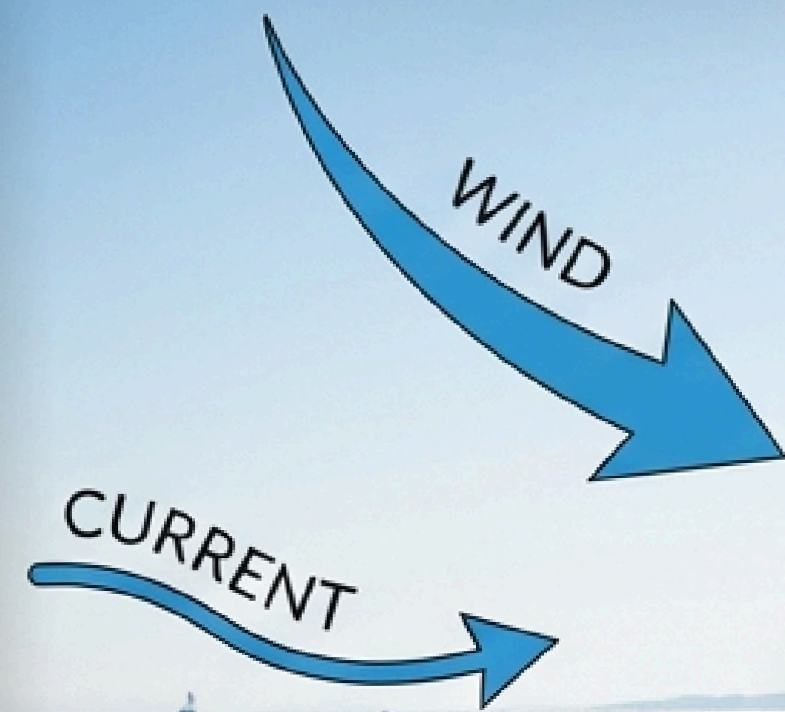
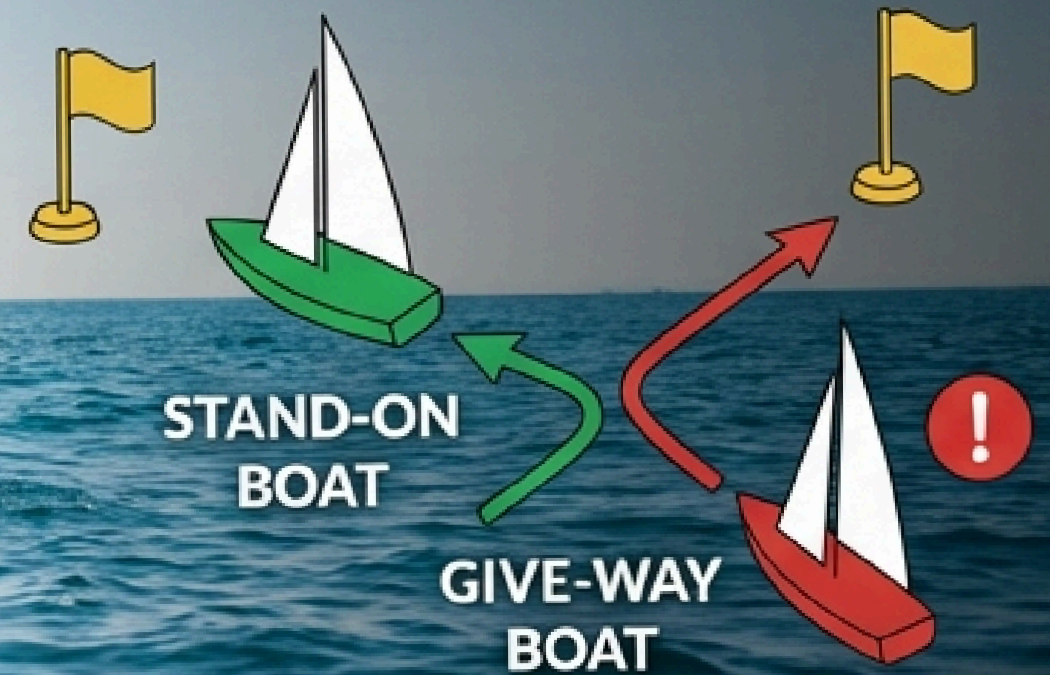


# Start Racing: Your First Regatta

A practical guide to getting on the start line with confidence.



**Rules in  
Action**



Starboard tack (green) has right  
of way over port tack (red).



