

Water Awareness and Charge Certificate Manual

Module 50: International Rules of the Road

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Module 21: International Rules of the Road	Updated for Special Inland Waters Requirement	1.2	20 April 2013
Module 21: International Rules of the Road	Outcomes Added	1.3	14 Jan 2018

Outcomes

After completing this module, the certificate holder will:

- Be able to identify vessel classes as described in the Colregs
- Be able to apply rules for avoiding collision as described in the Colregs

1 THE INTERNATIONAL REGULATIONS FOR PREVENTING COLLISIONS AT SEA

In order to avoid collisions on the water, the Skipper of any craft must not only have a working knowledge of the "Rules of the Road" but also know when to apply them. Firstly, the Skipper must know when there is the danger of a collision, as incorrect action or an unnecessary reaction can actually cause a collision which would not have happened if both vessels had kept steady courses.

There is the danger of a collision in either of the following instances:-

- a) When the bearing of the other vessel (or jetty, foul, peninsula, etc.) is more or less constant.
- b) In any close quarters situation.

The importance of safety at sea has never been greater and each year that passes increases the need for everyone in charge of a vessel to be able to apply the Seaman's "Rule of the Road" quickly and correctly in order to navigate safely in our busy waterways, whether on inland waters, harbours and coastal waters or deep sea. The Inter Governmental Maritime Consultative Organisation was responsible for the production of the "International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972", otherwise referred to as the **Colregs**. Where Special or Local Rules are made they shall conform as closely as possible to the International Regulations. In South Africa, these regulations are enforced by the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) and its affiliates, including South African Sailing (SAS). SAS is responsible for additions relating to safety in yacht races and controlling yachts in confined spaces

It must be remembered that courtesy and common sense dictates that small boats stay clear of larger vessels, the reason being that a smaller craft is far more manoeuvrable than larger vessels. Nevertheless, if there is a possibility of a collision, the rules clearly apply to both large and small vessels alike. By obeying the RULES we can make sure that there is a minimum danger of a collision. It is up to us as Sea Scouts and for that matter every other Scout who takes to the water in small boats, to make ourselves absolutely conversant with the local Rules that apply wherever we may be operating.

1.1 General Definitions in terms of Rule 3 of the Colregs

- i. **Vessel** includes every description of water craft, including non-displacement craft and sea planes, used or capable of being used as a means of transport on water
- ii. **Underway** refers to a vessel that is not at anchor, made fast to shore or aground. A vessel may be underway even if it is not being propelled (making way)
- iii. **Hove to** refers to a vessel that is not at anchor, made fast to shore or aground or making way. For the purposes of the Colregs, a vessel hove to, is still considered to be underway
- iv. **Stand on vessel** has right of way and shall continue on a steady course and speed until the danger has passed. If the other vessel has not seen you, attempt to make your presence known. If the other vessel persists in holding course, you must take action to avoid the collision
- v. **Give-way vessel** The Helmsman must take EARLY and POSITIVE avoiding action. This action can take several forms. One can reduce speed change course, go astern, go round in a complete circle, or any other action to avoid the collision. Changing course is probably the most common. Suppose a course change of 2 to 3 degrees is all that is required. The Helmsman who does just that will leave the other Helmsman wondering whether or not he

had been seen. It would be considered far more courteous to make an adjustment that is noticeable, say 10 degrees and then go back to the original plan of action. Above all – **DON'T CUT IN FRONT..**

A dangerous or ignorant helmsman is just as much a menace on the water as a drunken or discourteous driver is on the road.

1.2 Vessels of Different Classes

Consider the following classes of vessels:-

1. Vessels not under command
2. Vessels restricted in their ability to manoeuvre
3. Vessels fishing
4. Vessels under sail
5. Vessels under power

In every case the Skipper must always give way to the vessel higher up the list, i.e. the vessel with the lower priority number.

1. **Vessels not under command** refers to vessels that are hove to or under the command of automatic steering gear
2. **Vessels restricted in their ability to manoeuvre** includes, but is not limited to: Vessels with damaged propulsion or steering gear, large vessels in restricted waters and vessels at anchor
3. **Vessels fishing** refers to any vessel using nets, long lines or trawling rigs
4. **Vessel under sail** refers to any vessel driven solely by the wind
5. **Vessel under power** refers to any vessel propelled wholly or partially by human or mechanical power. This includes gigs and canoes and sailing vessels using their engines

1.3 Vessels of the Same Class

Almost all encounters of the type in consideration involve two vessels, the give-way vessel and the stand-on vessel. In order to avoid a collision, both helmsmen must obey some simple procedures

1.3.1 Overtaking Vessel Stays Clear

If two vessels are proceeding on the same course at different speeds, the faster boat (approaching from astern) will keep clear of the slower boat. The overtaking boat may pass on either side of the slower boat, but it is courteous to pass to leeward.

