

Scenario 1:

The diagrammed situation occurs around 20 seconds before the starting signal.

Position 1 –

W is clear ahead of L, so L is required to keep clear of W, and W is the right-of-way boat under rule 12, On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped. W has no obligation to anticipate that she may soon become the keep-clear boat. L's hailing is premature.

Position 2 –

L and W are overlapped. L is the right-of-way boat under rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped, and W is required to keep clear of her. Because L just acquired the right-of-way, L is required to initially give W room to keep clear under rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way, and W is required to promptly respond with her best effort to keep clear. See the definition Room. Rule 17 applies if boats were within two lengths of each other when overlap began, but a boat does not have a proper course before the starting signal.

Position 3 –

L is luffing (changing course) and is required to give W room to keep clear of her under rule 16.1, Changing Course. L can luff as quickly as she wants to as long as W has room (space and time) to keep clear, and can sail up to head to wind (because she is on starboard tack up to head to wind). From the time the overlap began, W is trimming her sail and turning away from L, so W is responding with her best effort to keep clear. Both boats are complying with the rules. The fact that W sails over the starting line while keeping clear is tough luck on W.

See US Sailing Appeal 108.

Tactical Take-aways...

For L, when you become overlapped to leeward of W, be sure to give her plenty of room (time and space) to keep clear of you. Remember that if the boats get very close together, W could be failing to keep clear if any alteration of course by you would result in immediate contact (see the definition Keep Clear (b)). Therefore, even if the boats get close together with no contact, you could be penalized for failing to give W room to keep clear. Also keep in mind that W may be side-slipping, especially if she has no forward speed and trims in her sails. Give her plenty of room.

L is very strong in this position. The only thing that can go wrong for L is if W fails to keep clear in the first 5 or so seconds of the overlap, particularly if there is contact. In that situation, L *could* be found to have broken rule 15. L should do all she can to avoid the boats getting close together as she establishes her leeward overlap.

The key for L is to pull forward enough so she has clear air when she wants to accelerate. For L, a good target is to get your bow even with or slightly ahead of W's.

For W, the key is to react immediately after L becomes overlapped. Immediately steering away from L and pulling in your mainsail are the two major things a protest committee will look for regarding you making your best effort to keep clear. W can also anticipate the situation and reach over the top of L and become the leeward boat.

Scenario 2:

The diagrammed situation occurs around 20 seconds before the starting signal.

Position 1 –

X and M are overlapped as are M & W and L & W. Windward boats are required to keep clear of the boats to leeward of them under rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped. L is clear astern of X and M, so she is required to keep clear of them under rule 12, On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped.

Position 2 –

* All four boats are overlapped, so windward boats must keep clear of leeward boats. L has acquired right of way over M so must initially give her room to keep clear under rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way. Also, rule 17 applies, but a boat does not have a proper course before the starting signal.

* Both L and M must keep clear of X, so X is an “obstruction” to both (see the definition Obstruction); and rule 19.2(b) requires M to give L room to sail between her and X. The same applies between L, M and W. L is an “obstruction” to those two, and W must give M room to sail between her and L. Rules 11 and 19.2(b) work in harmony here.

Note: If M had not been able to give L room to sail between her and X from the moment the overlap began, then she is not required to do so (see rule 19.2(b)). Rule 15 and 19.2(b) work in harmony here. If when L becomes overlapped to leeward of M, M has room to keep clear of L, she also has room to give L room to sail between her and X. If she doesn't have room to keep clear, then she also can't give L room to sail between herself and X.

Position 3 –

* L is luffing (changing course), so rule 16.1, Changing Course, requires her to give M room to keep clear. Room includes the space M needs to comply with the rules of Part 2 (see the definition Room). In order to keep clear of L, M must also luff (change course) and therefore also give room to W to keep clear under rule 16.1.

* There is contact between M and W, but if there is no damage, both boats are exonerated for breaking rule 14, Avoiding Contact, as M is the right-of-way boat and W is entitled to room under rule 16.1 (see rule 14(b)).

