

Collision Regulations Notes

with Poole Sailing



The International Rules for the Prevention of Collision at Sea

The IRPCS or Col Regs are the rules that govern interactions between vessels at sea.

Here are some fundamental rules that apply all of the time.

- Rule 5 **There must always be an adequate Lookout.** That means by all available means. Single-handed operation over long distances cannot, therefore, be undertaken within the rule.
- Rule 6 **You must always operate at a safe speed.** Factors that govern a 'safe speed' are; visibility, traffic density, sea state, depth, crew strength, etc.
- Rule 7 **It is everybody's responsibility to avoid collision.** You cannot rely on a 'give way' vessel to take avoiding action. If you are forced to take avoiding action when you are the 'stand on' vessel, take action in such a way that you do not aggravate the situation.
- Rule 8 **All 'avoiding actions' should be timely and obvious.** Make any course changes as early as possible and make them broad enough to show the stand on vessel that you understand your obligations. At night that involve a turn broad enough to change the light aspect that you show the other vessel.
- Rule 13 **The overtaking vessel is always the 'give way' vessel.** Even if you are a sailing boat, if you approach another vessel within the sector of its stern light then you are overtaking. You remain the 'overtaking vessel' until you are clear ahead.

Conduct in Narrow Channels

Rule 9 is widely misunderstood and abused, particularly by small vessels.

Here is a verbatim extract from the rule.

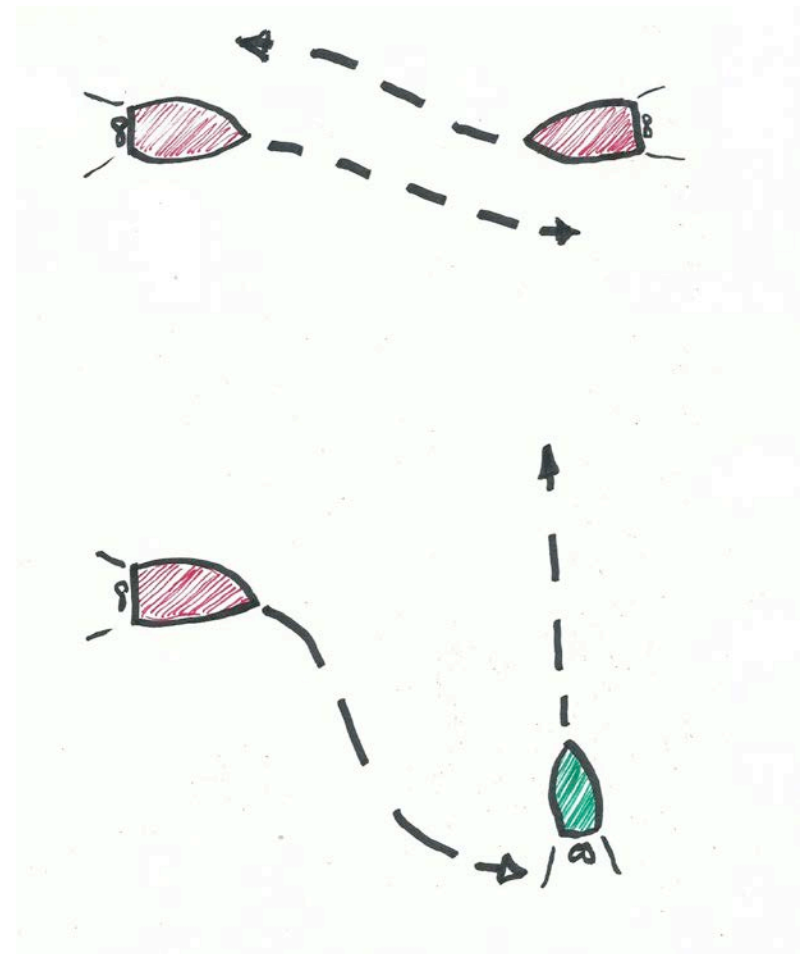
- (a) A vessel proceeding along the course of a narrow channel or fairway shall keep as near to the outer limit of the channel or fairway which lies on her starboard side as is safe and practicable.
- (b) A vessel of less than 20 meters in length or a sailing vessel shall not impede the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within a narrow channel or fairway.
- (c) A vessel engaged in fishing shall not impede the passage of any other vessel navigating within a narrow passage or fairway.
- (d) A vessel shall not cross a narrow passage or fairway if such crossing impedes the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within such channel or fairway. The latter vessel may use the sound signal, five or more short blasts, if in doubt as to the intention of the crossing vessel.
- (g) Any vessel shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, avoid anchoring in a narrow channel.

