



Know the Rules

Whether you are staying within the confines of the Waterway or venturing out to the surrounding coast you must be aware of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (commonly known as The COLREGS). These regulations are in place to reduce the risk of collisions between vessels. These are in effect, the nautical alternative to the highway code. As a user of the Waterway you will interact with other craft and will have to react accordingly.

Safe speed

All vessels must travel at a safe speed at all times.

A safe speed cannot be expressed as a maximum or minimum number of knots because it varies with circumstances and conditions. You must continually assess the safety of the vessel's speed.

A safe speed is one at which the vessel can be stopped in time to avoid any danger which arises suddenly. In judging a safe speed you must consider a number of issues including:

Visibility – drive slowly in rain, fog, mist, smoke or glare.

Special caution is required at night because many potential hazards may not be lit or may not be easily seen. Background shore lighting may confuse you.

Other vessels – slow down on busy waterways and when near moored or anchored vessels, working vessels showing special signals and large vessels which have difficulties in manoeuvring.

In the Waterway vessels secured to their moorings are not required to be lit at night and you should be aware of the location of such moorings. If you can avoid passing through or very close to moorings and moored vessels you should. However, if you have to you should pass slowly keeping your wash to a minimum and also keep a good look out.

Navigation hazards – slow down in shallow areas or in unfamiliar waterways.

In the Waterway, water depth can vary and change frequently. Not all hazards may be marked or lit and signs, buoys, marks or lights may have shifted.

Wind, waves and currents – may adversely affect the manoeuvrability of your vessel.

Manoeuvrability of the vessel – stopping and turning ability depends on the speed travelled, wind and current and the boat's design (such as hull shape, engine and propeller type and number).

If your vessel does not have a speedometer, you must be able to determine if you are exceeding a local speed limit. For example, if your boat is planing in a Dead Slow Minimum Wake area you will be exceeding the speed limit, so slow down.

Proper lookout

A good lookout must be kept by sight and hearing and all means available.

You must be fully aware of the boating environment, especially in bad weather, restricted visibility or darkness. Don't forget to look all around – even behind you.

Special care should be taken when operating your boat in areas where high speed vessels operate, such as water-ski areas. The situation can become dangerous very quickly due to rapid closing speeds, even if your vessel is travelling slowly.

For example, a vessel going at 20 knots will cover more than 100 metres in less than 10 seconds and the speed of your boat may further decrease your time to react to avoid a collision.

Don't confuse the lookout duties of the driver with those of the observer when the boat is towing a person on skis, tubes, etc.

The driver is responsible at all times for keeping a lookout for dangers.

Giving way

You must continuously assess the risk of collision with other vessels and power vessels must give way to:

- Sailing vessels
- Vessels approaching head on (by altering course to starboard)
- Vessels approaching from the right (starboard) hand side (i.e. crossing).
- Vessels displaying special lights and signals
- Large vessels restricted in their manoeuvrability
- Any vessel being overtaken
- Vessels engaged in fishing activities and showing appropriate signals

A vessel drifting is deemed to be underway and has no special right of way. It is required to comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea.

Do not create a dangerous situation by forcing your right of way. Always keep a safe distance off other vessels so the vessel can be stopped or manoeuvred to avoid any sudden danger.

The faster the speed, the greater the safe distance must be.

When altering course make your intentions clear to others as early as possible.

NOTE: In a collision, all masters involved can be held responsible even if the give-way vessel does not give way, because all masters are required to exercise caution and take avoiding action if the other vessel does not.

Sound signals may be used to indicate any manoeuvring intentions when vessels are in sight of each other.

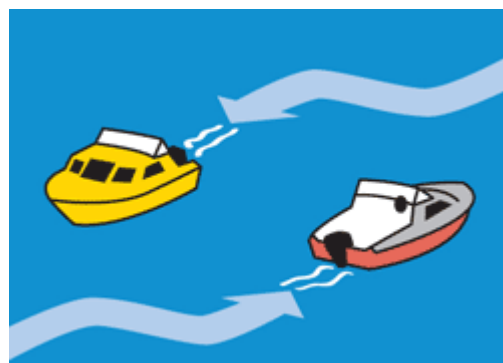
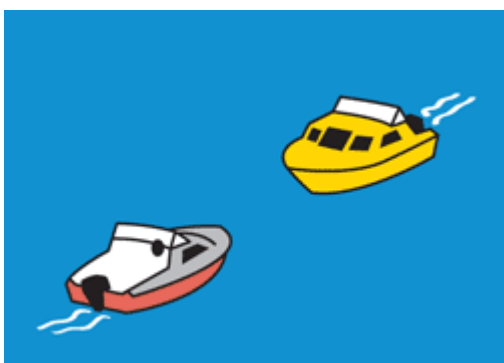
Power gives way to sail

A power driven vessel must give way to a sailing vessel unless the sailing vessel is in the process of overtaking it.