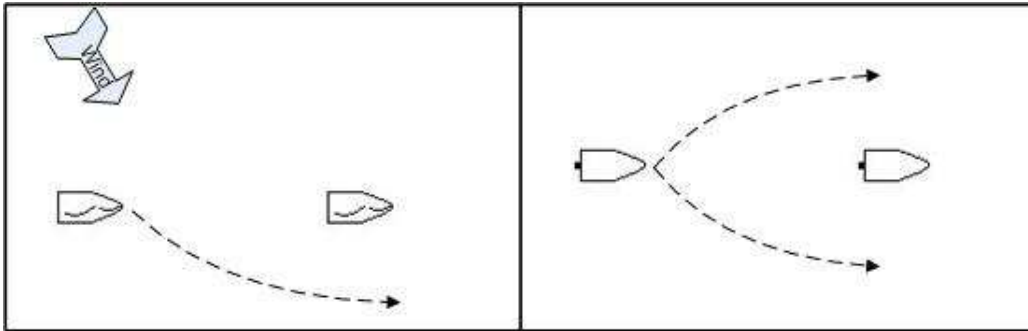


Figure 1: Overtaking vessel stays clear

1.3.2 Vessels Approaching Head-on

Two vessels of the same class approaching head on should take avoiding action by turning to starboard so that the vessels pass each other port side to port side

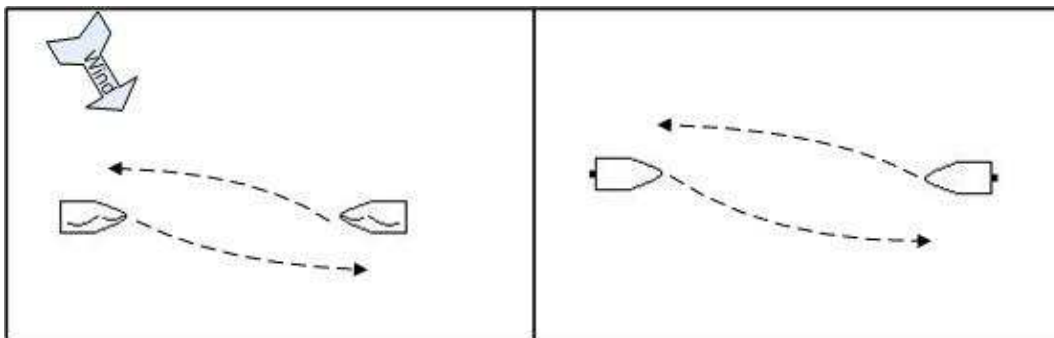


Figure 2: Vessels approaching head-on

This rule only applies if the other vessel is dead ahead. Otherwise, the port and starboard rules apply

1.3.3 Yacht on Starboard Tack Has Right Of Way

When two yachts are approaching each other on a collision course (but not head on) the yacht with the wind over its starboard bow will stand on, while the yacht with the wind over its port bow must give way

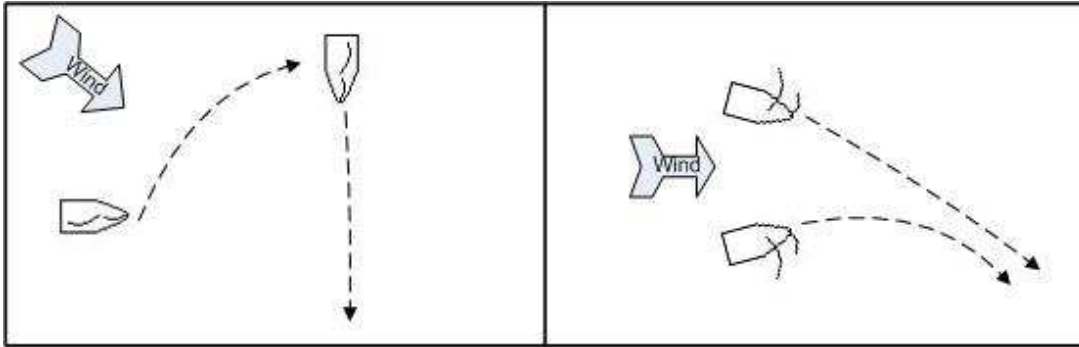


Figure 3: Yacht on starboard tack has right of way

1.3.4 Windward Yacht Gives Way

When two yachts are approaching each other on a collision course and both yachts are on the same tack, the windward boat (boat closest to the wind) must give way, while the leeward boat stands on.

