

# Rules of the Road

in Chichester Harbour

## Avoiding collisions and navigating safely



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Chichester  
Harbour  
Conservancy

# Introduction

**All boats using the Harbour are subject to the International Rules for Preventing Collisions at Sea: known as the Collision Regulations (COLREGS) or Rules of the Road.**



Most incidents in the Harbour are caused by ignorance or misunderstanding of a few key rules: this leaflet aims to explain these and act as a reminder but should not be regarded as a substitute for building a thorough understanding of the COLREGS.

The full COLREGS cover a large and often detailed amount of information which can appear daunting on first sight. There are however many books, cards and online learning aids that help distil this information down to a learnable amount which will give you a sound working knowledge.

Being equipped with this knowledge will make your boating safer for everyone and certainly more enjoyable.

Here we have used the terms 'give way boat' for the boat required to keep clear, and 'stand on boat' for the one in normal circumstances should hold course. For the purposes of the Col Regs, a motor boat is any boat that is motoring or motor-sailing. The term port is used for left and starboard for right.

The rules must be interpreted in seamanlike way if collisions are to be avoided. It should be noted that no vessel has a right of way and a 'stand on' vessel must take action if a risk of collision occurs.

There are also special ISAF racing rules that apply between sailboats which are racing however the Col Regs continue to apply between racing and non racing boats and take precedence.



## Rules which apply **to and between all boats**



### **Avoiding dangerous situations** (Rule 2)

Though the rules state 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)

One of the simplest but most important rules, but it's all too easy to get distracted whilst boating. Many a near miss or collision could have been avoided by just looking.

As well as sight, remember to listen and use all other available means (such as Radar) to assess the situation and any risk of collision.



### **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.



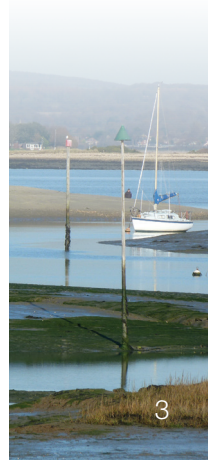
**This safe speed will often be less than the harbour speed limit of 8 knots!**



### **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.

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 where as broader stretches of water may only be considered narrow channels by larger vessels.



## Rules of the Road: Chichester Harbour



### Overtaking (Rule 13)

Sail or power, racing or not, if you are approaching another vessel from astern (22.5 degrees abaft her beam to be precise) and going to overtake, you must keep out of the way of the vessel being overtaken. The vessel being overtaken must maintain course and speed.



22.5°  
67.5°

The red boat is not overtaking the green boat



The yellow boat is overtaking the green boat



### 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 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 starboard. This will avoid 'shadow dancing', if both boats turn simultaneously.



# Give Way Hierarchy

## Responsibility Between Vessels (Rule 18)

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

**1** Motor Boat  
gives way to  
Sailing Boat



**2** Sailing Boat  
gives way to  
Boat engaged  
in Fishing



**3** Boat engaged  
in Fishing  
gives way to  
boat with  
Restricted Ability  
to Manoeuvre



**4** Boat with Restricted  
Ability to Manoeuvre  
gives way to  
Boat Not Under  
Command



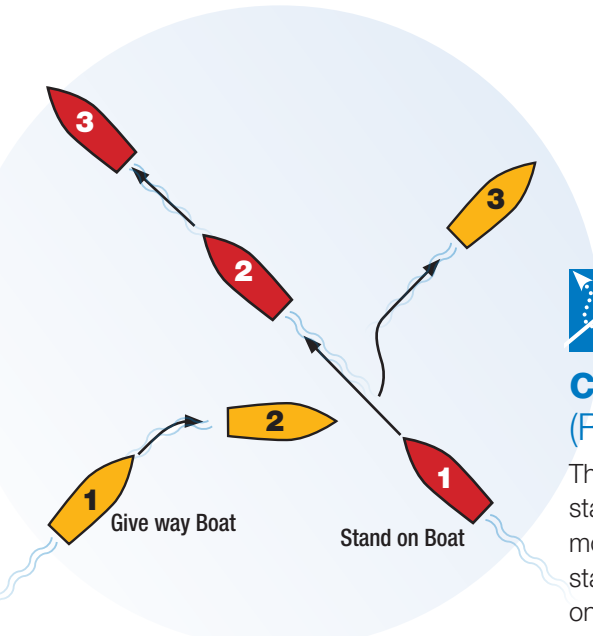
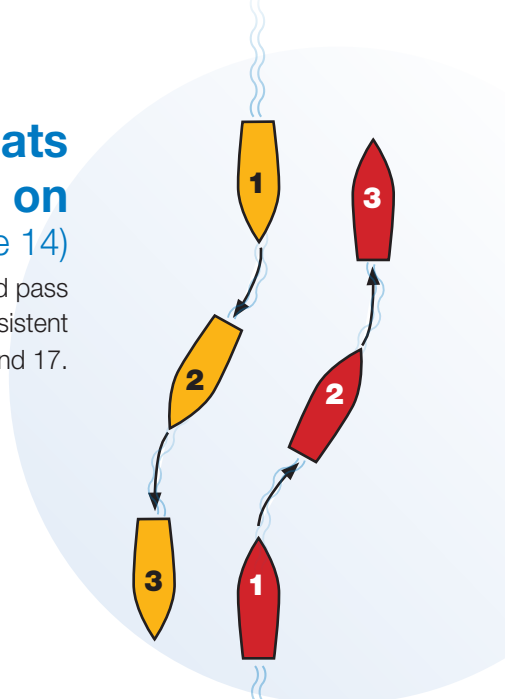
## Rules which apply **between motor boats**