W failed to keep clear, so she broke rule 11. If W was trying her hardest to keep clear but M failed to give her enough room to keep clear, then M broke rule 16.1, and W is exonerated (freed from blame) under rule 21(a), Exoneration. If M broke rule 16.1 because L didn't give her room (time and space) to give W room, then L broke rule 16.1 and M is exonerated under rule 21(a), Exoneration. If W had room (space and time) to keep clear but did not respond promptly enough to M's luff, then W is not exonerated. This will be up to the protest committee to decide based on what each boat did, and when.

See US Sailing Appeal 36.

Tactical Take-aways...

For L, when sailing in between two boats clear ahead, be sure the new windward boat will have plenty of room (space and time) to keep clear of you *after* the overlap is established, and that you will have no problem keeping clear of the boat to leeward of you while the windward boat is maneuvering out of your way.

And keep in mind that the windward boat's space and time to maneuver will be affected by boats that may be to windward of her; so you need to take them into account as well.

And windward boats need to respond “promptly” (almost immediately) to changes of course by leeward boats.

Scenario 3:

The diagrammed situation occurs around 20 seconds before the starting signal.

Position 1 –

W is clear astern of L, with W required to keep clear of L under rule 12, On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped. P is on port tack and is required to keep clear of both L and W under rule 10, On Opposite Tacks.

Position 2 –

P has passed head to wind, so she is on starboard tack (see definition Tack, Starboard or Port) but is not yet on a close-hauled course. Therefore, rule 13, While Tacking, requires P to keep clear of W and L (and while rule 13 applies, rules 10, 11 and 12 do not; see rule 13). W is luffing away from P to avoid contact; therefore P broke rule 10 or 13, depending on when W had to take avoiding action (see the definition Keep Clear).

Tactical Take-aways....

For P, when you are going to tack in to leeward of another boat, be sure to turn well past a close-hauled course to establish without a doubt that you complied with rule 13 before luffing back up towards the new windward boat.

Note: your sails do not need to fill to be on a “close-hauled course.” You need only be aiming on the course you would be on when sailing close-hauled. “Close-hauled” is not a defined term under *The Racing Rules of Sailing*, but is generally defined as a course a boat would sail with advantage in working to windward (see Terminology in the Introduction of *The Racing Rules of Sailing*).

Once P gets to a close-hauled course, she becomes the right-of-way boat under rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped, and must initially give W room to keep clear under rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way. And if P then luffs (changes course), she must give W additional room to keep clear under rule 16.1, Changing Course.

For W, if you have to take action to avoid contact with P **before** P gets down to a close-hauled course, avoid the contact and protest her. However, once she is clearly on a close-hauled course, she becomes the right-of-way boat and you must promptly act to keep clear of her.

Scenario 4A:

Position 3 occurs 15 seconds *before* the starting signal.

Position 1 –

L is on port tack and must keep clear of both M and W who are on starboard tack under rule 10, On Opposite Tacks. M is clear astern of W so is required to keep clear under rule 12, On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped.

Position 2 –

L has completed her tack (reached a close-hauled course) without causing either M or W to have to change course to avoid her while she was tacking. L has the right of way over M and W, and has given them room to keep clear under rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way. Because L did not become overlapped on either boat from clear astern, rule 17, On the Same Tack; Proper Course, does not apply to her, and she can sail above her proper course after the starting signal if she wishes to.

M has become overlapped to leeward of W from clear astern, so she has right of way over W under rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped, but she must initially give W room to keep clear under rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way. And because she became overlapped from clear astern, rule 17, On the Same Tack; Proper Course, applies, so she cannot sail above her proper course after the starting signal has been made. A boat does not have a proper course before the starting signal (see the definition Proper Course).

Position 3 –

The race committee boat is both an obstruction and a starting mark (see the definition Obstruction and Mark). All three boats are approaching the starting mark to start, therefore rules 18, Mark-Room and 19, Room to Pass an Obstruction, do not apply (see the preamble to Part 2, Section C). Therefore W and M are not entitled to room to pass to leeward of the race committee boat. And M does not have a “proper course” so she can sail up to head to wind if she pleases.

