

2025-2028 Racing Rules of Sailing

Important Changes Affecting Race Management

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The Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS) are reviewed and revised every four years by World Sailing, the world governing body for the sport. World Sailing recently published the 2025-2028 edition of the RRS, which will become effective on 1 January 2025. *The Racing Rules of Sailing* include the Introduction, Basic Principles, Definitions, Race Signals, Parts 1 through 7, rules of the appendices, and relevant preambles.

You can find *The Racing Rules of Sailing* and other support documentation at [Racing Rules - US Sailing](#) and [World Sailing - Racing Rules of Sailing](#). US Sailing also offers a smartphone app that allows you to view and search *The Racing Rules of Sailing*, as well as the WS Case Book, US Sailing Appeals Book, and many other useful resources. You can also submit a protest or request redress from your device, and draw and submit animated protest diagrams. The app is free and only available to US Sailing members.



This document summarizes important changes in the *2025-2028 Racing Rules of Sailing* which affect race management practices and procedures. It is helpful to have both the old 2021-2024 RRS and new 2025-2028 RRS for reference.

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.



- **N** All races ~~that have started~~ in progress are *abandoned*. Return to the starting area.
- **N over H** All races in progress are *abandoned*. Further signals ashore.
- **N over A** All races in progress are *abandoned*. No more racing today.

The term “races in progress” is not defined or used in any other racing rule, or authoritative interpretations of the racing rules (cases or call books). We suggest that until such time when there is an authoritative interpretation, the phrase “races in progress” refers to any race for which the starting sequence has started and in which at least one boat is still racing.

Therefore, after the starting sequence has started and before the race has started, you can postpone or abandon that race, and send the boats ashore or tell them that there is no more racing that day by displaying flag AP, AP over H, or AP over A, with two sounds, or flag N, N over H, or N over A, with three sounds (see rule 27.3).

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Once the race has started, and while at least one boat is still racing in that race, you can abandon the race, and have them return to the starting area, go ashore, or tell them there is no more racing that day by displaying flag N, N over H, or N over A, with three sounds (see rules 32.1 and 32.3).

If you need to send everyone ashore for safety reasons, such as an approaching storm, and some classes races are in progress and others are not, you'll need to display the following race signals:

- **N over H with three sound signals** - to abandon races in progress and send boats ashore.
- **AP over H with two sound signals** - to postpone races not in progress and send boats ashore.

INTRODUCTION:

Terminology

“**Boat** – A sailboat and the crew on board, that are subject to the rules.”

Only sailboats that are subject to the rules are a “boat”. A sailboat that has no connection to an event, such as a cruising boat that sails through the racing area, is not a “boat.”

“For a source of the nautical sense of a word, a reader may refer to *The Equipment Rules of Sailing.*” The *Equipment Rules of Sailing* provide useful definitions regarding equipment used in the sport. They can be found at:

<https://www.sailing.org/inside-world-sailing/rules-regulations/equipment-rules-of-sailing/>

Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions 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 under “Online Documents.”

DEFINITIONS:

“**Finish** A boat *finishes* when, after ~~starting~~ her starting signal, any part of her hull crosses the finishing line from the course side.”

Until the 2021-2024 rulebook, a boat simply crossed the finishing line to *finish* a race. In the 2021-2024 rules a boat had to *start* in order to *finish*. If a boat had not *started*, she couldn't *finish*, and the status of the boat was in limbo. Furthermore, a boat in a distance race that received a scoring penalty for being OCS could not *finish*. This change returns the status quo back to the pre-2021 state. A boat simply crosses the finishing line to finish. “After finishing she need not cross the finishing line completely.”

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“The sailing instructions may change the direction in which boats are required to cross the finishing line to finish.” This change allows a race committee to describe the direction which boats shall cross the finishing line to finish in the sailing instructions. For races that are influenced by headlands or islands, or are raced in rivers, there are times when the direction to cross the finishing line is not clear based on what is the course side of the line. See Case 145. Submission E04-24

Obstruction – In the old rules, the definition *obstruction* could designate an object, area or line as an “obstruction” in the sailing instructions. Now it can do so in any “rule.” *Rules* include the notice of race and sailing instructions, as well as any other document governing the event (see the definition Rule(g)).

