

RULE 19.2(b) — GIVING ROOM AT AN OBSTRUCTION

When boats are *overlapped*, the outside boat shall give the inside boat *room* between her and the *obstruction*, unless she has been unable to do so from the time the *overlap* began.

The outside boat, whether the right-of-way boat or not, must give the inside boat *room* to pass between her and the *obstruction* when she needs it, which will be when she needs to commit to sailing on one side or the other of the *obstruction* and needs *room* to do so.

A common example is two *overlapped* boats sailing upwind on *port-tack* (PL and PW) approaching a *starboard-tack* boat (S). As the boats near each other, PL bears away to pass astern of S. When PW gets to the point where she must commit to either bearing away also or tacking, rule 19.2(b) requires PL to give PW *room* to pass astern of S if PW chooses to do so (Case 11).

Another common example is on the starting line. Two *overlapped starboard-tack* boats (SL and SW) are reaching down the line and approaching another *starboard-tack* boat *clear ahead* (A). If SL wants to pass or stop on the *wind-ward* side of A, she may do so by luffing, subject to rule 16.1 (Changing Course), and SW must *keep clear*. If SL chooses to pass astern of A, then she must give SW *room* to do so if SW chooses to pass astern as well. This is true even if SW's bow is ahead of SL's such that she will reach A before SL. (See Case 117 and Appeal 36.)



“What happens if it is not clear on which side the right of way boat will pass the obstruction?”

Good question! Rule 19.2(b) is premised on there being an “inside” and an “outside” boat. If neither boat is clearly the “outside” boat, then it is not possible to apply rule 19.2(b). It will be up to the protest committee to decide, based on the facts, whether there was an “outside” boat. If, in the starting line example above, SL is aiming at the aft portion of A when SW needs to commit to passing A on one side or the other, I would say it is reasonable for her to assume that SL will pass astern of A; i.e., on the “outside.”

However, consider the situation where two *overlapped port-tack* boats (PL and PW) are sailing downwind and approaching a boat ahead on the same *tack* (PA), with PW half a length ahead of PL. As both PL and PW are required to *keep clear* of PA under rule 12 (On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped), PA is an *obstruction*. If PL is clearly sailing a course to pass to *leeward* of PA, then PW is entitled to *room* to do likewise when she arrives at PA.

If PL is clearly sailing a course to pass to *windward* of PA, then PW must *keep clear* under rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped); and when PL must commit to passing PA to *windward*, she is also entitled to *room* from PW to do so. However, if PL is aiming directly **at** PA's transom, such that it is not possible to determine by the positions of the boats on which side of the *obstruction* PL will pass, there is no clear "outside" boat. As PW will arrive at PA before PL does, she should *keep clear* under rule 11 and should not anticipate receiving *room* under rule 19.2(b). She may end up *overlapping* PA to *windward* as a result of *keeping clear* of PL. If when PL arrives at PA she chooses to pass PA to *leeward*, she must give *room* to PW (assuming the boats are still *overlapped*), but that may be a moot point as PW may not be able to take advantage of that space if she is *overlapped* close to *windward* of PA. Hails between PW and PL regarding PL's intentions as the boats approach PA may be helpful, but are not mandatory under the *rules*. (See Question 123.)

"If I am the outside boat, remind me how much space I need to give the inside boat?"

