

Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS) 2021-2024

The following is a summary of the major rule changes in the 2021-2024 RRS that affect conduct upon the race course. This is not an exhaustive list, but covers most of what racers will see when racing.

Definitions:

Finishing

The meaning of “finishing” has changed. It used to be that any part of the boat, rig or sails in normal position that crosses the finish line signals a “finish.” The new rules restrict this to ONLY THE HULL. Only when any portion of the hull crosses the finish line (even if sails precede it) is the boat considered finished.

A Mark

The meaning of a “mark” is extended to include any object intentionally attached to an object or RC vessel serving as a mark in the 2017-2020 definition.

Mark Room

The meaning of “mark room” is extended to include room to both round AND PASS a mark in the act of sailing the course without touching the mark is “mark room.”

An Obstruction

Obstructions are extended to include not only an area, but also a Line or Object designated in the Sailing Instructions as an obstruction is an obstruction.

Proper Course

“Proper course” now includes the course a crew would CHOOSE TO SAIL. This clarifies that not only is a proper course one that all might agree is the best course to finish fastest, but now also the course a boat's crew chooses to sail.

Sail the Course

A new definition has been added in this edition to express what it means to “sail the course” in a race.

Starting

When have you “started?” It used to be when any part of a boat, crew or equipment has crossed the start line, you have started. The new rule, obviously in concurrence with the change in finishing above, uses only the hull crossing the line to designated having started.

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Fundamental Rules

Helping those in Danger (1.1)

The concept that helping others who are in danger on the race course is expanded to include not only competitors but also any “support person” also on the course.

Avoiding Contact (14)

A fundamental rule of racing is that one boat, sails, equipment or crew may not physically make contact with another boat, sails, equipment or crew. The exception is that the vessel with rights in a near contact situation may take actions to avoid contact if it becomes apparent that the vessel without rights is not avoiding contact. This rule has been simplified.

Changing Course (16.2)

A port-tack boat must stay clear of a starboard-tack boat. But in close quarters, while the port-tack boat is altering course to stay clear, the starboard-tack boat may not bear away so as to prevent the port-tack boat from staying clear. The old rule said change course instead of bear away. The concept that a boat that has rights (stand on boat) is still obligated to hold a course while the boat without rights (give way boat) is altering course to avoid contact/collision is a basic principle not just of the RRS but of international rules of the road.

Mark Room (18)

The details of giving Mark Room (allowing a boat overlapped and between you and a mark within the “zone”) have been subtly altered to indicate when the rule does or does not apply.

Room to Tack at an Obstruction (20)

A new section (20.4) allows for a non-audible method to indicate invocation of a right to tack when an obstruction forces this move by a vessel that is otherwise not entitled to effect the operation of the other vessel. Remember the definition of an Obstruction has been expanded to include one designated by the sailing instructions.

Sailing the Race (28)

The definition of sailing a race has been simplified as the fundamental qualifications of sailing a race are now part of the definitions.

Changing the Next Leg of the Course (33)

A clarification is added to say that the race committee may alter a leg of a race “while boats are racing.” The basic intent of the requirements upon the RC to alter a leg have not been changed. This is just a clarification.

Missing Mark (34)

The clarification of “while boats are racing” is also added to rule 34.

Race Time Limit and Scores (35)

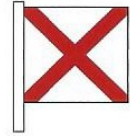
The rules concerning the effects of exceeding a time limit to finish now does not include a reference to rule 28 (concerning how to sail a course) as the concept of sailing the course is now a definition common to all rules.

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(Fundamental Rules Changes - continued)

Search and Rescue Instructions (37)

This is a new rule. It requires all competitors, when the race committee has displayed flag “V” with one horn, to immediately monitor the race committee’s radio channel for instructions on Search and Rescue activities.



Personal Flotation Devices (40)

Details of the use of Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) have been re-organized.

Rule Rewrite starting with Rule 47

Starting with Rule 47 there are a number of changes in the rules by rule number regarding operation of your boat. Most items are clearly understood. The reference to a Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) refers to a government prescribed method to route deep-draft commercial vessels through constricted areas. Locally this is loosely seen in the Pelee Passage between Pelee Island and Pointe Pelee and also in the up-bound and down-bound channels of the Detroit River.

There are also a number of subtle changes to how protests are to be conducted. I'm not covering these as they do not directly relate to conducting a boat around a race course.

You can find a full set of the Racing Rules of Sailing on-line here:

[https://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/RRS20212024Final-\[26369\].pdf](https://www.sailing.org/tools/documents/RRS20212024Final-[26369].pdf)

Or consider joining US Sailing. All members get one free paper copy of the new rules.