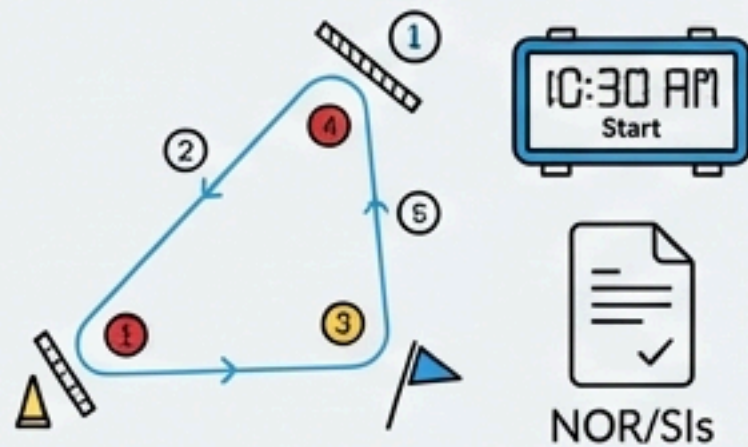
# The Race Day Starts Now



## Know the Plan: Check the Documents

**Notice of Race (NOR) & Sailing Instructions (SIs):** Find these on the club website.

**Key Info to Find:** Start time for your class, number of races scheduled, course area location, and entry procedures.



## Know the Conditions: Check the Forecast

**Wind:** What is the expected strength and direction? Will it build or die?

**Tide/Current:** When is high/low tide? What direction is the current flowing and how strong will it be?

**Visibility & Temperature:** Will you need fog signals? What is the air/water temperature?



## Personal Prep Checklist

**Clothing:** Dress for the conditions, with layers you can add or remove.

**Nutrition & Hydration:** Pack plenty of water and high-energy snacks.

**Sun Protection:** Sunscreen, hat, sunglasses.





**Watch:** A waterproof watch with a countdown timer is essential.





# A Prepared Boat is a Fast Boat.

## Pre-Race Systems Check:

-  • **Hull:** Bungs are in and secure.
-  • **Foils:** Daggerboard/centreboard and rudder are smooth, clean, and fit correctly.
-  • **Rigging:** All pins, split rings, and shackles are secure.
-  • **Controls:** All lines (sheets, halyards, control lines) run freely and are not tangled.

## Rig for the Conditions:

Briefly introduce the concept of adjusting the rig based on the wind forecast (e.g., “More wind? You might want a flatter sail. Less wind? A fuller, more powerful shape.”).



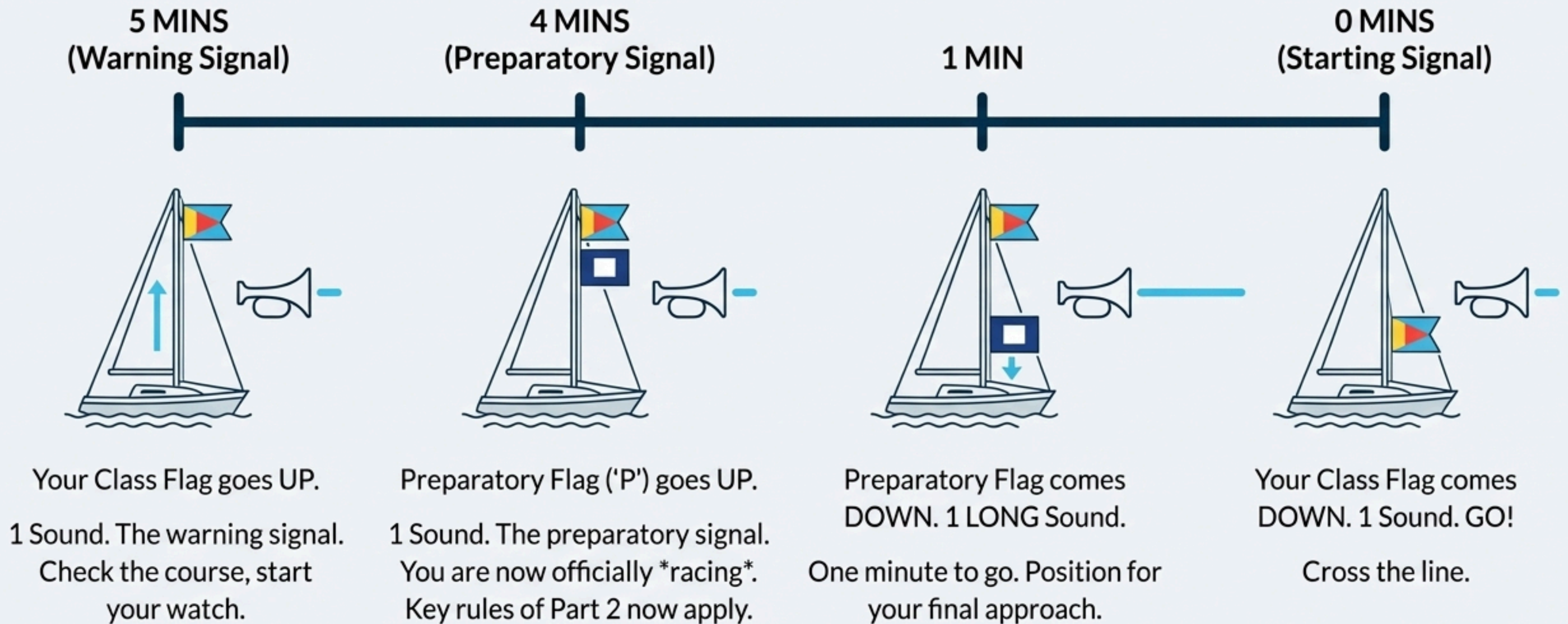
## Rules in Action: Rule 3: The Decision to Race

