

RULE 18.2—GIVING MARK-ROOM

- (a) **When boats are *overlapped* the outside boat shall give the inside boat *mark-room*, unless rule 18.2(b) applies.**
- (b) **If boats are *overlapped* when the first of them reaches the *zone*, the outside boat at that moment shall thereafter give the inside boat *mark-room*. If a boat is *clear ahead* when she reaches the *zone*, the boat *clear astern* at that moment shall thereafter give her *mark-room*.**

Note, rule 18.2(a) and the first sentence in 18.2(b) are “talking” only to *overlapped* boats. The second sentence in rule 18.2(b) deals with boats that are not *overlapped*.

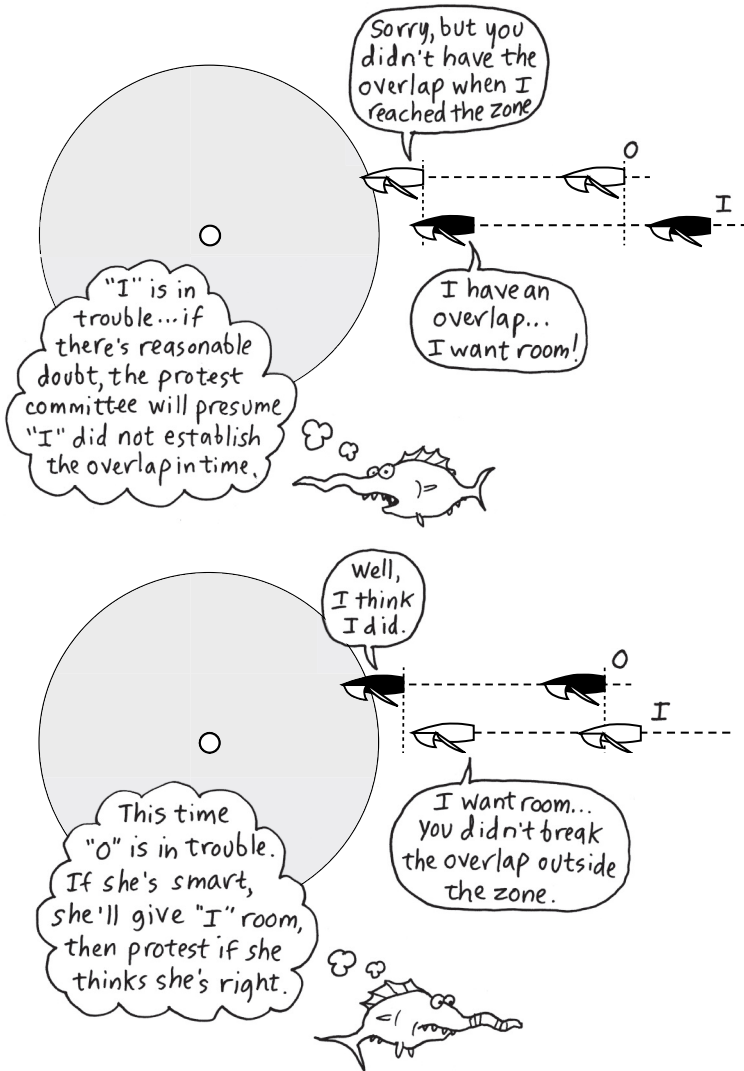
Remember, a boat is *overlapped* with another if her bow or equipment in normal position (such as the spinnaker or extended bowsprit) is on or across a line drawn abeam through the aftermost point of the other boat’s hull and equipment in normal position. Also, two boats that otherwise are not *over-lapped* suddenly become *overlapped* when a boat **in between them** *overlaps* both of them. So if you are approaching a *mark* to be left to port and are just *overlapped* on the port transom of the boat ahead of you, and she is just *over-lapped* on the port transom of the boat ahead of her, you are technically *overlapped* with the boat ahead of her (see the definition *Clear Astern* and *Clear Ahead; Overlap*). Therefore you are entitled to *mark-room* from both boats if you are *overlapped* when the **farthest boat ahead** arrives at the *zone*.

Also remember that, by definition, two boats *overlap* when the bow or equipment in normal position of one is over the line drawn through the after-most part of the other, even when the boats are a quarter of a mile apart.

