

Racing Rules of Sailing

Definitions Obstruction and Continuing Obstruction

A submission from the Chairman of the Racing Rules Committee

Purpose or Objective

To format four obstructions in a way that is helpful for readers.

Proposal 1

Present the current definition *Obstruction* as two separate definitions, *Obstruction* and *Continuing Obstruction* as follows:

Obstruction and Continuing Obstruction

Obstruction An object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially, if she were sailing directly towards it and one of her hull lengths from it. The following are also *obstructions*: an object that is so designated in a *rule*, or that can be safely passed on only one side, and an area or line in a *rule* that boats are prohibited from entering or crossing. However, a boat *racing* is not an *obstruction* to other boats unless they are required to *keep clear* of her or, if rule 22 applies, avoid her.

Continuing Obstruction An *obstruction* is a *continuing obstruction* when a boat is passing it and will pass alongside it for at least three of her hull lengths. However, the following are not a *continuing obstruction*: a vessel under way, a boat *racing*, or a race committee vessel that is also a *mark*.

Consequential changes needed if Proposal 1 is approved:

Add the following new entry in Definitions after the definition *Conflict of Interest*:

Continuing Obstruction See ***Obstruction and Continuing Obstruction***.

Change 'continuing' to '*continuing*' in rules 18.1(d), 19.1 and 19.2(c).

Current Position

As a result of the approval of Submissions 003-22 and 004-22 with amendments, the definition *Obstruction* in the 2025 RRS will be:

Obstruction An object that a boat could not pass without changing course substantially, if she were sailing directly towards it and one of her hull lengths from it. The following are also *obstructions*: an object that is so designated in a *rule*, or that can be safely passed on only one side, and an area or line in a *rule* that boats are prohibited from entering or crossing. An *obstruction* becomes a *continuing obstruction* when a boat is passing it and will pass alongside it for at least three of her hull lengths. However,

- (a) a boat *racing* is not an *obstruction* to other boats unless they are required to *keep clear* of her or, if rule 22 applies, avoid her; and
- (b) the following are not continuing *obstructions*: a vessel under way, a boat *racing*, and a race committee vessel that is also a *mark*.

Reasons

1. The current definition *Obstruction* is long and contains two definitions intertwined. Most of the obstructions that boats encounter are not continuing obstructions and so many times when the rulebook is consulted to understand an incident involving an obstruction, all the reader needs is the definition *Obstruction*. In those relatively rare incidents that involve a continuing obstruction, the reader needs a good understanding of both definitions,
2. The split definitions clearly separate out the sentences related to continuing obstructions from the sentences related to obstructions that are not 'continuing'.
3. It is appropriate to add 'continuing obstruction' as a defined term in the RRS because, given the way 'continuing' is used in the phrase 'continuing obstruction' in the RRS, it is really a technical term that is quite different from the everyday meaning of 'continuing' in general use.

Proposal 2

Move the definition *Mark-Room* so that it is located immediately following the definition *Room* and format the two definitions as follows:

Room and Mark-Room

Room The space a boat needs in the existing conditions, including space to comply with her obligations under the rules of Part 2 and rule 31, while manoeuvring promptly in a seamanlike way.

Mark-Room *Room* for a boat to leave a *mark* on the required side. Also,

- (a) *room* to sail to the *mark* when her *proper course* is to sail close to it, and
- (b) *room* to round or pass the *mark* as necessary to *sail the course* without touching the *mark*.

However, *mark-room* for a boat does not include *room* to tack unless she is *overlapped* inside and to *windward* of the boat required to give *mark-room* and she would be *fetching* the *mark* after her tack.

Consequential changes needed if Proposal 2 is approved:

Add new line after the definition *Mark* as follows:

Mark-Room See ***Room and Mark-Room***.

Current Position

The definition *Mark-Room* is currently located immediately after the definition *Mark*.

Reasons

To understand the definition *Mark-Room*, the reader needs to a good understanding of the definition *Room*. *Room* is space a boat needs for a manoeuvre. *Mark-Room* is *room* a boat needs for the manoeuvres described in the definition *Mark-Room*.