Sail the Course – The definition has added the requirements to *start* and *finish*, which had been in old rule 28.1, Sailing the Race. This is one of many changes undoing the unintended consequences when the definition *Sail the Course* and rule 28 were changed in the 2021-2024 rulebook.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

The new definition Rule(a) clarifies that the Basic Principles, which include Sportsmanship and the Rules, and Environmental Responsibility, 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.

When a boat violates Sportsmanship and the Rules, she can still be protested and penalized under rule 2, because when a boat breaks a rule and is not exonerated, she shall take an appropriate penalty, which is defined as a principle of sportsmanship. Similarly, a boat that violates Environmental Responsibility can be protested under rule 47, Trash Disposal.

PART 2 – WHEN BOATS MEET

Rule 14 Avoiding Contact

A new rule 14(c) has been added which requires boats to not cause other boats to hit objects that should not be hit, such as race committee vessels. Now, if a boat hits the race committee vessel, the race committee can protest the boat that hit the committee vessel under rule 31, Touching a Mark, and the boat next to them under rule 14(c) if it thinks that boat caused the contact.

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PART 3 – CONDUCT OF A RACE:

US Prescription to Rule 25.1 – Changed to make sailing instructions readily available to boats rather than competitors, and until the end of the event. See Terminology “Boat”

27.3 Other Race Committee Actions Before the Starting Signal – flag N has been added to the list of flags the race committee can display before the starting signal.

28 Sailing the Course-Race – Changed to correspond with changed definition *Sail the Course*.

32.1 Shortening or Abandoning After the Start – The descriptions of how to signal shortening (display flag S) or abandoning (display flag N) have been moved into their own rules (see rules 32.2 and 32.3 and Race Signals). See submission 027-21. Changed *finish* to *sail the course* in rule 32.1(b) to correspond with changed definition *Sail the Course*.

PART 4 – OTHER REQUIREMENTS WHEN RACING:

40.2 When Rule 40.1 Applies – added new rule 40.2(c). Now rule 40.1 applies if a rule in the class rules, notice of race or sailing instructions states that it applies.

44.3 Scoring Penalty – This reminds that scoring penalties only apply if they are specified in the notice of race or sailing instructions. Also, the scoring for a Scoring Penalty has been changed. The 20% penalty is changed from rounding to the nearest point (0.5 rounded upward), to rounding to the nearest tenth of a point (0.05 rounded upward). This affects rules 30.2, A5.2, T1(b) and sailing instructions that reference 44.3(c). For race committees that have scoring penalties baked into their scoring programs, they will have to adjust to the new rounding error. Test your scoring program before January 1, as you may need to download a new version, or change some configuration settings.



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.

56 Fog Signals and Lights; Traffic Separation Schemes; Tracking Systems – New rule 56.3 promotes safety for boats sailing near commercial vessels or in conditions of limited visibility. Boats cannot “hide” by turning off their tracking system.

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PART 5 – PROTESTS, REDRESS, HEARINGS, MISCONDUCT AND APPEALS:

Part 5 has been extensively reorganized and the rules renumbered. This will require all Part 5 rule references in race documents such as notices of race and sailing instructions, to be revised. The Part 5 Working Party has produced a guide to explain where the 2021-2024 rules have been moved to in the 2025-2028 rulebook. [Part-5-Destinations-Guidance](#)



Part 6 – ENTRY AND QUALIFICATION:

76 Exclusion Of Boats Or Competitors – Rewording to clarify rule. Clarifies that a competitor who enters after the first race of a series can be excluded, and that the organizing authority or race committee must state a “proper” reason for the rejection or cancellation of the boat’s entry.

78.1 Compliance with Class Rules – 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 this rule.

US Prescription 88.2 – Changed to reflect the renumbering of the rules in Part 5.

