

The Racing Rules of Sailing FAQ

What are the Racing Rules?

The Racing Rules of Sailing govern the sport of sailboat racing and include the so-called “right of way” rules for racing sailboats, as well as rules that concern eligibility, race organization and competitors’ rights to protest and appeal decisions. The rules are written by [World Sailing](#) (WS) and are published on January 1 of the year following the Summer Olympic games. The rules are in effect for the following four years, or “quadrennium.”

Are the rules the same worldwide?

Mostly. Each country’s National Authority adds “Prescriptions” to the rules as they apply in that country. Under rule 86.1, only certain rules can be changed by prescriptions. To understand how the rules in a particular country have been changed from the WS version you need to look at a copy of that country’s prescriptions. View [US Sailing’s Prescriptions](#) for the United States.

How do I get the rules?

The Racing Rules of Sailing for 2017-2020 are available online at [World Sailing](#); the US Sailing Prescriptions are also available online at [US Sailing](#). US Sailing publishes a printed version that includes all of the World Sailing rules as well as the US Sailing Prescriptions. The US Sailing rulebook is available for purchase through the [US Sailing Web Store](#), or by calling 800-877-2451. Some marine suppliers also provide the print edition for purchase.

Have there been any changes since the last rulebook?

There have been some changes and corrections in the rules and prescriptions since the 2013-2016 quadrennium.

- World Sailing: [Changes and Corrections to *The Racing Rules of Sailing for 2017-2020*](#)
- US Sailing: [Changes and Corrections to *The Racing Rules of Sailing for 2017-2020*](#)

How do the rules get changed?

WS revises the rulebook every four years. The various National Authorities are invited to propose rules changes to the WS Racing Rules Committee, which reviews the proposals and forwards its recommendations to the WS Council for final approval. Fewer than one third of the proposed changes are adopted. Some changes may be approved during “off” years, with implementation delayed until the new rulebook is published at the beginning of the quad.

The US Sailing Racing Rules Committee develops US Sailing’s proposed submissions to WS and sends them to the US Sailing Board of Directors. If they are approved by the Board, the submissions are sent to WS for consideration by the WS Racing Rules Committee.

Most rule changes result from comments or proposals from competitors or race officials. The US Sailing Racing Rules Committee welcomes your suggestions for improving the racing rules.

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Please email comments and suggestions to the [Racing Rules Committee](#) or mail them to US Sailing Racing Rules Committee, P.O. Box 1260, Portsmouth, RI 02871.

How do I get official interpretations of the rules?

Official interpretations of the WS rules are made by a committee appointed by the WS Racing Rules Committee and are published as the [World Sailing Case Book](#). In the United States, official interpretations of the rules are made by the US Sailing Appeals Committee and are published in *The Appeals Book for 2017-2020, Including the World Sailing Cases for 2017-2020*. This handy publication includes both WS Cases and US Sailing Appeals, and is cross-referenced by rule numbers and key words. You may purchase a copy of this book from the [US Sailing Web Store](#).

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