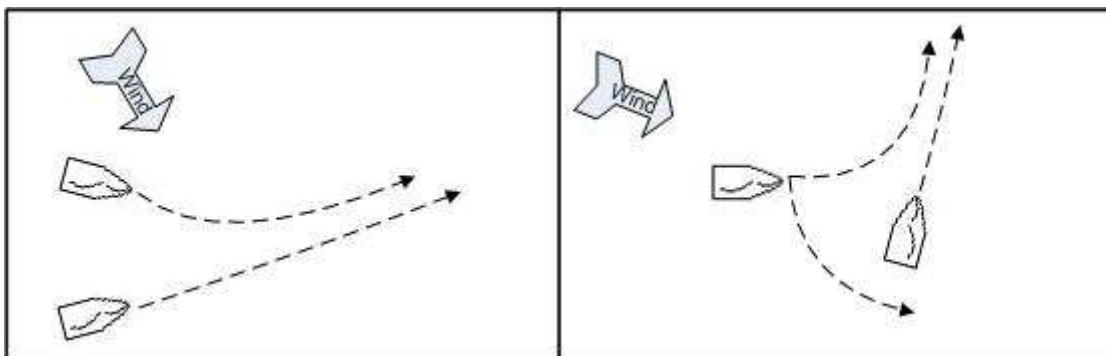


Figure 4: Windward yacht gives way

1.3.5 Approach on Port Side

The port side of a vessel is shown by the colour red. Another vessel approaching and seeing the red side of a vessel must give way to that vessel.

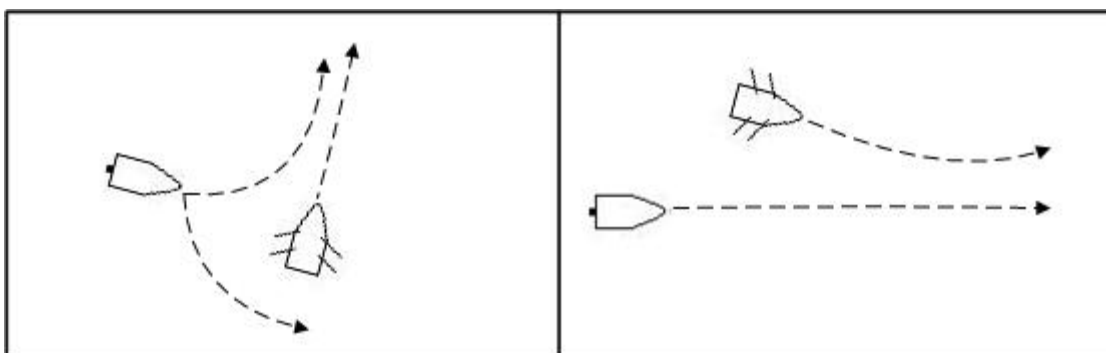


Figure 5: Approach on port side

1.3.6 Approach on Starboard Side

The starboard side of a vessel is shown by the colour green. Another vessel approaching and seeing the green side of a vessel has right of way and stands on.

