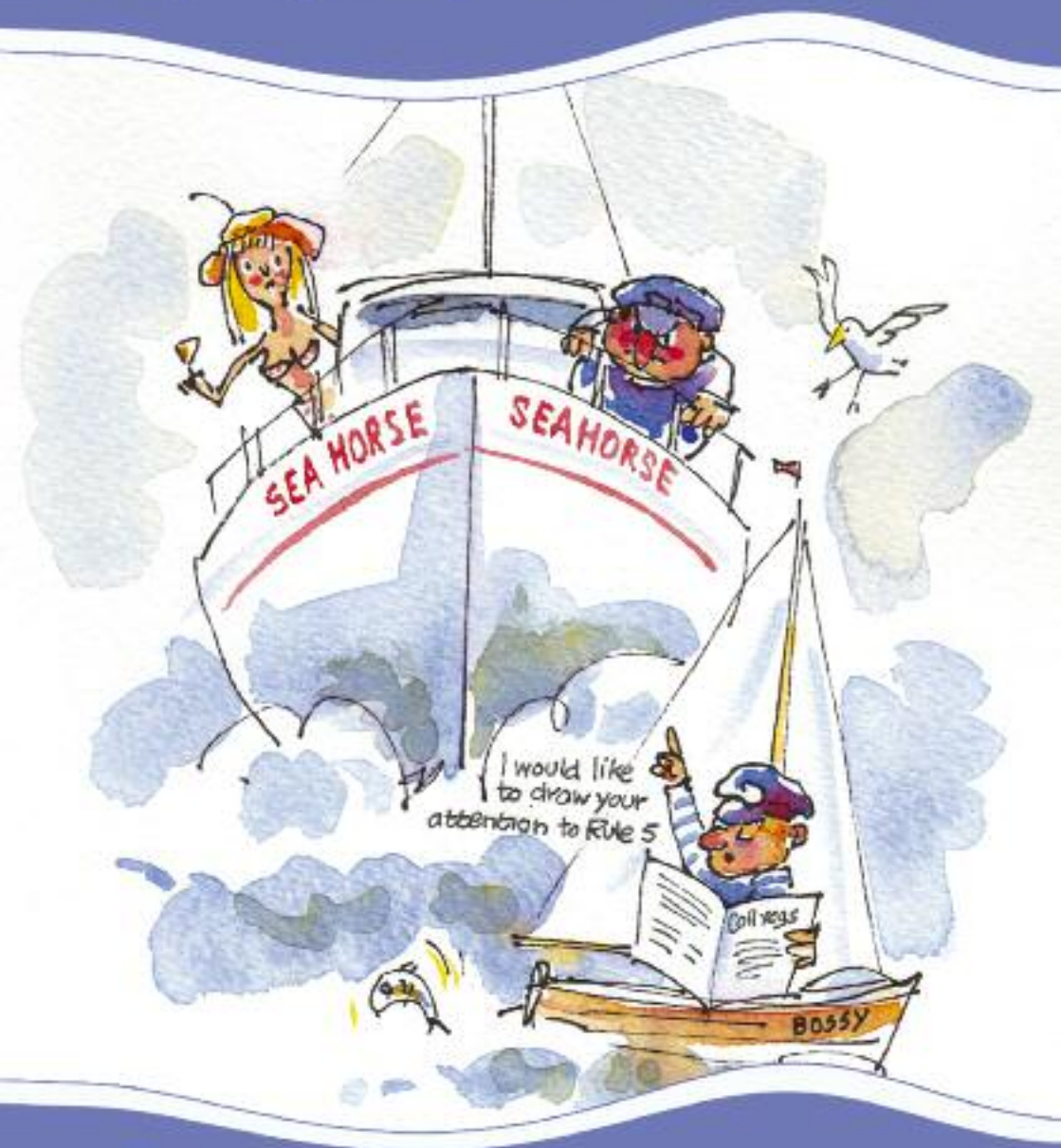


Rules of the Road: Navigating Safely in Chichester Harbour



Chichester Harbour Conservancy
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

November 2008
www.conservancy.co.uk

Introduction

All boats using the harbour are subject to the International Rules for Preventing Collisions at Sea: the 'Colregs'. Though there are also special ISAF racing rules which apply between sailboats which are clearly racing, the Colregs continue to apply between racing and non-racing boats, and take priority whenever there is any doubt.

