark* on the required side. “Room” is defined as “*The space a boat needs in the existing conditions, including space to comply with her obligations under the rules of Part 2 and rule 31, while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way.*” You are in a sailboat race, so the space you “need” to round a *mark* in a “seamanlike way” will be just enough space to change course around the *mark* onto whatever course you need to be sailing to begin the next leg without risk of touching the *mark* or fouling the outside boat. It is not as much room as you would like to make a tactical “swing wide/cut close” rounding (see Cases 21 and 118 and Appeals 3 and 20).



“I notice that rule 18.1(b) says ‘Rule 18 no longer applies between boats when mark-room has been given.’ So when have I been given mark-room?”

Once you have rounded the *mark* and are on a course needed to begin sailing the next leg, and you can *keep clear* of an outside right-of-way boat without risk of touching the *mark* or fouling another boat, and you have *room* to leave the *mark* astern, you have been given *mark-room* and you must thereafter *keep clear* of right-of-way boats. This might occur before you have left the *mark* astern. And for sure, once you have left the *mark* astern after rounding or passing it, you have been given *mark-room*.



“If I am an inside, windward boat in the zone of a windward mark, does mark-room include room for me to tack and sail to the mark?”

Well, “mark-room” is the *room* you need to sail to the *mark*, which may include tacking. So as you begin heading up as part of your tack, the outside boat has to give you *room* to change course. But note that the rule that entitles you to *mark-room*, rule 18 (Mark-Room), shuts off the moment you pass head to wind (see rules 18.1(a)(1) and 18.2(b)). That means that the moment you pass head to wind you are no longer entitled to *mark-room* and will be penalized if you break rule 13 (While Tacking).