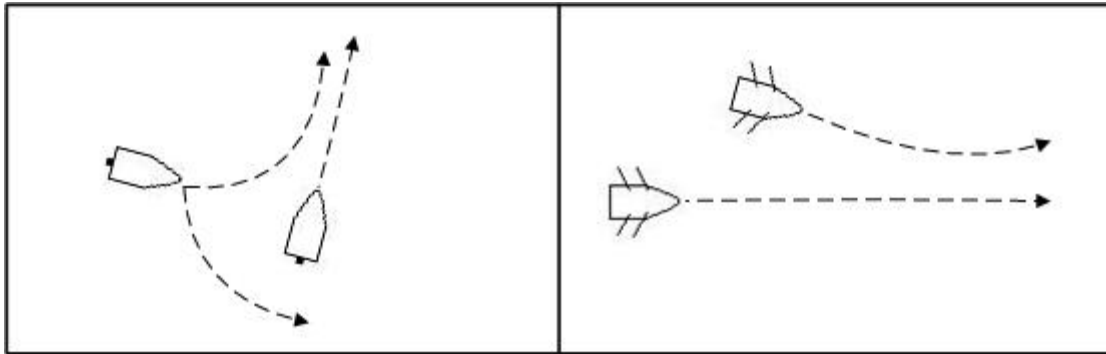


Figure 6: Approach on starboard side

1.3.7 Most Maneuverable Vessel Stays Clear

Also known as "Might is right", the vessel with the highest ability to manoeuvre stays clear in all circumstances. In general this means that power-driven vessels will give way to vessels under sail. However, the size and circumstance of such vessel must be taken into account as a large power-driven vessel or vessel fishing may be restricted in movement and thus unable to give way to smaller vessels.

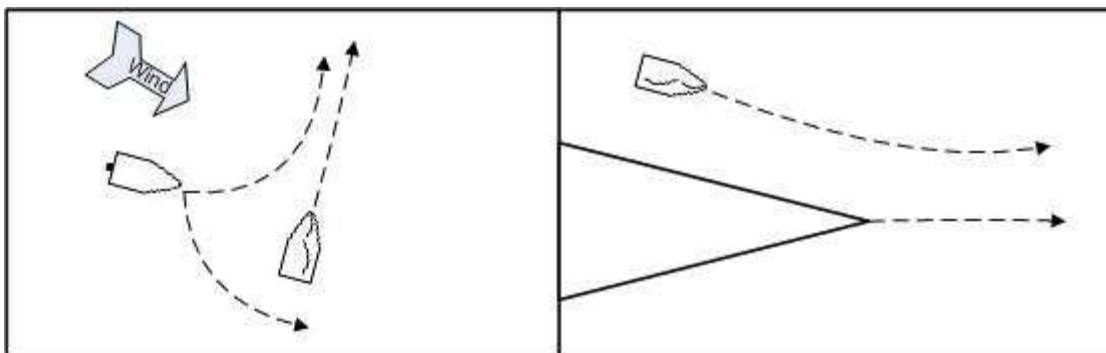


Figure 7: Most manoeuvrable vessel stays clear

1.3.8 Racing

Vessels partaking in racing events have to remain on a specific course, thus are less manoeuvrable and have right of way over vessels not racing, regardless of category

1.4 Avoiding Collisions

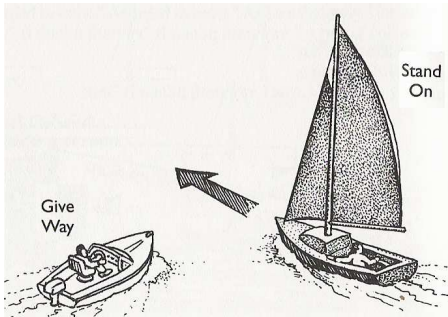
Regardless of the rules listed above, always take whatever steps are necessary to avoid a collision, even if you feel you are in the right. It is rarely the case that only one vessel is at fault in the event of a collision

Just as important as knowing how to act in an encounter with another vessel, is keeping a good look-out at all times. In times of reduced visibility, this is even more important. Speed should be reduced in such circumstances.

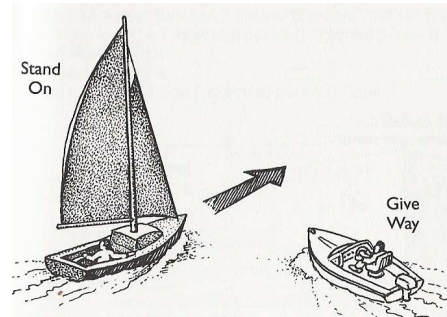
1.5 Rules of the Road in Practice

The sketches on the following page are designed to give the Coxswain of a boat under oars, which for the purposes of this manual is deemed to be "power-driven vessel", a picture of what he will see from his position on the tiller in the stern sheets. Similarly, the helmsman of a yacht has three basic principles to observe in RULE 12 which states:

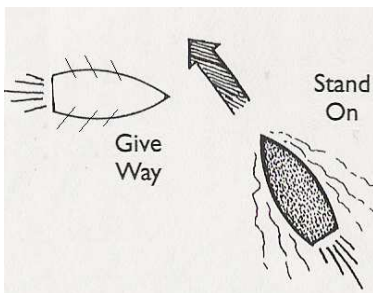
- (a) When two sailing vessels are approaching one another, so as to involve risk of collision, one of them shall keep out of the way of the other as follows:
- (i) When each has the wind on a different side, the vessel which has the wind on the port side shall keep out of the way of the other (Sketch No. 7).
 - (ii) When both have the wind on the same side, the vessel which is to windward shall keep out of the way of the vessel which is to leeward (Sketch No. 6).
 - (iii) If a vessel with the wind on the port side sees a vessel to windward and cannot determine with certainty whether the other vessel has the wind on the port or starboard side, she shall keep out of the way of the other (Sketch No. 8).
- (b) For the purpose of this Rule the windward side shall be deemed to be the side opposite to that on which the mainsail is carried.



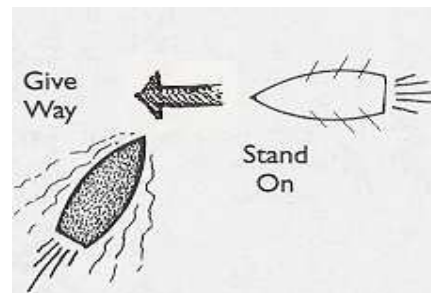
1. GIVE WAY: Alter course to Starboard in order to pass behind the yacht



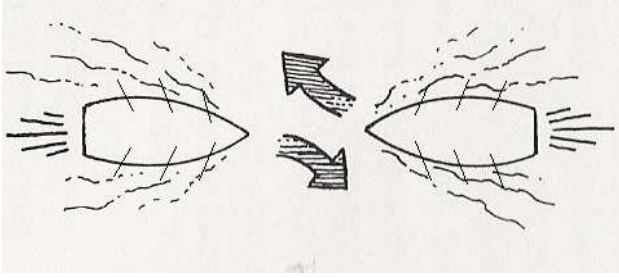
2. GIVE WAY: Alter course to Port in order to pass behind the yacht.



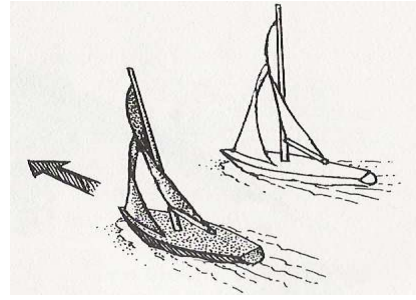
3. GIVE WAY: Alter course to Starboard in order to pass behind the motor vessel. Vessel is on your Starboard bow therefore you must give way. Keep clear.



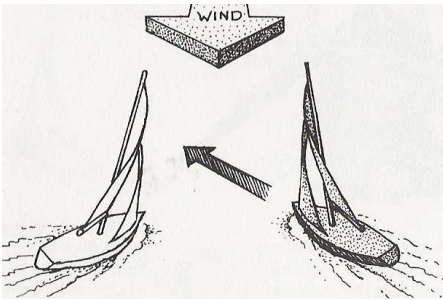
4. STAND ON: Hold your course and speed. The other vessel is on your Port bow, you are on his Starboard bow; he must alter course to Starboard and pass behind you. You have the right of way.



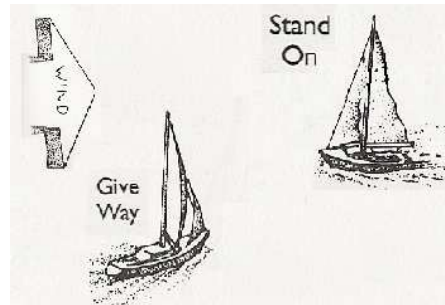
5. Both vessels must alter course to Starboard pass Port to Port.



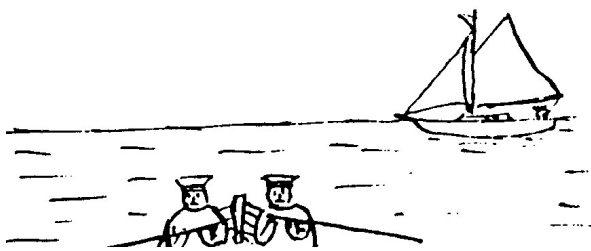
6. STAND ON: Both vessels have wind on the Starboard side (on Starboard tack). Your vessel is to leeward therefore the other boat must Keep Clear of the leeward vessel.