“The responsibility for a boat’s decision to participate in a race or to continue racing is hers alone.” This means *you* are the ultimate judge of whether you and your boat are safe to compete in the conditions.





# The Countdown: Decoding the Flags & Sounds



Times are taken from the visual signals; the absence of a sound signal shall be disregarded. (RRS 26)

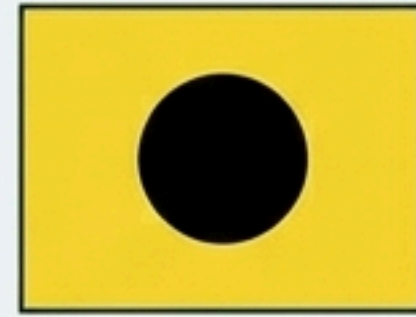


# Read the Signals, Know the Rules.



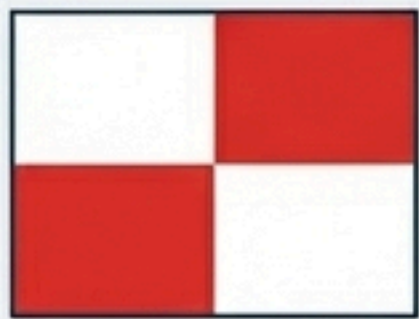
## **P Flag (Papa)**

The standard preparatory signal. If you are over the line at the start, you must dip back behind the line to start correctly.



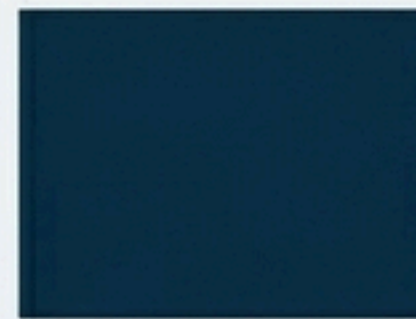
## **I Flag (India) - 'Round the Ends'**

If any part of your boat is over the line in the last minute, you must sail around one of the start marks before starting. (Rule 30.1)



## **U Flag (Uniform)**

If you are in the triangle formed by the ends of the start line and the first mark in the last minute, you will be disqualified. (Rule 30.3)