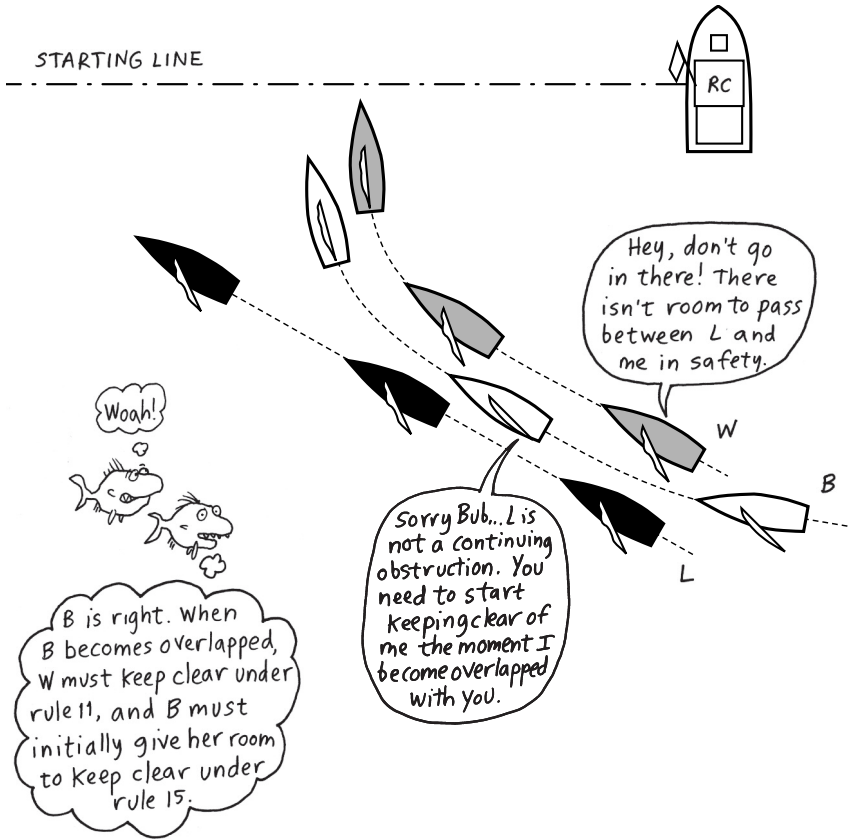


You have to give her "*room*," which is enough space for her to sail between you and the *obstruction* in the prevailing conditions in a "seamanlike way;" i.e., sailing her boat in its normal way without risk of touching either you or the *obstruction*.

"Does the inside boat have to call for room in order to get it?"



There is no requirement in the *rules* that an inside boat has to call for *room* in order to get it, though I recommend hailing in advance to avoid problems

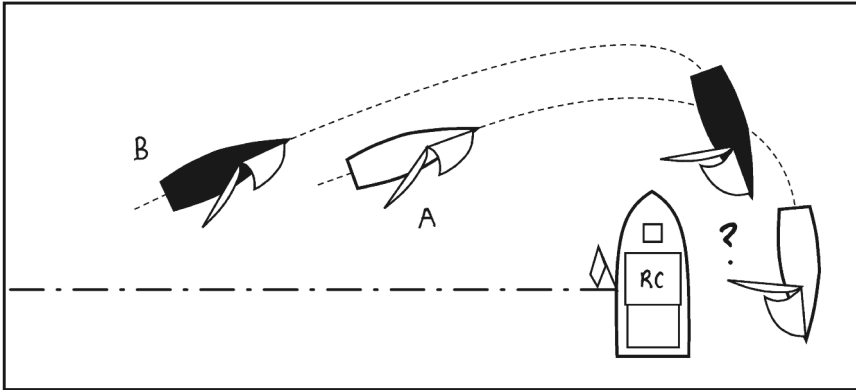


later. Boats are expected to know their obligations under the rules, which includes outside boats at *obstructions*. Case 41 reads, “QUESTION 2: Does BW have to hail for room to pass to leeward of A? If not, would BL risk disqualification by not giving room? ANSWER 2: BW is not required to hail for room, although that is a prudent thing to do to avoid misunderstandings. Rule 19.2(b) requires BL to give room to BW if they both pass to leeward of the obstruction, whether or not BW hails for room.”



“How does it work when I want to establish an overlap between two boats on the starting line?”

Let’s say you were on *starboard tack* approaching two other *starboard-tack* boats (L and W) sitting side-by-side near the starting line. You need to *keep clear* of L under rule 12 (On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped), and W needs to *keep clear* of L under rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped). Because



If A and B are only passing the obstruction (race committee boat) for a very short time, it is not a “continuing obstruction.” B is permitted to establish an inside overlap and become entitled to room only if A can initially keep clear under rule 11 when B becomes overlapped to leeward of her (see rule 15), and is able to give B room from the time the overlap is established (see rule 19.2(b)).

If A and B are sailing alongside the obstruction for more than a few seconds, the obstruction is a “continuing obstruction” and B is not permitted to establish an inside overlap and become entitled to room because there is not room for her to pass between A and the race committee boat (see rule 19.2(c)).

you **both** need to *keep clear* of L, she is an *obstruction*; but as a vessel under way, she is not a “continuing” *obstruction* (see the definition *Obstruction*). Therefore, rule 19.2(b) applies, meaning that you can establish an *overlap* between L and W even if there is not *room* at that moment to sail all the way between them in safety.