Priorities

- In open water where no other conditions apply
- **Motor vessels** will give way to vessels under oar and to vessels under sail
- **Vessels under oar** will give way to vessels under sail
- All will give way to vessels 'restricted in ability to manoeuvre' or vessels 'not under command'.

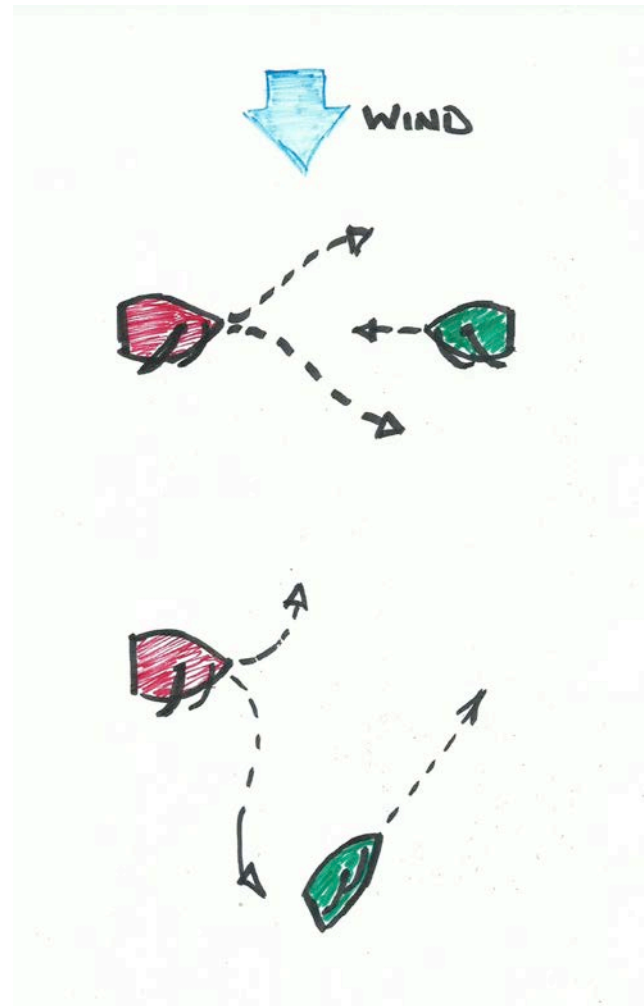
Passing Rules, Motor Vessels

- **Motor vessels head to head**
- This is the only situation that requires action from both vessels. Each must alter their course to starboard so that the other passes down their port side.
- **Motor vessels on converging courses**
- The give way vessel is the one that has the other on its starboard side. Either slow down and let the stand on vessel pass ahead or alter course to starboard and pass around her stern.



Passing Rules, Vessels Under Sail

- **Sailing vessels on opposite tacks**
- The sailboat with wind on its starboard side has right of way. If sails are set on both sides then it's the mainsail that determines which tack it is on.
- **Sailing vessels on the same tack**
- When two yachts are on the same tack but converging, the vessel to windward should give way.