## **Black Flag**

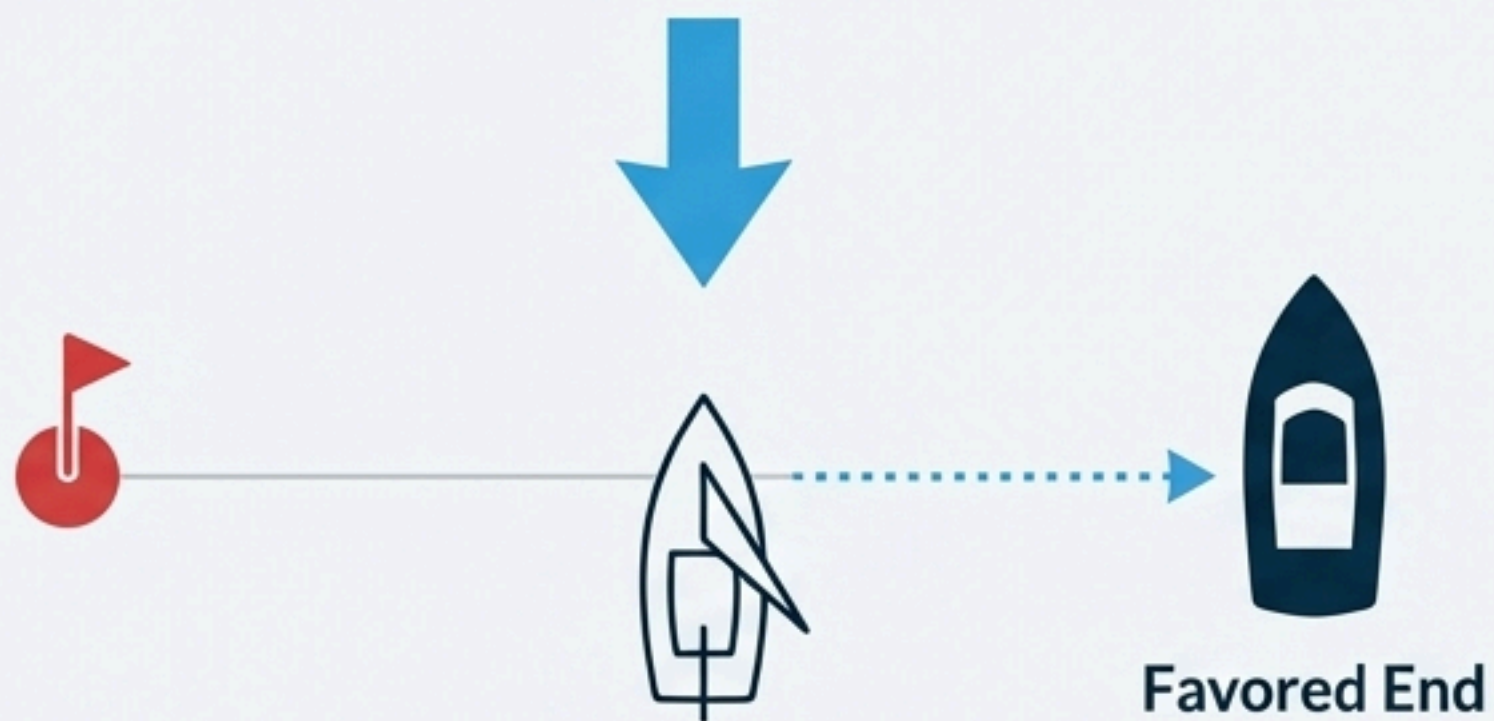
The same as the U Flag, but if the race is restarted, you are not allowed to sail in it. This is the ultimate penalty. (Rule 30.4)



# Your First Tactical Decisions

## 1. Find the Line Bias

Which end of the start line is further upwind?  
Starting there gives you an instant advantage.



Sail to the middle of the line and luff head-to-wind. Your bow will point to the favored end.

## 2. Get Clear Air

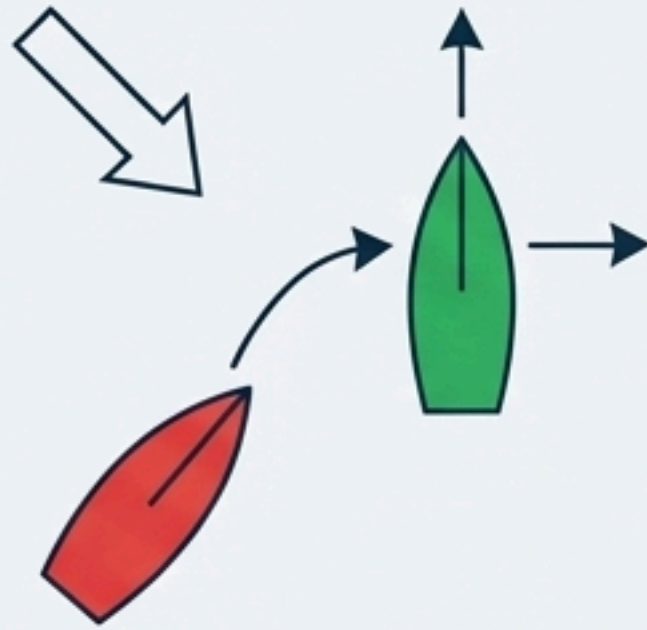
A boat ahead of you creates a "wind shadow" or "dirty air" that slows you down.



Avoid sailing directly behind or to leeward of other boats. Find a gap on the line that gives you a clear lane of wind.