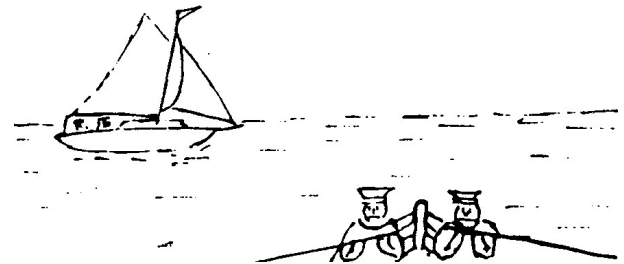
7. STAND ON: You have the wind on your Starboard side, the other vessel has the wind on his Port side. Yacht with the wind on the Port side must give way.



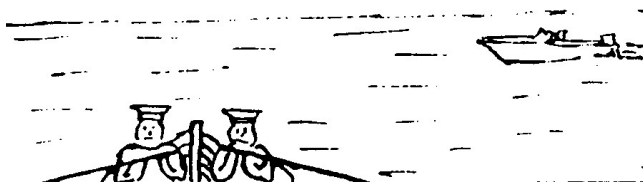
8. GIVE WAY: You have the wind on your Port side and cannot determine with certainty on which side the vessel to leeward has the wind, therefore you must keep clear.



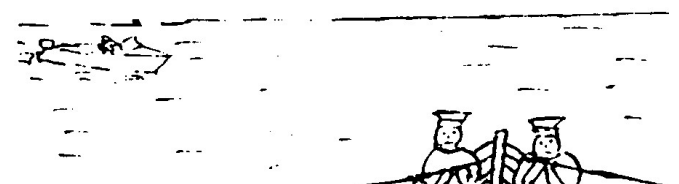
1. GIVE WAY: Alter course to Starboard in order to pass behind the yacht.



2. GIVE WAY: Alter course to Port in order to pass behind the yacht

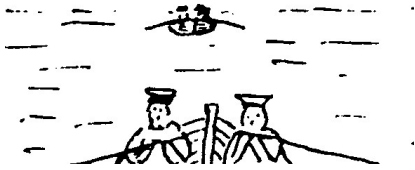


3. GIVE WAY: Alter course to Starboard in order to pass behind the motor vessel. Vessel is on

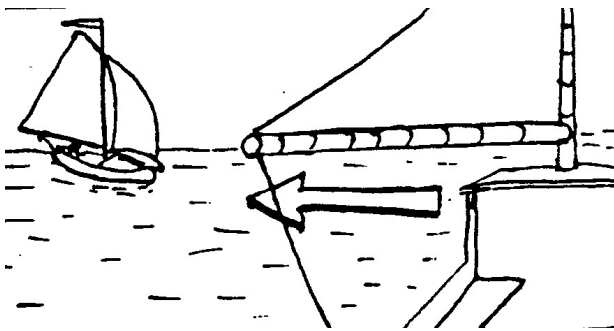


4. STAND ON: hold your course and speed. The other vessel is on you Port bow, you are on his

your Starboard bow therefore you must give way. Keep clear.



5. Both vessels must alter course to starboard. Pass Port to Port.

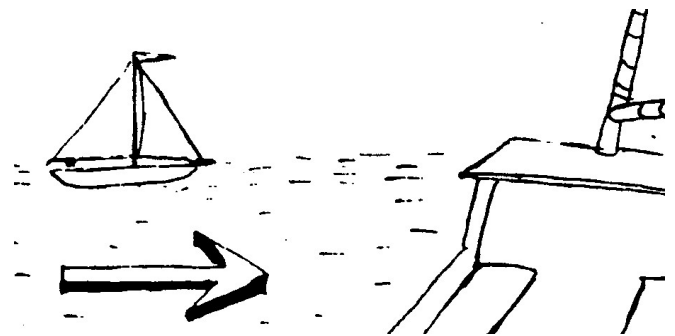


7. STAND ON: You have the wind on your Starboard side; the other vessel has the wind on his Port side. Yacht with wind on Port side must give way.

Starboard bow; he must alter course to Starboard and pass behind you. You have right of way.



6. GIVE WAY: Both vessels have wind on the Starboard side. Your vessel is to windward; therefore you must keep clear of the leeward vessel.



8. GIVE WAY: You have the wind on your Port side and cannot determine with certainty on which side the vessel to windward has the wind, therefore you must give keep clear.