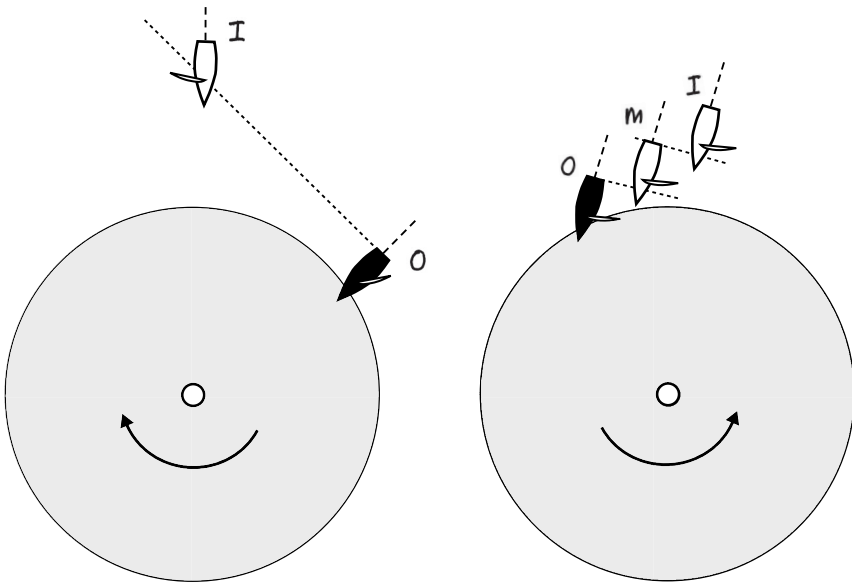
“Can boats on opposite tacks be overlapped?”



Yes. Boats on opposite *tacks* are *overlapped* when rule 18 applies to them, or when they are both sailing more than ninety degrees from the true wind. This becomes important as boats approach the leeward mark on opposite tacks on widely differing angles.



For instance, say that two boats are reaching on opposite *tacks* to a leeward mark to be left to starboard. When the *starboard tack* boat (S) reaches the *zone*, the *port tack* boat (P) is five lengths from the mark, but based on the angle of S's course, P is *overlapped* on the inside of S. Therefore, P is entitled to *mark-room* from S under rule 18.2(b) if she needs it! However, as two boats approach a windward mark on opposite *tacks*, they are on a beat to windward, and rule 18.1(a) says that rule 18 does not apply to them.



Even though *I* is well behind *O*, *I* has an inside overlap when *O* reaches the zone; therefore *O* must give *I* mark-room.

M is in between *O* and *I* and overlaps both of them; therefore, *I* is overlapped with *O* when *O* reaches the zone. *O* and *M* must keep clear of *I* and give *I* mark-room.

As they are not sailing below ninety degrees to the true wind, the terms “clear astern,” clear ahead” and overlap do not apply to them, so they are not “overlapped,” and the port-tack boat must keep clear of the starboard-tack boat. See the definition *Clear Astern* and *Clear Ahead; Overlap*.

“Are there any limitations on obtaining an overlap and becoming entitled to the rights in rule 18.2(a) or 18.2(b)?”



Yes, there are two:

- 1) the boat astern cannot obtain an inside overlap and become entitled to mark-room once the boat ahead reaches the zone clear ahead of the boat astern (rules 18.2(b) and 18.2(c)); and
- 2) the outside boat is not required to give mark-room if she has been physically unable to give the inside boat mark-room from the time the overlap began (18.2(f)).

Up to 1965, a boat clear astern could get a legal inside overlap as long as it was (a) in time to enable the outside boat(s) to give room; (b) before the boat ahead changed her course in the act of rounding; and (c) before any part of the boat

ahead came abreast of the *mark*. Things were often a tad out of control as boats came barreling up from astern yelling for “buoy room” at the last second.

In 1965 the rule writers took a creative step. Realizing that there ought to be some “cutoff point” after which a boat *clear astern* could not obtain an inside *overlap*, they devised a safety zone now simply called “the *zone*,” which has proved to work very effectively. And because the “point” can be in any direction from the *mark*, the *zone* is an imaginary area with the *mark* in the center and having a radius of three of the nearer boat’s hull lengths; for in-stance, 72 feet in a Melges 24 (see the definition *Zone*). Note the fact that it is the nearer boat’s hull lengths; this becomes important when the boats are different sizes.

The second sentence in rule 18.2(b) says, “*If a boat is clear ahead when she reaches the zone, the boat clear astern at that moment shall thereafter give her mark-room.*” So the game ends at the *zone*. If you are catching up from astern but don’t get the inside *overlap* before the boat ahead of you gets to the *zone*, then you are not entitled to the rights in rule 18.2(b) and must give the boat ahead *mark-room* under rule 18.2(b). If you do get the inside *overlap* before she gets to the *zone*, then you are entitled to the rights in rule 18.2(b). So often the race is not to the *mark*... it is to the *zone*!