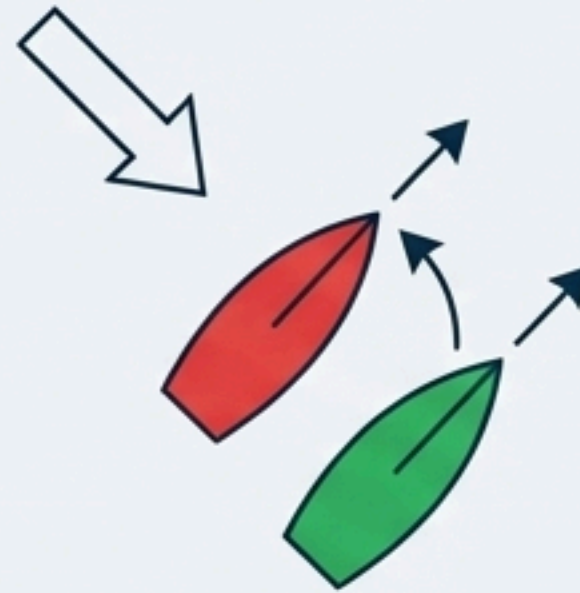


# Who Keeps Clear? The Core Rules of the Road



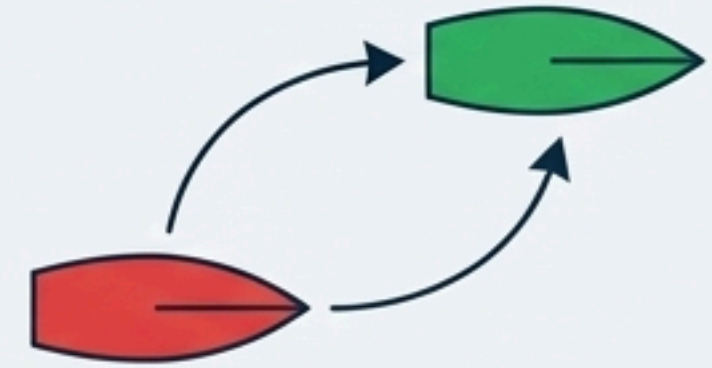
## Rule 10: Port Gives Way to Starboard

When boats are on opposite tacks, the port-tack boat keeps clear.



## Rule 11: Windward Gives Way to Leeward

When boats are on the same tack and overlapped, the windward boat keeps clear.



## Rule 12: Overtaking Boat Keeps Clear

When boats are on the same tack, a boat clear astern keeps clear of a boat clear ahead.

## Rule 14: Avoid Contact

A boat shall avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible. Even if you have right of way, **you must act to avoid a collision if it becomes clear the other boat is not keeping clear.**



# The Chess Match: Getting to the Windward Mark

## Strategy (The Big Picture)

Your goal is to stay in the best wind. Look up the course for darker patches of water ('pressure' or 'gusts') and sail towards them.

## Tactics (The Boat-on-Boat Battle)

When the wind shifts towards your bow (a 'header'), you are sailing a longer distance. This is the best time to tack. When it shifts away from your bow (a 'lift'), you are pointed more directly at the mark – keep going!