Part 7 – EVENT ORGANIZATION:

89.2 Notice of Race; Appointment of Race Officials – The notice of race is now required to be “written”!

90.3(a) Scoring – Changed to correspond with changed definition *Sail the Course*.

Appendix A – Scoring

Changed to correspond with changed definition *Sail the Course*. Changed “completed” to “scored” in rules A1 and A2.1.

A5 Scores Determined by the Race Committee – Rule A5.1 differentiates between not *finishing* (DNF) and taking a penalty by retiring (RET).

NSC now means: Did not *sail the course* (other than DNC, DNS, OCS and DNF)

Appendix B – Windsurfing Fleet Racing Rules

B4 Rule 44.1 Taking a Penalty – allows the notice of race or the sailing instructions to specify the use of some other penalty. See submission 048-23

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Appendix C – Match Racing Rules

C2.1 The definition Finish is changed to – One of many changes undoing the unintended consequences when the definition *Sail the Course* and rule 28 were changed in the 2021-2024 rulebook.

C2.14 Rule 27.2 is changed to:

27.2 No later than the warning signal, the race committee may move a starting mark. – Submission 010-23. The race committee can no longer move a starting mark between the start of one flight and the preparatory signal of the next.



C8 PENALTIES INITIATED BY UMPIRES

C8.6 When one boat retires after both boats in a match have started, the umpires may signal under rule C5.4, identifying the retired boat.



Currently rule C8.5 allows a race to be terminated when one boat has started, and it is clear that other boat will not start. This saves time in a busy regatta schedule and minimizes possibility of damage to organizing authority supplied boats. However, when after starting, one boat retires from the race, the other boat must sail the course to be awarded the win. The new rule allows the same logic that applies to a boat not starting to apply to a boat that retires. The change also changes rules C5.4 and C8.5. Submission 053-23.

Appendix D – Team Racing Rules

D3.1 – One of many changes undoing the unintended consequences when the definition *Sail the Course* and rule 28 were changed in the 2021-2024 rulebook.

D4.2 Event Format, D4.3 Scoring a Round-Robin Stage, D4.5 Scoring a Knockout Stage – To allow describing the event format and the scoring of a knockout stage in the notice of race. See submission 209-23

D5.4 – Improve consistency by using the same words throughout the rulebook. The words "finishing position" are only used in rule D5.4, while the words "finishing place" is used 12 times in other rules. See submission 055-23

Appendix F – Kiteboarding Racing Rules

Finish – One of many changes undoing the unintended consequences when the definition *Sail the Course* and rule 28 were changed in the 2021-2024 rulebook.

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Appendix J – Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions

J1.2(6) - Rule 90.3(e) has been added to the list of items the notice of race must include when it applies. See submission 081-23

J2.1(3) – This change allows a race committee to describe the direction which boats shall cross the applicable finishing line to finish in the sailing instructions. For races that are influenced by headlands, or islands or are raced in rivers, there are times when the direction of a start or finish is not clear based on what is the course side of the line. See Case 145. Submission E04-24

Appendix M – Recommendations for Protest Committees

Appendix M has been rewritten to conform with the rewrite of Part 5.

Appendix R – Procedure for Appeals and Requests – US Prescription

R3.2, Fees: US Sailing has eliminated the fee for members to file an appeal with the US Sailing Appeals Committee. Additionally, clubs and other organizations affiliated with US Sailing can now request an interpretation of the rules under rule 72 and rule R1.4 without incurring any fees.

Appendix S – Standard Sailing Instructions

S.12.1 Time Limits –Time Limit wording changed due to change to definition *Sail the Course*. See submission 010-23.

- Race Time Limit Time limit for the first boat to ~~start,~~ sail the course ~~and finish.~~
- Finishing Window Time limit for boats to finish after the first boat ~~starts,~~ sails the course ~~and finishes.~~

Make sure you make similar changes to sailing instructions that don't use Appendix S.

Appendix U – Audible-Sound Starting System

Rule U5 – Due to the restructuring of Part 5 the reference to rule 62.1 has been changed to rule 61.4(b).

Similar changes will be needed to sailing instructions that currently reference rule 62.1.