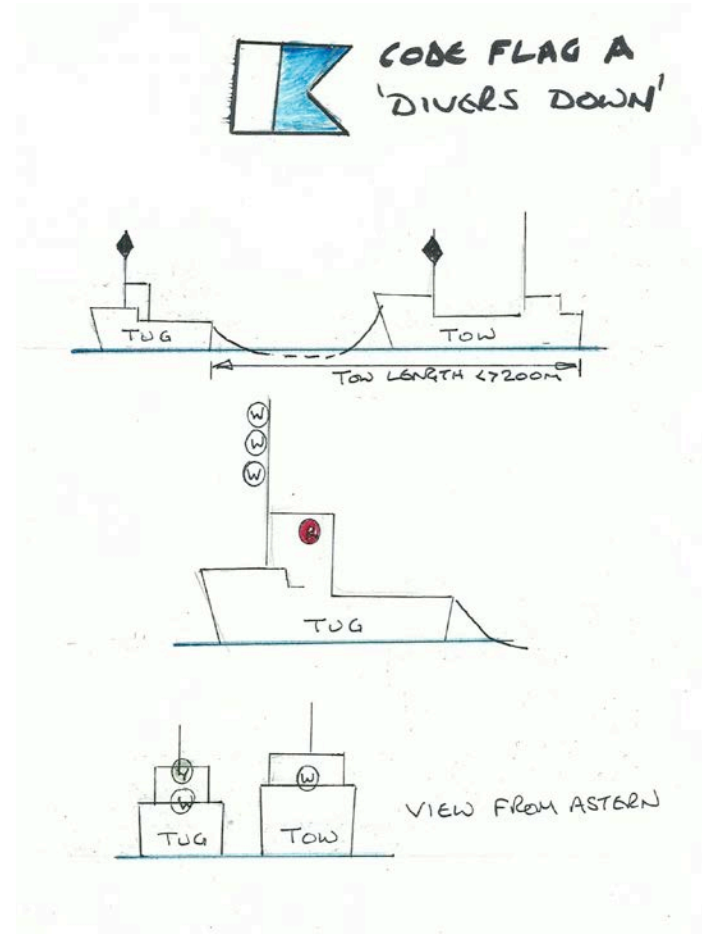
I.R.P.C.S. Vessels that we give way to

Some vessels can claim a priority under the rules by virtue of their condition or the work that they are doing. Those vessels will show special Day-marks during daylight and special light combinations at night. We must give way to vessels showing these signals, even when sailing.

TYPE	DAYMARK	SPECIAL LIGHTS Visible 'all around'
Restricted in Ability To Manoeuvre.		
Not Under Command		
Constrained by Draft		
Engaged in Fishing		
Engaged in Trawling		
Mine Hunting		
At Anchor		 $< 100m$ $> 100m$ $> 150m$ ANCHOR LIGHTS +
Vessels Aground		

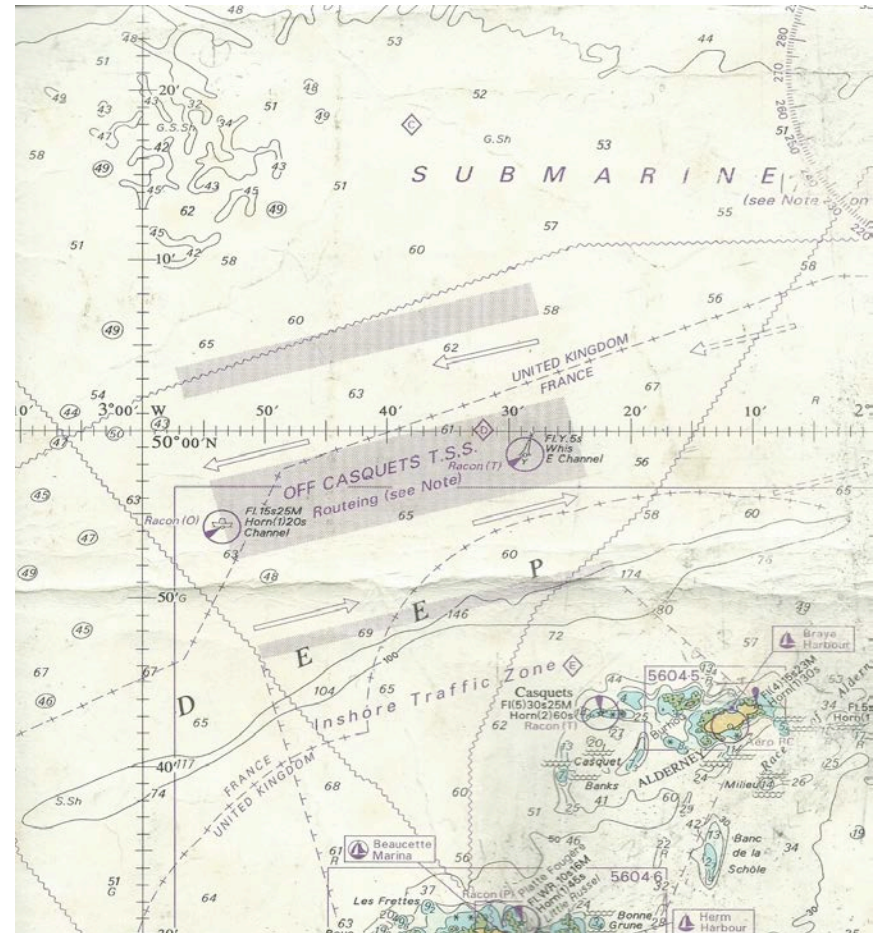
Divers Down, Tugs and Tows.