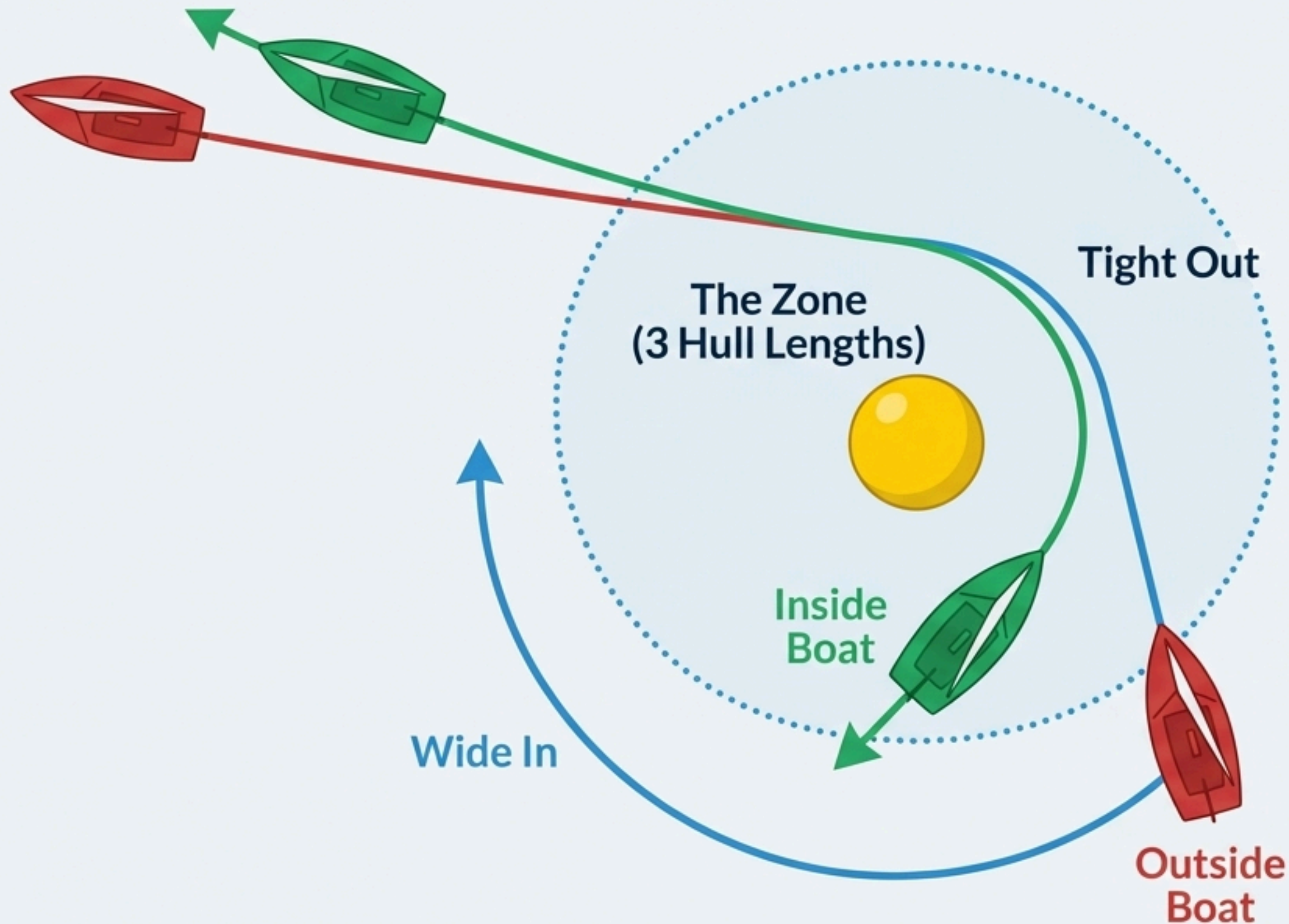
## Laylines: The Final Approach

The layline is the course on which you can sail directly to the mark without needing to tack again. Avoid over-standing (sailing past) the layline, as it means sailing extra distance.





# Wide In, Tight Out



## Rule 18: Mark-Room

Rule 18 applies when at least one of two overlapped boats is in the zone.

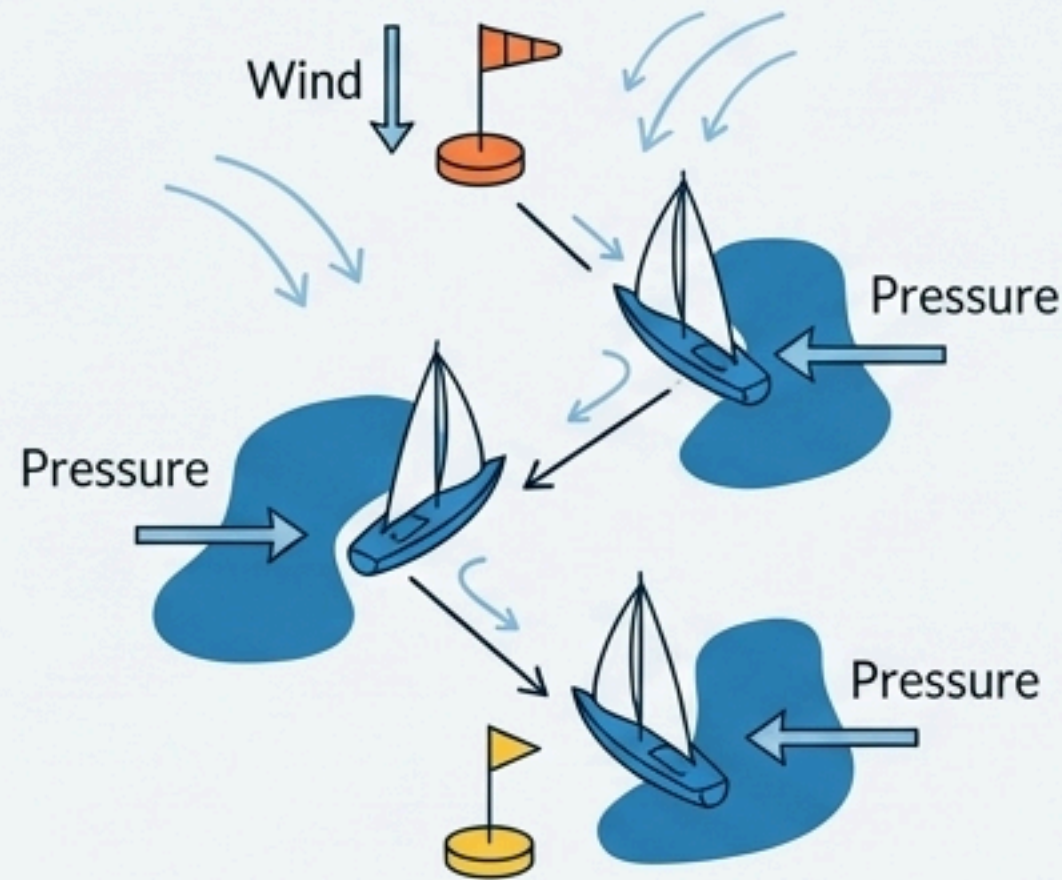
When you are the outside boat, you must give the inside boat *mark-room* – enough space to round or pass the mark. This right is established the moment the first boat reaches the zone.