“What if I physically can’t give room to the boat that just obtained the inside overlap on me?”

That’s the second exception to rule 18.2(a) and 18.2(b). When a boat obtains an inside *overlap* from *clear astern*, the boat ahead has a “protective shield” if she needs it. When a boat gets an *overlap* on you just before you reach the *zone*, she becomes entitled to *mark-room* under rule 18.2(b) as an inside boat. However, you are not required to anticipate her arrival. There are times, though rare, when you may be physically unable to give her the *room* she needs to round or pass the *mark* from the time the *overlap* began, based on your situation at that moment. Rule 18.2(f) says, “*If a boat obtained an inside overlap from clear astern or by tacking to windward of the other boat and, from the time the overlap began, the outside boat has been unable to give mark-room, she is not required to give it.*” In this situation, she is not entitled to *mark-room* and the applicable rules of Section A and B apply. If she becomes the right-of-way boat, she must comply with rule 15 (Acquiring Right of Way) which means she won’t get inside at the *mark* because if the outside boat could have created enough room to do so, she would

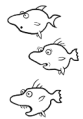
have done so in the first place. And if she is a keep-clear boat, she must *keep clear*.

One example of where this situation might occur is a tightly packed *mark* rounding in light air where a boat astern gets an inside *overlap* on a boat that is three-and-a-half boat-lengths from the *mark*, but there's just no way the outside boat can get everyone else outside of her to move away from the *mark* in time to create *room* for the new inside boat. Another example is when two boats are going so fast that by the time the outside boat can react to her new obligation and make the *room*, the inside boat is already past the *mark* on the wrong side. Twelve knots of boat-speed equals about 20 feet per second, so on a windy reach a Hobie 18 will chew up three boat-lengths in less than three seconds!

A similar situation is when you are approaching a starboard-hand windward *mark* on *starboard-tack* and you tack in the *zone*. Rule 18.3 (Passing Head to Wind in the Zone) does not apply (see the discussion of rule 18.3). If a *port-tack* boat becomes *overlapped* with you from *clear astern*, it is entitled to *mark-room* under rule 18.2(a) unless you are physically unable to give her *room*, in which case she is not entitled to *mark-room*.

Another similar situation is when you are approaching a starboard-hand windward *mark* on *starboard-tack*, and a *port-tack* boat crosses you in the *zone* and tacks to *windward* of you, or ducks you and then tacks into a *wind-ward overlap*. Rule 18.2(a) requires you to give them *mark-room* unless you are physically unable to do so from the moment the *overlap* began.

“What if at a port-hand windward mark the boat ahead of me, or over-lapped outside of me, didn't reach the zone clear ahead of me, but instead they approached on the opposite tack and then tacked inside the zone?”



If you are approaching a windward *mark* to be left to port on *starboard tack* and a boat comes in on *port tack* and tacks inside the *zone* and is *clear ahead* of you when she completes her tack, you **can** obtain an inside *overlap* and become entitled to *mark-room* under rule 18.3 (Passing Head to Wind in the Zone). Note, when rule 18.3 applies, if the boat that tacked is unable to give you *mark-room*, tough luck on her; she breaks rule 18.3. And if a boat tacks within the *zone* into an outside *overlap* on you, she must give you *mark-room* at the *mark* as well under rule 18.3. Rule 18.2 does not apply when rule 18.3 does. See the full discussion of rule 18.3 in chapter 9.

Another possible scenario is two boats (P and S) approaching a windward *mark* to be left to port on opposite *tacks*. S is about two lengths below the *starboard-tack* layline; P is close to the *port-tack* layline. When S nears the *port-tack* layline she tacks. When she passes head to wind she is within the *zone*. She completes her tack *clear ahead* of P. P, moving faster, *overlaps* S to windward about one length from the *mark*. Or in a similar approach, when S completes her tack she is *overlapped* to leeward of P. In both scenarios, S is required to give P *mark-room* under rule 18.2(a).

The reason is that after S tacks the boats are *overlapped*, but rule 18.2(a) makes no reference to **where** the boats were when they reached the *zone*. It just talks about *overlapped* boats (and remember, P and S were not “over-lapped” when they were on opposite *tacks*). Because S and P are *overlapped* with S on the outside, rule 18.2(a) requires the outside boat (S) to give the in-side boat (P) *mark-room*. Note that in these two scenarios, S is not *fetching* the *mark* after her tack, so rule 18.3 does not apply.