### Motor boats meeting head on

(Rule 14)

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



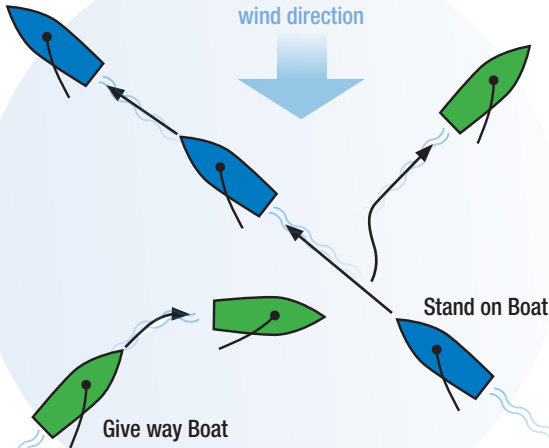
### Motor boats on crossing courses

(Rule 15)

The boat that 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. The phrase 'if to starboard red appear, 'tis your duty to keep clear' can be a helpful way to remember this one.

**The red being the colour of the light on the port side.**

# Rules which apply **between sailing boats**



## **Sailing boats on opposite tacks**

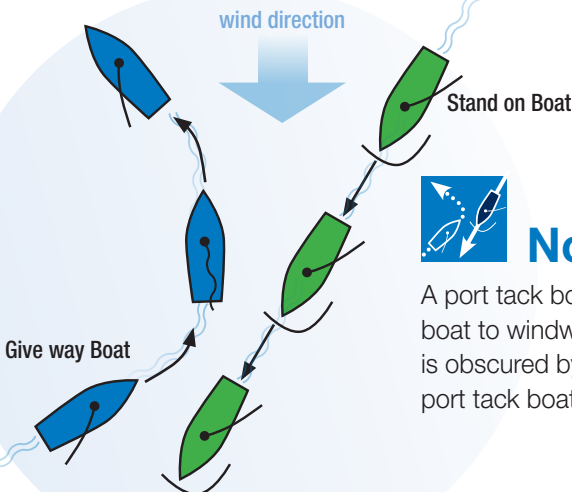
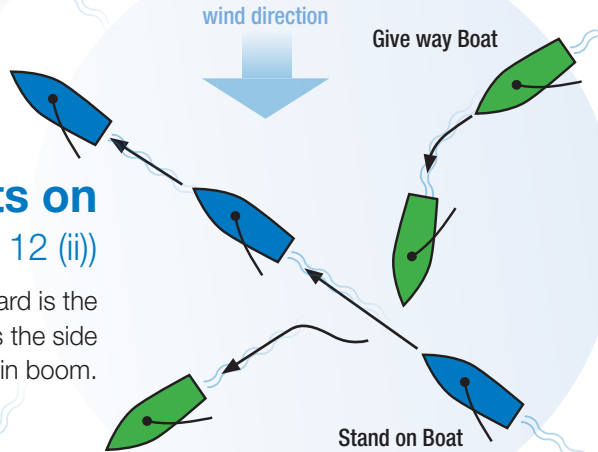
(Rule 12 (i))

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



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

The boat that 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 and 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  
or  
20m  
tricolour  
lantern at  
masthead



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