

## Simple Sailboat Racing Rules Overview

For full official rules which apply for all Dory Club races see the NDC General Instructions and “The Racing Rules of Sailing 2009-2012” See <http://www.sailing.org/racingrules.php>. If you want a good guide to racing rules, I recommend “Understanding the racing Rules of Sailing 2009-2012) which is \$21.45 on Amazon. It discusses most of the typical situations and uses illustrations to explain right away. Also good: [The Rules in Practice 2009 - 2012](#) by [Bryan Willis](#)

Summary of rules follows.

### DEFINITIONS

**STARBOARD** is the right side of the boat when you are looking forward

**PORT** is the opposite side of starboard - the left side.

**STARBOARD TACK** is when the wind is coming over the starboard side & the boom is on the port side.

**WINDWARD** is the side the wind is coming from; **LEEWARD** is the other side

### Primary RIGHT OF WAY rules:

“**Starboard**”: A boat on **starboard tack** has right of way over a boat on port tack.

**When Changing Tacks** such that you will get right of way, the other boat must be given room to get out of the way and is not required to anticipate your getting right of way.

“**Windward keep clear**”: When two boats are side by side on the same tack, the downwind (**leeward**) boat usually has right of way unless it overtook the windward boat from completely behind it or is too close to a race buoy. The leeward boat can come up into the wind. **This applies at the start and a windward boat may not “barge” between a leeward boat and the windward starting buoy. The leeward boat can force the barging boat to take the wrong side of the starting buoy.**

“**Mark room**” (formerly **buoy room**)” Is a special rule that applies when sailing around any race buoy except the starting line buoys. There is a zone around each mark with a radius of 3 boat lengths. A boat enters the zone when it crosses into the zone. If two or more boats are overlapped when either boat’s bow gets within **three** boats lengths of a race buoy, the outside boat must keep clear of any overlapped inside boats. A boat establishing an inside overlap after the lead boat is into the 3 boat length area, does not get any right of way rights and must keep clear. One exception to the buoy room rule is when boats are on opposite tacks and one boat has to tack (as opposed to jibe) such as **at the windward buoy**; then the boat on starboard tack has right of way even within three boat lengths of the buoy.

**Boats should avoid collisions. Rule 14 states:** “A boat shall avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible. However, a right-of-way boat or one entitled to *room* or *mark-room* (a) need not act to avoid contact until it is clear that the other boat is not *keeping clear* or giving *room* or *mark-room*, and (b) shall not be penalized under this rule unless there is contact that causes damage or injury “– **Communicate: shout your intentions or ask questions to avoid a crash.**

**Penalty Turns:** if you foul another boat you must sail around in two complete circles (any size). If you hit a buoy you must make one circle (360 degrees). Turns should be done as soon as you are clear of other boats.

### SAFETY Considerations:

Under MA law, one life jacket/person should be on board each boat and children under age 12 must wear them. And as stated in the official racing rules:

#### **“1.2 Life-Saving Equipment and Personal Flotation Devices**

## **Simple Sailboat Racing Rules Overview**

A boat shall carry adequate life-saving equipment for all persons on board, including one item ready for immediate use, unless her class rules make some other provision. Each competitor is individually responsible for wearing a personal flotation device adequate for the conditions.”

### **“4 DECISION TO RACE**

The responsibility for a boat’s decision to participate in a race or to continue *racing* is hers alone.”

### **Disclaimer of Liability:**

Competitors participate in the sailing races or regatta entirely at their own risk. See “Decision to Race” above. The organizers of the races will not accept any liability for material damage or personal injury or death sustained in conjunction with, prior to, during, or after the races or regatta.