

RULE 19.2 (c) — GIVING ROOM AT AN OBSTRUCTION

- (c) **While boats are passing a continuing *obstruction*, if a boat that was *clear astern* and required to *keep clear* becomes *overlapped* between the other boat and the *obstruction* and, at the moment the *overlap* begins, there is not *room* for her to pass between them,**
- (1) **she is not entitled to *room* under rule 19.2(b), and**
  - (2) **while the boats remain *overlapped*, she shall *keep clear* and rules 10 and 11 do not apply.**

First of all, we need to discuss what a “continuing *obstruction*” is. It is an *obstruction* that a boat “continues” to sail next to for a longer period of time, as opposed to one that is passed in a matter of seconds. For instance, a shore-line or breakwater that a boat is sailing along for more than a few seconds is a “continuing *obstruction*,” whereas a small spectator or race committee boat that gets sailed by in just a few seconds is not a “continuing *obstruction*.” Note that a vessel under way, including a boat racing, is never a “continuing *obstruction*” (see the definition *Obstruction*).



“So when can a boat come up from clear astern and obtain an inside overlap between a boat ahead and a continuing obstruction and be entitled to room?”

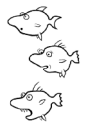
The answer depends on whether the boat astern has the right of way or not. When boats are passing an *obstruction* and are not *overlapped*, rule 19 places no obligations on the boats, meaning that the rules in Sections A and B apply. For instance, if two boats are running downwind along the shore or a break-water or dock and the boat astern is on *starboard tack* (SB) and the boat ahead is on *port tack* (PA), PA must *keep clear* of SB under rule 10 (On Opposite Tacks). Of course, PA can defend her position close to the *obstruction* by gybing so that she too is on *starboard tack*. Then SB would need to *keep clear* of her under rule 12 (On the Same Tack, Not Overlapped).

However, if the boat astern is a keep-clear boat, then rule 19.2(c) applies. In that case, the boat *clear astern* (B) can obtain an inside *overlap* between the boat *clear ahead* (A) and a continuing *obstruction* only when, at the moment the *overlap* is obtained, there is enough *room* for B to pass **completely** between A and the *obstruction* at that moment without touching either. In other words, imagine

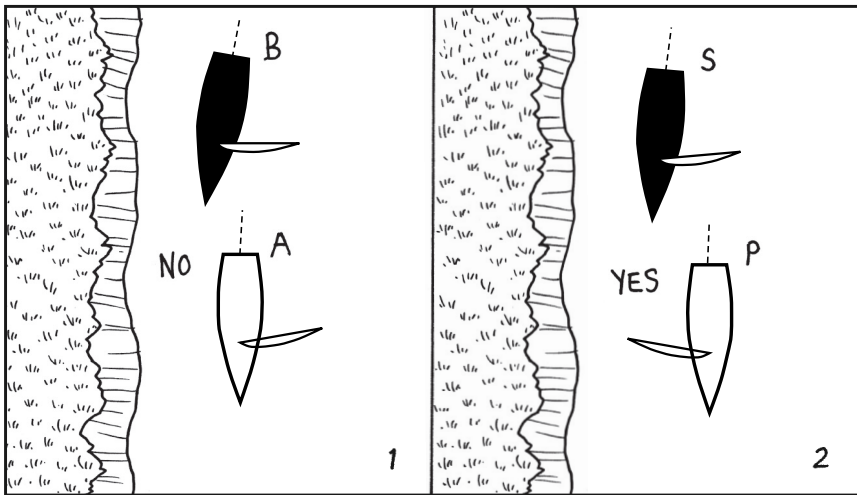
that the moment the *overlap* between A and the *obstruction* is made, you could “freeze” the motion of A and the *obstruction*. If there is enough “room” (physical space) for B to sail through between them in a “seamanlike way” (see the definition *Room*), meaning sailing the boat in its normal way (including boom out in its normal downwind trim, see Case 21) without risk of touching either the *obstruction* or the outside boat, then the *overlap* is legal and A must give B *room* under rule 19.2(b) for as long as they are *overlapped* and B needs the *room* to keep from touching the *obstruction*; i.e., hitting the wall, running aground, etc. If B loses the *overlap* on A, then A ceases to be required to give *room* until B obtains another legal *overlap* and again needs *room*.

One sensitive situation occurs when A is sailing as close as she dares to shore but it’s not obvious how close a boat of her class can really go without running aground. Boat B comes up and wants to obtain an inside *overlap*. The question becomes, “How do you determine if there is *room* for her to pass inside of A?” The essence of *room* is whether, under the conditions existing, the inside boat can safely sail between the outside boat and the *obstruction*. If B decides to risk it and obtains the *overlap*, and then immediately runs aground, she has demonstrated that there was not room for her at the time she obtained the *overlap*. But after she has sailed inside for a couple of lengths, she has clearly demonstrated that there was room for her to pass safely between the outside boat and the continuing *obstruction* at the moment the *overlap* began, and therefore, having met the criterion in rule 19.2(c), is entitled to *room* for as long as the *overlap* continues to exist.

“If I’m a *keep-clear* boat and I obtain an *overlap* when there isn’t room to sail between the outside boat and the continuing *obstruction*, have I broken rule 19.2(c)?”



No. You don’t break rule 19.2(c) merely because you obtained an *overlap*. However, if you are not entitled to *room*, then while the boats remain *over-lapped*, you are required to *keep clear* of the outside boat under rule 19.2(c) even though you may have subsequently acquired the right of way as a *leeward* or *starboard tack* boat. If the outside boat has to take action to avoid you, now you have broken rule 19.2(c). Note that rules 10 (*port/starboard*) and 11 (*windward/leeward*) do not apply in this situation.



*In situation 1, B is the keep-clear boat. There is not room for B to sail between A and the shoreline (a continuing obstruction) without hitting one or the other. Therefore, if she did establish an overlap between them, she would not be entitled to room under rule 19.2(b) and she would be required to keep clear of A under rule 19.2(c).*

*In situation 2, S is the right-of-way boat. P must keep clear of her under rule 10.*