“OK, I get all that. So if I’m the outside boat, can you remind me when I have to start giving the inside boat *mark-room*?”

You have to start giving *mark-room* the moment rule 18 begins to apply, which is when the hull of the first of the boats involved is in the *zone*, which is normally three lengths from the *mark*. It is at this point that outside/right-of-way boats need to yield their right of way and provide the inside/keep-clear boats the space they need to sail to and around the *mark*.



“So if I’m the outside boat and required to give *mark-room*, how much room do I have to give the inside boat?”

Well, first you have to understand what “*room*” means; then what “*mark-room*” means. “*Room*” is “*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*” (see the definition *Room*). “*Mark-room*” is “***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***” (see the definition *Mark-Room*).

First, you have to give her *room* to round or pass the *mark* on the required side.

Also, assuming the inside boat’s *proper course* is to sail close to the *mark*,

say within a couple of feet or so as it will be when she is rounding the *mark*, you have to give her the space she needs to sail **to** the *mark* in a “seamanlike way” (meaning safe; not putting her boat or crew at risk of damage or injury, or at risk of touching the *mark*; sailed the way competent, but not expert, sailors would sail to the *mark*) in the prevailing conditions. A boat will need more space if it is windy and wavy, and less space if it is light air and smooth; just as a boat will need more space if it has a lot of sail handling to do, and less space if it has only one sail to deal with. (See Case 21.)

Note: *room* does **not** include space for the inside boat to sail her *proper course* to the *mark*; i.e., the space the inside boat might like to set up for a tactically desirable “swing wide-cut close” type rounding, though in actual practice most outside boats are a little more forgiving. (See Appeal 20.)

Then you have to give her the space she needs to round or pass the *mark* as necessary to *sail the course*, which means just enough space to allow her to round the *mark* in a “seamanlike way” onto the course she needs to sail to begin the next leg (see the definition *Room*). Again, “seamanlike way” means the space needed to not be at risk of touching the *mark* or the outside or *clear astern* boat during her rounding, and not the space she might want to sail her *proper course*; i.e., the course she might want to sail for tactical reasons. (See Case 118.)



“What if I need to gybe; do I get room for that too?”

If you need to gybe to round the *mark* in order to *sail the course*, then yes, *mark-room* includes enough space for your boom to come across and your stern to swing when you gybe to round the *mark*. This is common at leeward *marks* when the inside boat needs to gybe to round the *mark*. (See Case 75.)

“Do I also get room to gybe around the windward mark going onto a run?”

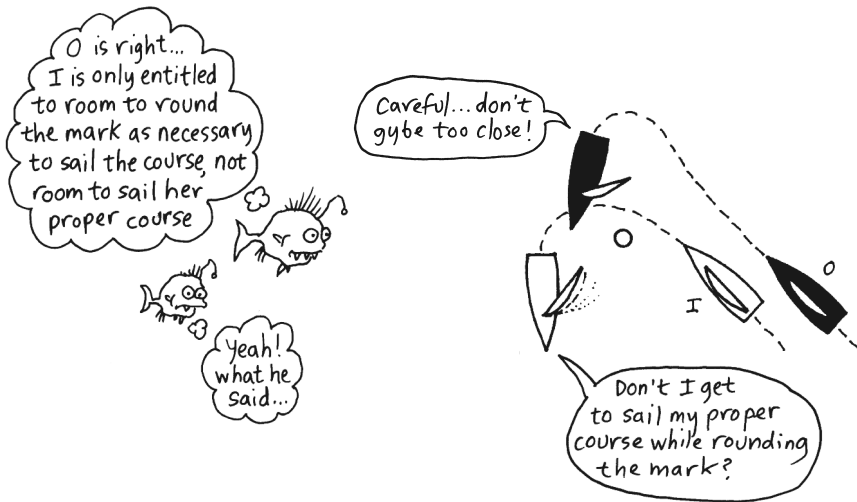


No! If you are *clear ahead* and rounding close to the windward *mark* onto a run (where you will spend time on both *tacks*), you do not need to gybe in order to *sail the course*, even though gybing may be your *proper course*. Therefore, *mark-room* does **not** include *room* to gybe in that situation.