# Finishing Strong




## The Downwind Leg: Gybe for Pressure

Similar to sailing upwind, a direct line to the leeward mark is rarely the fastest. Look for gusts and sail to them, gybing to stay on the favored tack.



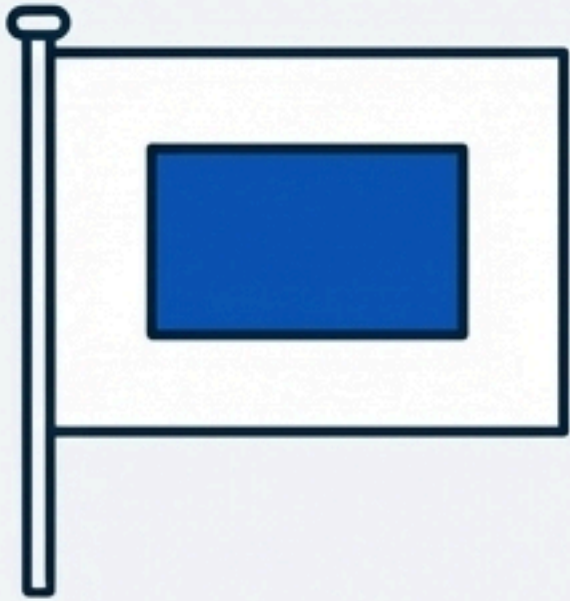
## The Finish Line: A Tactical End

Don't just sail for the line—sail for the *best part* of the line.

-  **1. Identify the Line:** The line is between the staff with the blue flag on the committee boat and the finishing mark.
-  **2. Check for Bias:** Just like the start, determine which end is further upwind (or downwind, depending on the finish).
-  **3. Finish Fast:** Cross at the favored end with clear air.



# Expect the Unexpected: Reading Race Committee Signals



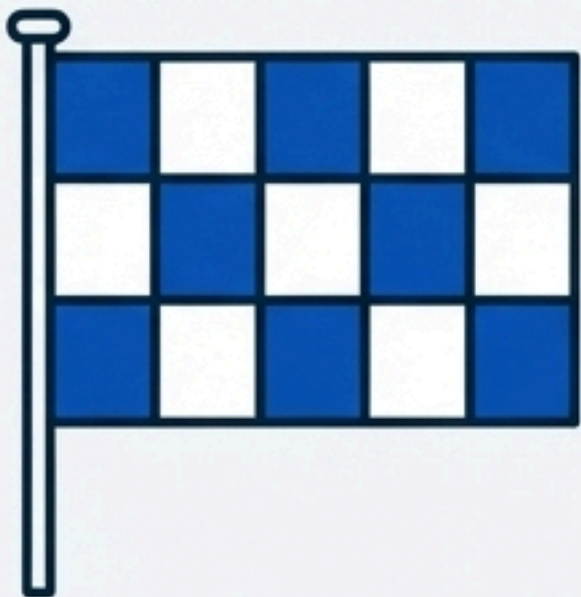
## **S Flag: Shorten Course (2 Sounds)**

The course is shortened. The finish line is now between the next mark and the committee boat displaying this flag.