Many incidents in the harbour can be attributed to ignorance or misunderstanding of a few key rules: this leaflet aims to clarify these, and act as an aide memoire, but should not be regarded as a substitute for reading and understanding a full copy of the regulations which can be found at all chandlers, the Harbour Office or at www.sailtrain.co.uk. We have used the terms 'give way boat' for the boat required to keep clear, and 'stand on boat' for the one which in normal circumstances should expect to hold course. For the purposes of the Colregs, a 'motor boat' is any boat which is motoring or motor-sailing. The term 'port' is used for left and 'starboard' for right.

The rules must be interpreted in a seamanlike way if collisions are to be avoided. It should be borne in mind that no vessel has a 'right of way'.



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Rules which apply to and between all boats

Avoiding dangerous situations (Rule 2)

Though the rules dictate which boat should give way in every case, rule 2 requires the stand on boat to avoid danger and deal with any special situation in a seamanlike way. For example if the give way boat has lost control or is unable to keep clear, the stand on boat must take avoiding action to prevent a collision.

Keeping a look out (Rule 5)

It is the skipper's responsibility to keep a proper lookout at all times, whatever the distraction! Be aware of blind spots, particularly on sailing boats, high-sided motor boats, and fast racing dinghies. Failure to keep a good look out is probably the single largest cause of incidents in the harbour.



Safe speed (Rule 6)

Skippers are expected to sail or motor at a speed which enables them to keep clear of other boats, allowing for the conditions. Safe speed may be affected by the characteristics of the boat, number of other boats around, the wind and current direction and strength, and the width of the channel. This safe speed will often be less than the harbour speed limit of eight knots!

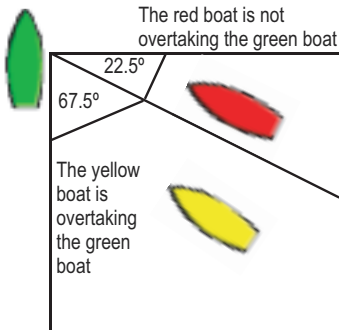
Narrow channels (Rule 9)

All boats should keep to the right, and as close to the edge of the channel as is practical. Anchoring in a narrow channel breaks Rule 9 as well as risking a serious accident.



The term narrow channel is relative and depends upon a vessels' means of propulsion, size, manoeuvrability and the prevailing conditions. For instance all vessels should treat mooring fairways as narrow channels whereas the main channels may only be considered narrow channels by large vessels.

Skippers must keep a safe speed - often less than the 8 knot speed limit



Overtaking (Rule 13)

One boat is overtaking another when it starts its overtaking manoeuvre within the arc of a vessel's stern light is more than 22.5° behind its beam.

The overtaking boat is the give way boat. This applies between motor boats, sailing boats, and motor and sailing boats. This is fundamentally different from the racing rules of sailing.

Avoiding a collision (Rules 8 and 16)

The give way boat should make its avoiding manoeuvre obvious, and in plenty of time. This is its means of communicating with the other boat! It should also pass at a safe distance: this means a bigger margin for error than many racing manoeuvres!

Standing on (Rule 17)

To avoid misleading the give way boat, a stand on boat should not change course or speed. This is especially important where a non racer has to give way to a racer: though the racer may wish to alter course he must 'stand on' until the give way boat is clear.

Of course, if it becomes obvious that the give way boat is for some reason not keeping clear, the stand on boat must avoid a collision! If this late avoidance involves a turn, it should generally be to the starboard. This will avoid 'shadow dancing', if both boats turn simultaneously. Of course this situation will only occur if the give way boat has broken rule 16!



Make your 'give way' intentions clear to avoid 'shadow dancing' when two boats turn simultaneously

November 2008

Give Way Etiquette

Responsibilities Between Vessels (Rule 18)

When two different types of boat meet in situations not covered above, the following priorities apply.