If you become *overlapped* to leeward of W, she needs to *keep clear* of you under rule 11; and you need to initially give her *room* to *keep clear* of you under rule 15 (Acquiring Right of Way). W also needs to give you *room* to pass the *obstruction* (L) if she is able to do so from the moment you became *overlapped* with her (rule 19.2(b)). If she is able to *keep clear* of you and give you *room* to pass L, then she must. However, if despite her best effort she is unable to do so, then you break rule 15 if you hit W, or rule 11 if you hit L or force L to avoid you.

“So if the inside boat gets her overlap so close to the obstruction that I physically can’t give her room, I don’t have to?”



That’s right. Rule 19.2(b) says that if an outside boat is “unable” to give *room* from the time the *overlap* begins, she doesn’t have to do so. This is a safety

feature intended to discourage boats from creating last-minute inside *overlaps* near *obstructions*. Note also that if the boat astern is acquiring the right-of-way when it establishes an inside *overlap*, it also has to comply with rule 15 (Acquiring Right of Way). So again, if the outside keep-clear boat is unable to respond promptly and *keep clear* (which would likely result in them also giving *room*), the inside boat breaks rule 15 and the outside boat does not break rule 19.2(b).



“OK, but what do I do if I’m entitled to room but the outside boat doesn’t give me room; can I get exonerated if I am forced to break a rule?”

Yes. Let’s say you (PW) and a *leeward* boat (PL) are on *port tack* approaching a *starboard-tack* boat (S). It looks clear to you that PL is going to duck S, i.e., pass astern of her, and you begin to duck S as well. At the point in time that it becomes clear to you that PL is not going to give you *room*, it is not possible for you to tack without hitting S. You continue ducking S and your boom touches PL. You both protest. First, at the point in time that it becomes clear to you that PL is not going to give you *room*, it is not possible for you to avoid contact with either S or PL; therefore you did not break rule 14 (Avoiding Contact). Second, PL failed to give you *room* to pass the *obstruction* (S) and therefore broke rule 19.2(b). Third, though you failed to *keep clear* of the *lee-ward* boat (PL) and broke rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped), you are exonerated (freed from penalty) by rule 43.1(b) (Exoneration) because you were sailing within the *room* you were entitled to.



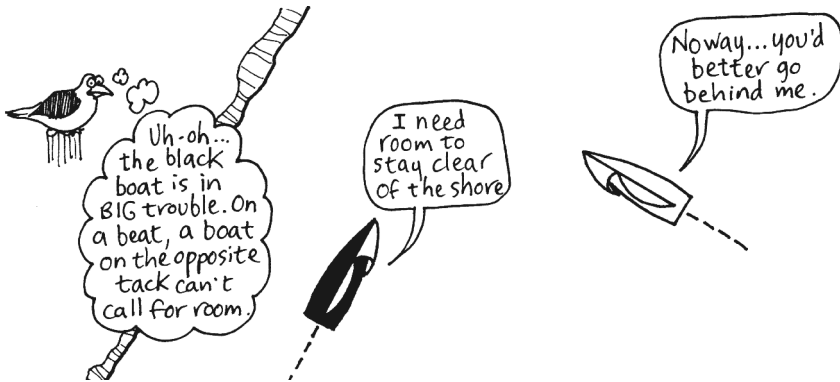
“When does rule 19 cease to apply such that I no longer have to give the inside boat room?”

Once the inside boat no longer needs *room* to sail between the outside boat and the *obstruction*, the boats are no longer “at” the *obstruction* and rule 19 ceases to apply. For instance, take the upwind situation where PL and PW are passing astern of S. Once PW has passed S such that she no longer needs space from PL to avoid S, PL may assert her rights under rule 11 (On the Same Tack, Overlapped) and can luff subject to rule 16.1 (Changing Course) and rule 17 (On the Same Tack; Proper Course).



“If I’m on port tack sailing as close to a shoreline or dock as I can, can I call for ‘sea-room’ from a starboard-tacker?”

Absolutely not! First, there’s no such thing as “sea-room” in the rules. “Sea-



room” is just a term for “room.” Rule 19.2(b) applies only to boats that are “overlapped.” Boats sailing upwind on opposite *tacks* are not *overlapped* (see the definition *Clear Astern* and *Clear Ahead; Overlap*). Therefore, if you are sailing close-hauled on *port tack* as close to the shore or a dock as you can get, you cannot call for *room* from a converging close-hauled *starboard-tack* boat. Rule 10 (On Opposite Tacks) applies and you must slow down or bear off and take their stern. (See Cases 9 and 43.)