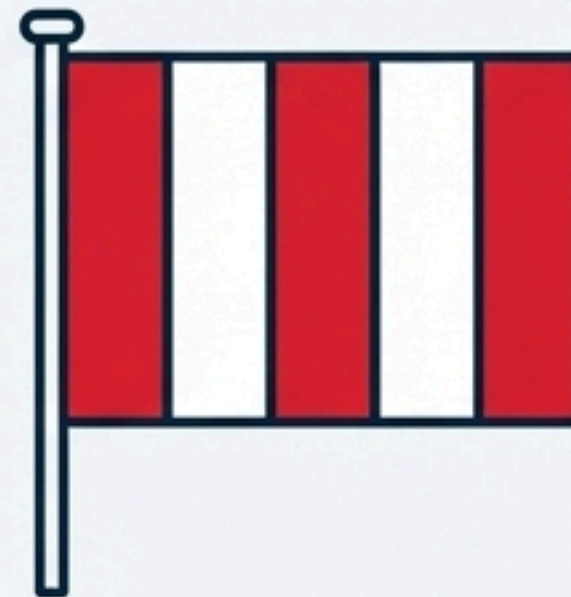
## **C Flag: Change of Course (Repetitive Sounds)**

The position of the next mark has been changed. Look for the new mark or check the compass bearing displayed by the committee boat.



## **N Flag: Race Abandoned (3 Sounds)**

The race is cancelled. Return safely to the starting area and await further signals.



## **AP Flag: Race Postponed (2 Sounds - when on the water)**

The race is delayed. The warning signal will be made 1 minute after this flag is lowered. Stay in the area.

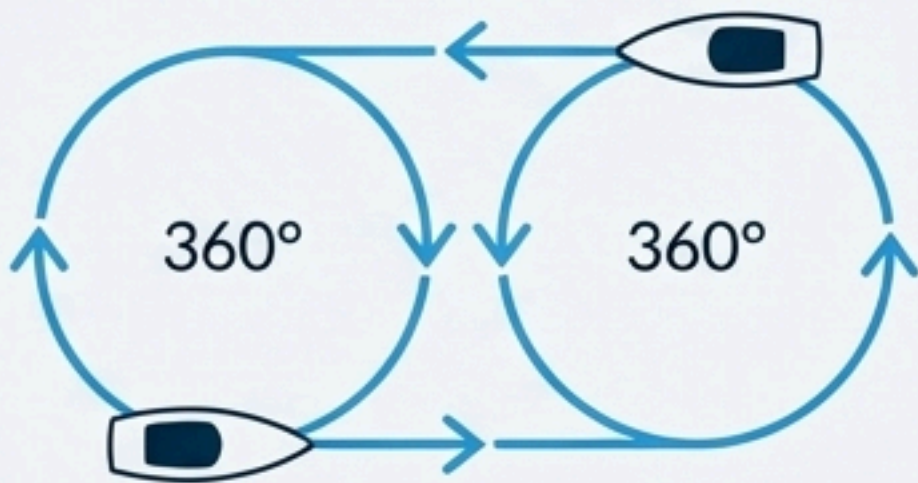


# Keeping It Fair: The Spirit of the Rules

“A fundamental principle of sportsmanship is that when a boat breaks a rule and is not exonerated, she will promptly take an appropriate penalty or action.” – RRS Basic Principles

## If You Break a Rule: Take a Penalty

Sail well clear of other boats and complete a **Two-Turns Penalty**.



RRS 44

## If Another Boat Breaks a Rule

At the first reasonable opportunity, hail '**Protest**' clearly and **display a red flag** in your rigging. You must inform the other boat and the Race Committee after the race.



RRS 60.2

## The Golden Rule


The essence of sportsmanship is acknowledging your own fouls. It keeps racing fair and fun for everyone.





# The Start of Your Racing Journey

## Your Irish Sailing Logbook Requirements

-   **Assist** a qualified **Race Officer** in running **2 club races**.
-   **Log** participation in **6 club races** as **helm**.
-   **Log** participation in **6 club races** as **crew**.
-   Compete in at least **1 interclub regatta** (minimum 3 races).

## How to Keep Improving

-  **Join your club's regular racing series.** Consistency is key.
-  **Find a mentor.** Ask an experienced sailor at your club for advice.
-  **Practice with purpose.** Work on specific skills like roll tacks or starting line positioning.
-  **Explore other modules.** Consider Advanced Boat Handling or Kites & Wires to round out your skills.



# Your Racing Toolkit



## World Sailing Racing Rules of Sailing

The official source for all rules, definitions, and race signals. Download the app for easy on-the-go reference.

[sailing.org/racingrules](https://sailing.org/racingrules)

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## Irish Sailing

The national governing body. Find information on advanced courses, coaching programs, and clubs across Ireland.

[sailing.ie](https://sailing.ie)

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## Your Club & Class Association

Your number one resource. Find the Notice of Race, Sailing Instructions, results, and connect with fellow sailors for local knowledge, coaching, and crew opportunities.



# See You on the Water!

*“You haven’t won the race if in winning the race you have lost the respect of your competitors.” – Paul Elvstrøm, Four-time Olympic Gold Medalist*