“How about when I’m a windward/inside boat coming into the windward mark or rounding the leeward mark; am I entitled to room to tack around the mark?”

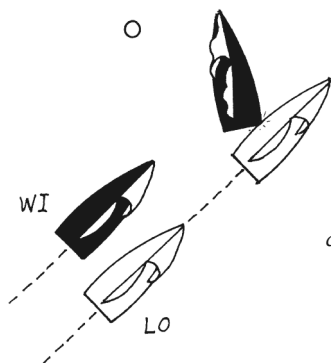


At the windward *mark*, Yes; at the leeward *mark*, No. If you are the inside



boat and are **overlapped** to windward of the boat required to give you *mark-room*, and you need to tack to round the *mark* in order to *sail the course*, then *mark-room* includes *room* to tack as long as you are *fetching the mark* after your tack (see the definition *Mark-Room*). Note, if you are *clear ahead* in the *zone*, you are still entitled to *mark-room*, but not to *room* to tack (see the definition *Mark-Room* and Appeal 89). However, at a leeward *mark* going onto a beat to windward, you do not need to tack around the *mark* in order to *sail the course*; therefore, *mark-room* does **not** include *room* to tack.

At the windward *mark*, note that once the inside *overlapped* tacking boat passes head-to-wind, rule 18 no longer applies because the boats are now on opposite tacks on a beat to windward (rule 18.1(a)). If contact occurs during the tack, the inside boat will have a good argument that the outside boat was failing to give her *mark-room* before she passed head-to-wind; i.e., while rule 18.2(a) or 18.2(b) still applied, and that she is exonerated by rule 43.1(b) (Ex-oneration) for her breach of rule 13 (While Tacking). However, it is possible that a protest committee might decide that the inside boat could have tacked without causing contact (i.e., that she had *room* to tack), and therefore disqualify the inside boat for breaking rule 13 because rule 18 no longer applied once she passed head to wind. The bottom line in this situation is that the outside boat should be sure to give the inside boat enough space to make a normal tack without hitting her; and the inside boat should be careful not to hit the outside boat while she is tacking to be safe.



LO must give WI mark-room under rule 18.2(b), which includes room to tack. However, the moment WI passes head to wind, she and LO are on opposite tacks and rule 18 shuts off. At that point rule 13 requires WI to keep clear of LO while tacking; and rule 14 always requires both boats to avoid contact. If WI makes a normal tack and her transom touches LO, it is likely a protest committee will decide that LO failed to give WI room to tack. To be safe, WI should try not to let her transom touch LO after she passes head to wind, and LO should give WI enough space so she can tack without contact.

“Rule 18.1 says that rule 18 no longer applies once the boat entitled to mark-room has been given mark-room. When has a boat been given mark room?”



Rule 18.1 states, “Rule 18 no longer applies between boats when mark-room has been given.” A boat has been given *mark-room* when it has received all the *room* (space) it is entitled to in the definition *Mark-Room* (see Cases 21 and 118). Specifically,

- 1) the boat has the space it needs to round or pass the *mark* on the required side;
- 2) if the boat’s *proper course* will bring her within a couple of feet of the *mark*, the boat has the space it needs to sail “to” the *mark*;
- 3) the boat has the space it needs to round or pass the *mark* as necessary to *sail the course*, i.e., sail onto the course needed to begin the next leg or to *finish*; and
- 4) while rounding or passing the *mark*, the boat can *keep clear* of the boat giving her *mark-room* without risk of touching the *mark* or fouling another boat.
- 5) Additionally, *mark-room* includes *room* to tack in certain situations (see the discussion above).

Note, this might occur before she has left the *mark* astern when there are no mitigating circumstances; or it might occur after she has left the *mark* astern, for instance in strong adverse current.



“What if I am sailing short-handed or my crew is inexperienced; do I get more room as a result?”

No. A boat is not entitled to more space than usual just because her crew is short-handed or inexperienced. Case 103 addresses this head on by saying, “Neither the experience of IW’s crew nor their number is relevant in determining ‘room’... the interpretation of ‘seamanlike way’ must be based on the boat-handling that can reasonably be expected from a competent, but not expert, crew of the appropriate number for the boat.”

The moment a boat has been given *mark-room*, rule 18 ceases to apply, meaning she is no longer “sailing within the *room* or *mark-room* to which she was entitled” under rule 18.2. This means she is no longer “protected” by rule 43.1(b) (Exoneration). She is subject to the rules in Section A and B, and must comply with those rules or risk penalty.