Scenario 4B:

Position 3 occurs 2 seconds *after* the starting signal.

Position 1 – same as in Scenario 4A.

Position 2 – same as in Scenario 4A.

Position 3 –

As in Scenario 4A, rules 18, Mark-Room and 19, Room to Pass an Obstruction, do not apply (see the preamble to Part 2, Section C); therefore W and M are not entitled to room to pass to leeward of the race committee boat. At the starting signal, boats have a proper course (see the definition Proper Course). L tacked into her leeward position, so rule 17, On the Same Tack; Proper Course, does not apply to her. Between M and W, to determine M’s proper course you remove W from the picture (the other boat referred to in rule 17; see the definition Proper Course). M would still be sailing above close-hauled because she is keeping clear of L; therefore M is not sailing **above** her proper course, so she is not breaking rule 17.

Tactical take-aways...

For L, you are very strong if you are sailing a straight course near the close-hauled layline to the committee boat in the final approach to start, and do not have a boat close to leeward of you. You do not need to let boats to windward of you in between you and the committee boat before or after the starting signal.

However, if M insists on going in there, rule 14, Avoiding Contact, requires you to avoid contact if reasonably possible; so it is best to let them in and protest them. Remember, if you force the contact and even the committee boat gets damaged, you can be disqualified under rule 14.

Also note: if you are **not** approaching the committee boat to start, then rule 19, Room to Pass an Obstruction, applies and you **are** required to give windward/inside boats room to sail between you and the committee boat (which is an obstruction). There is no appeal that interprets **when** a boat is approaching a starting mark to start, particularly as it depends on a lot of factors. To be safe, windward boats should consider that they are approaching the starting mark to start in the final minute before the starting signal.

For M and W, if you see L can “shut the door,” slow down and plan to start directly behind the leeward boats if they are on time, or on their windward hip if they are early. If you force yourself in between L and the committee boat and cause L to take avoiding action, or if there is contact, then you have broken rule 11, and the sailor’s slang is that you have “Barged.”

Scenario 5A:

This is a downwind start. The first mark is on a course directly downwind of the starting line, about a mile away. The starting signal is made at position 1. Yellow would have hit Blue had Yellow not luffed between positions 1 and 2.

At position 1 in both pairs, the boats were approaching the starting marks to start. Therefore rules 18, Mark-Room and 19, Room to Pass an Obstruction, did not apply (see the preamble to Part 2, Section C). Therefore the rules in Section A and B applied. Yellow was required to keep clear of Blue under rule 10, On Opposite Tacks; and Grey was required to keep clear of Green under rule 11, On the Same Tack, Overlapped. No boat broke a rule.

Scenario 5B:

This is a downwind finish. In both situations, the boats were overlapped as they entered the zone (see the definition Clear Astern and Clear Ahead; Overlap for why Yellow and Blue on opposite tacks were “overlapped”). Therefore rule 18 applied (see rule 18.1) and because the boats were overlapped in both pairs, rule 18.2(b) applied. Blue and Green were required to give Yellow and Grey room to pass between them and the mark which they failed to do.

Tactical take-aways...

The downwind start...

Blue & Green have the start nailed. Yellow needs to luff and pass astern of Blue. Had Yellow wanted to be where Blue is, she would have needed to make her move sooner to get in front of Blue much earlier. Grey should have slowed down and followed Green across the line.

The downwind finish...

Yellow & Grey are entitled to mark-room to pass the finishing marks, but only just enough space to pass between the mark and the outside boat in a “seamanlike way” (see the definitions Mark-Room and Room). “Seamanlike” generally means “safe; with no risk of touching the mark or fouling the other boat in the existing conditions.”

Blue & Green can probably bear away to give mark-room while still crossing the finishing line ahead. All boats should plan on sailing the last 3-5 seconds of the race perpendicular to the finishing line (unless that would take Grey farther from the mark than needed to pass it in safety).

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Lunch Scenarios Rules Worksheet

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