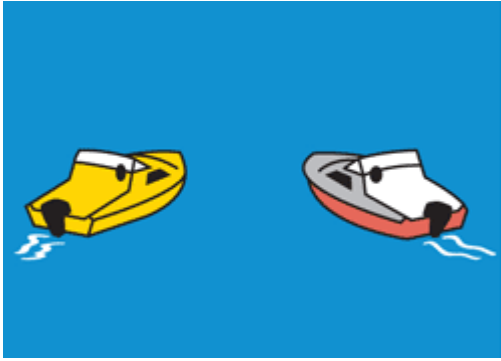
Power driven vessels meeting head on

When two power driven vessels meet head on, each must alter course to starboard (to the right) and pass at a safe distance.



Power driven vessels crossing

In crossing situations, give way to the right.



Action to avoid collision

The give-way vessel must avoid a collision by changing course substantially, by slowing down, or stopping and allowing the vessel which has right of way to pass clear ahead. This must be done as early as possible.

NOTE: The master of the vessel which has right of way must maintain a lookout, maintain course and speed and be prepared to take action to avoid a collision if necessary.

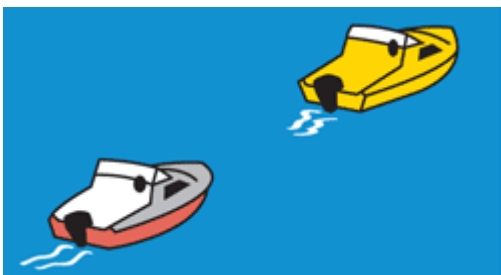
Vessels overtaking

Any vessel (including a sailing boat) which is overtaking another vessel must keep well clear of the vessel being overtaken.

You can overtake another vessel on either side but only when it is safe and you must stay well clear.

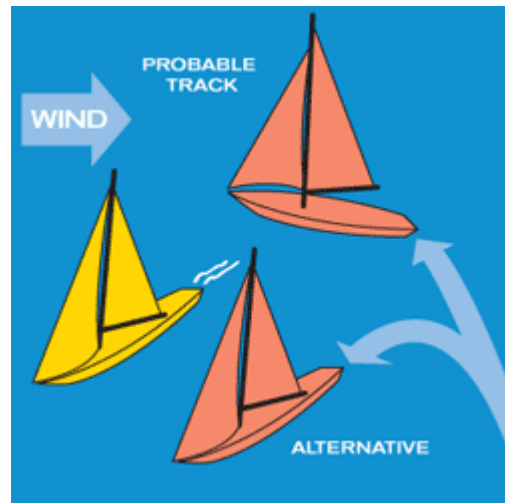
In narrow channels you must be particularly careful when overtaking.

In all instances, make sure you do not cut in front of the vessel you have overtaken.

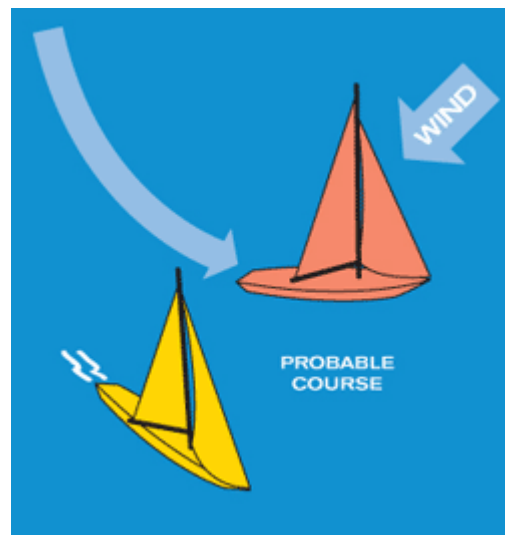


Sailing vessels

When two sailing vessels have wind on different sides, the vessel with wind on the port side gives way.



When both craft have wind on the same side, the vessel which is to windward shall keep out of the way of the vessel which is to leeward.



NOTE: If a collision appears inevitable, the skipper of each vessel must take proper action to avert the collision.

Safe distance

A safe distance between a vessel and a person or thing (including another vessel) is a distance that will ensure that the vessel will not cause danger or injury to the person or damage to the thing, having regard to all relevant safety factors including weather conditions at the time, visibility, speed of the vessel and obstructions to navigation that are present.

It should be noted that where a skipper is issued a penalty for breaching the distance off requirements referred to above and claims that even though this distance off was breached, the distance off was a 'safe distance', the onus is on the skipper to prove this in court.