Motor Boat
Gives Way to
Sailing Boat



Sailing Boat
Gives Way to
Boat Engaged in Fishing



Boat engaged in fishing
Gives Way to
Boat with Restricted Ability to Manoeuvre

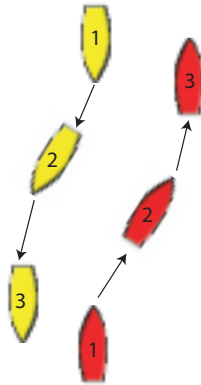


Boat with Restricted Ability to Manoeuvre
Gives Way to
Boat Not Under Command



Boat Not Under Command

Rules which apply between motor boats

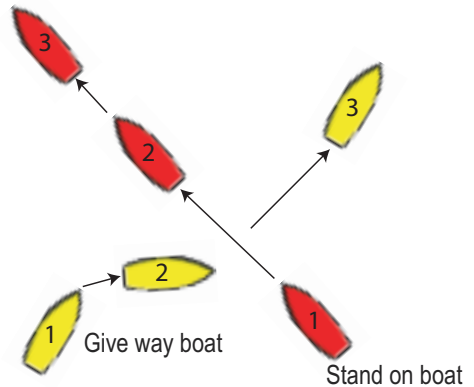


Motor boats meeting head on (Rule 14)

Both should alter course to the starboard, and pass port side to port side. This is logical, and consistent with rules 9 and 17.

Motor boats on crossing courses (Rule 15)

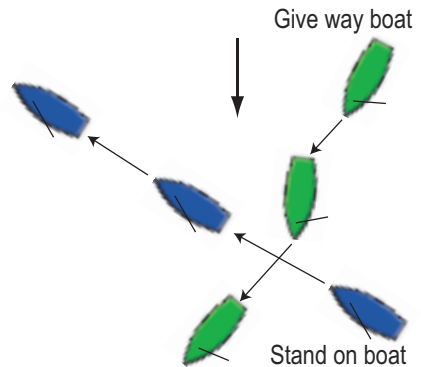
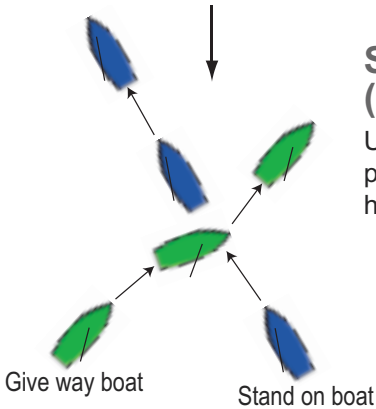
The boat which has the other on its starboard side is the give way boat. In most circumstances it should turn to the starboard and pass behind the stand on boat.



Rules which apply between sailing boats

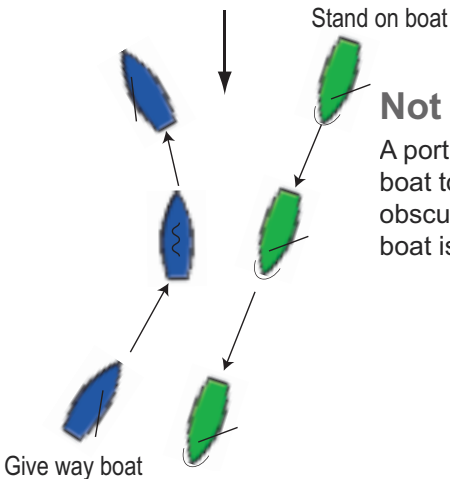
Sailing boats on opposite tacks (Rule 12(i))

Unless one boat is overtaking another, the boat on port tack is the give way boat. A boat is on port tack if her main boom is on the starboard side.



Sailing boats on the same tack (Rule 12(ii))

The boat which is furthest to windward is the give way boat. The windward side is the side opposite to the main boom.



Not sure? (Rule 12(iii))

A port tack boat may be unsure of which tack a boat to windward is on, if for example its boom is obscured by a spinnaker. In this case, the port tack boat is the give way boat.

Signals & Lights

When anchored, motor sailing, fishing, restricted in ability to manoeuvre, or not under command, the following signals are mandatory. Using and understanding the correct signals will clarify which boat is the give way boat, and avoid misunderstandings.



Anchored
(Rule 30)



Motor-sailing
(Rule 25e)



Fishing
(Rule 26)



Not under
command
(Rule 27a)



Restricted in
ability to
manoeuvre
(Rule 27b)

Motor Boats



Motor boat
under 7m,
less than 7
knots



Motor boat
under 12m,
combined
masthead &
stern light



Motor boat
under 20m,
combined
lantern for
sidelights

Sailing Boats



Sailing boat
under 7m
shows white
light to
prevent
collision



Sailing
yacht under
20m
combined
sidelights &
sternlight



Sailing
yacht under
20m
tricolour
lantern at
masthead



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01243 512301 November 2008

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