

ACYC

Andreas Cove Yacht Club, Inc.

Fundamentals of Sailboat Racing

The Andreas Cove Yacht Club (ACYC) is a non-profit organization made up of members who enjoy boating, sailing, and sailboat racing. Sailboat racing is a sport, and like all sports, there are rules and regulations for the competition. The object of a sailboat race is for all of the competing boats to sail around a designated course safely, as fast as possible, in accordance with the rules. ACYC uses a handicap system that gives each boat a standardized rating based on its relative size and speed. The competition among the boats is determined by the order of finish based on the handicap corrected time elapsed for each boat. The handicap system ideally makes each boat competitive with every other boat.

ACYC utilizes the *Racing Rules of Sailing, 2001-2004*, established by the International Sailing Federation. ACYC also has its own *Sailing Instructions* established by the ACYC Board of Directors, which apply to all ACYC events.

Every sailor who intends to compete in a regatta should obtain copies of the rules and instructions and study them not only for the competitive aspects of the rules, but because the rules have the goal of maintaining safety and order on the race course.

There are many textbooks that give extensive and exhaustive discussions about all aspects of sailing rules and sailboat racing, boat preparation, starting, upwind sailing, mark rounding, downwind sailing, finishing, and, of course, recognition and use of the racing rules.

Additional resources include:

- www.westmarine.com is a source of racing and rule books.
- www.sailing.org has the racing rules posted.

It is not practical to give a complete listing and thorough explanation of all the rules of racing, but it is important to list (1) **Fundamental Rules** that must be observed, (2) **Fundamental Terms** that must be understood, and (3) Basic **Sailing Rules** that must be learned in order to enjoy and safely participate in sailboat racing.

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Fundamental Rules

Safety is the overriding concern of all rules, so regardless of any other consideration, the following rules are paramount:

1. Render help and assistance to any boat or person that is in danger or distress.
2. No boat shall sail in conditions that are beyond the capability of the boat, or the skill or experience level of the skipper and crew. It is the responsibility of each skipper and crewmember to decide for themselves whether to race or not and when to discontinue racing due to harsh weather conditions or other factors affecting safety. ACYC recommends that all persons wear approved floatation devices while participating in ACYC events.

Fundamental Terms

1. **Starboard and Port** – When facing forward towards the bow of the boat, the starboard side is on the right and the port side is on the left.
2. **Starboard Tack** – When the wind is striking the starboard side of the boat, the boat is on a “starboard tack,” and has right-of-way over any “port tack” boat. When the right-of-way is in doubt, the starboard boat shall hail and warn the port tack boat.
3. **Port Tack** – When the wind is striking the port side of the boat, the boat is on a “port tack” and must give way to any boat on the starboard tack that is approaching.
4. **Tacking (to tack)** – The maneuver involving changing direction from one tack to another when sailing upwind. The boat tacks the moment her bow passes head to wind.
5. **Jibing (to jibe)** – The maneuver involving changing direction from one tack to another when the boat is sailing downwind. The boat jibes the moment her mainsail crosses her centerline from one side to the other.
6. **Leeward** – A leeward boat is a boat that is downwind from another boat.
7. **Windward** – A windward boat is a boat that is upwind of another boat.
8. **Clear Ahead or Astern – Overlapped** – Boat B is “clear astern” and Boat A “clear ahead” when Boat B’s bow does not cross an imaginary line drawn across the stern of Boat A. When the bow of Boat B crosses the line drawn across Boat A’s stern, they are “overlapped.”
9. **Mark** – A mark is an object which the sailing instructions require each boat to pass on the specified side (either “to port” on the left side of the boat or “to starboard” on the right side of the boat). The mark may be an inflated ball, a channel marker, an island, a boat, or any designated object.

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10. **Starting Line and Finishing Line** – The starting and finishing line is that straight line between the “pin” or some other designated point and the committee boat flag and some other designated point.

Introduction to Sailing Rules

1. **Avoiding contact** (Rule 14): Regardless of port or starboard tack, windward or leeward position, or any other consideration, all boats shall avoid contact with any other boat if reasonably possible. DO NOT HIT ANOTHER BOAT OR LET ANOTHER BOAT HIT YOU.
2. **Boats on opposite tacks** (Rule 10): When boats are on opposite tacks, the port tack boat shall keep clear of a starboard tack boat. The starboard tack boat has the right of way over port tack boats.
3. **Boats on the same tack** (Rules 11 and 12): When boats are on the same tack and overlapped, a windward boat shall keep clear of a leeward boat. When boats are on the same tack and not overlapped, a boat clear astern (behind) shall keep clear of a boat clear ahead.
4. **Changing Course** (Rule 16): When a boat with the right-of-way changes course, she shall give any other boat room to keep clear. Even when you have the right-of-way, do not hit another boat.
5. **Starting** (Rule 29.1): A boat is “over early” when any part of the boat crosses the starting line prior to the starting signal, and the boat must come back entirely across the line and start over. A boat that is “over early” and does not exonerate itself will not start the race.
6. **Barging at the Start** (Rule 18.1) When boats are approaching the starting line to start the race, a leeward or outside boat does not have to allow a windward (or inside) boat “room” to “squeeze in” between the leeward (or outside) boat and the Committee Boat in pin. “Barging” is risky and dangerous. This is a complex rule that should be studied.
7. **Rounding a Mark** (Rule 18.2): If Boat A and Boat B approach a mark and are “Overlapped,” even though Boat A may be ahead and leeward, Boat A must give Boat B room to round the mark if the overlap occurred before the bow of Boat A reaches a point that is two boat lengths from the mark. Under these circumstances, Boat A cannot “squeeze” Boat B out at the mark. Boat B is not entitled to “room” at the mark if the overlap occurs after Boat A’s bow reaches the two boat length distance from the mark. This rule applies to boats on the same tack. Starboard tack still prevails over port tack inside the two boat length circle. This is a complex rule that should be studied.
8. **Honor the “Honor System”** of sailboat racing competition. DON’T CHEAT. Voluntary compliance with the rules, acceptance of any penalties imposed, and good sportsmanship are essential to the success and survival of the ACYC fleet.

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9. **Violation of Rules – Exoneration** (Rules 30 and 31):
 - a. If a boat hits a mark, the boat must either withdraw from the race or exonerate itself by doing a “360” (one complete rotation).
 - b. If a boat violates any other rule, the boat must either withdraw from the race or exonerate itself by doing “720” (two complete rotations).
 - c. A boat that is exonerating itself or restarting shall keep clear from all other boats, regardless of tack.
 - d. If boat A violates a rule and causes an injury to a person or Boat B or damages Boat B to the extent that Boat B can no longer compete, Boat A shall withdraw from the race.
 - e. If a boat hits a mark or violates a rule and then does not exonerate itself or withdraw, the boat shall be disqualified.
10. **Protests** (Rule 61) – If a boat is the victim by damage or interference resulting from a violation of a rule by another boat, the victim should protest by:
 - a. Hailing “Protest” to the other boats;
 - b. Displaying the red protest flag;
 - c. Reporting the protest to the race committee as soon as possible, but not later than 15 minutes following the end of the subject race; and
 - d. Filing a written protest within one hour of the completion of all races for that race day.

Basic Goals of ACYC Fleet Sailboat Racing

1. Sail Safe
2. Have Fun
3. Sail Fast
4. Finish First

Study the sailboat rules and racing books. Practice, practice, practice, in order to accomplish numbers 1,2,3, and 4.