- Dive Boats will display code flag 'A' meaning that they have divers in the water. A well run boat will pace herself between her divers and the oncoming vessel.
- A short tow is either an 'alongside' tow or a tow astern where the overall tow length is less than 200 metres. During the day a signal is considered unnecessary but at night the tug will carry an additional white steaming light.
- When arranged as a long tow, over 200 metres, both Tug and Tow will carry a 'diamond' day mark and the tug will carry two additional white steaming lights at night.
- When viewed from astern a tug will carry an additional yellow stern light over its original white stern light.



Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS)

- In heavily trafficked areas and around major headlands, there is a very serious risk of collision between large commercial vessels. To separate and regulate the flows of traffic, authorities have introduced Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS). These are effectively 'gates' through which large ships moving in one direction must pass. One gate is reserved for ships moving in one direction, with another adjacent gate for those moving in the opposite direction. The two gates are separated by a 'no go' zone, coloured in magenta on the chart.
- Ships moving properly through a TSS enjoy 'right of way' over all vessels crossing, including vessels under sail. Operations such as dredging, fishing, anchoring etc. are not allowed in a TSS. Small vessels should avoid TSS when ever possible, but if they have to cross, they must do so at a sensible speed, and with their 'heading' at 90° to the flow of traffic so that they quit the TSS as soon as possible.



Sound Signals in Clear Visibility

- Vessels getting underway or emerging from a blind bend make a single long blast. -
- Vessels intending to turn to Starboard make a single short blast. .
- Vessels intending to turn to port make two short blasts. . .
- Vessels putting their engines in reverse make three short blasts. . . .
- Vessels that are not sure of the intentions of another vessel but believe that they are running into danger should make five or more short blasts.
- In narrow waterways a vessel can seek permission to overtake to Starboard by making two long plus one short blasts. - - .
- Or if seeking to overtake to port, two long plus two short blasts. - - . .
- They should not attempt the manoeuvre unless they receive the affirmative response, long short, long short. - . - .

Conduct in Fog

Actions to take

- On entering fog **Slow Down**.
- If you hear a vessel ahead and cannot determine that there will not be a collision, **you must stop your vessel**.
- Make the appropriate sound signal.
- Obtain a fix and use all available navigation aids.
- Small vessels should navigate in shallow water and away from shipping channels when possible.
- Use additional lookouts.
- Have crew on deck in waterproofs, Life jackets and with harnesses.
- Have life-rafts ready to deploy.
- If in a harbour, check specific fog regulations

Sound signals

to be made every two minutes

- Motor Vessels underway and making way, one long blast.
- Motor Vessels underway not making way, two long blasts.
- All other vessels underway, including sailing vessels, one long plus two short blasts.
- Pilot vessels on station, four short blasts
- A towed vessel, one long plus three short blasts.
- Vessels at anchor, one short one long plus another short. **. - .**
- Vessels at anchor ring a bell in the bow for 5 seconds.
- Vessels over 100m at anchor ring a bell in the bow and then a gong at the stern for 5 seconds.