

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.*

This definition is central to applying rule 18 (Mark-Room). It describes the “space” (see definition *Room*) a boat needs to give another boat when one of them is in the zone. The definition describes two different points in time: first, while the inside boat is sailing “to” the mark; and then while the inside boat is rounding or passing the mark.

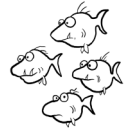
Let’s look at the first part of the definition first. Rule 18 begins to apply when the first of the boats involved reaches the zone (rule 18.1), which is normally when she is three of her hull lengths from the mark. From that point, the out-side boat or the boat clear astern must give the other boat mark-room. Mark-room is the space the inside or clear ahead boat needs to leave the mark on the required side. (See Case 118.)

Furthermore, if the proper course of the inside or clear ahead boat is to sail close to the mark (within a couple of feet or so), which will certainly be the case when the boat is rounding the mark, then mark-room includes the room (i.e., the space) needed to sail to the mark in a “seamanlike way,” which means handling her boat in a normal way without risk of touching the boat giving her mark-room or the mark. Allowing her this space is to prevent an outside boat with luffing rights from luffing an inside boat inside the zone before she gets to the mark. Note, however, the use of the term “proper course” in the definition is purely a test for whether the boat is entitled to room to sail to the mark; it does not mean that the boat is entitled to space to actually sail her “proper course” to the mark.

Say, for instance, the inside boat was leaving the mark to port. Clearly, it would not be “seamanlike” to sail a course that will result in touching the mark or leaving the mark to starboard. Therefore, to sail “to” the mark, P will sail a course that will bring her slightly to the right of the mark in anticipation of her rounding or passing maneuver at the mark. See the discussion of the definition *Room for a* discussion on how far from the mark it is “seamanlike” to sail.

An example of a boat in the *zone* whose *proper course* is **not** to sail close to the *mark*, is a boat approaching the finishing line a couple lengths from one of the finishing *marks*. Clearly the boat is in the *zone* of the finishing *mark*, but her *proper course* will be to cross the finishing line as soon as possible, which may mean she will get no closer than two lengths to the actual *mark*. In that case, *mark-room* does not include space for her to sail “to” the *mark* (see the discussion of rules 18.2(b) and 18.2(c)(2) in Chapter 8 to understand why this is important).

“OK, I understand that when I’m a keep-clear boat and I’m approaching a rounding mark, I get room to sail “to” the mark in a seamanlike way. But how much room do I get when I am rounding or passing the mark; and when have I taken all the room I am entitled to?”



You are entitled to *room* to round or pass the *mark* as necessary to *sail the course*, which means just enough space to allow you to round the *mark* in a “seamanlike way” (see the definition *Room*). “Seamanlike way” means the space needed to handle your boat in a competent but not expert way, and not be at risk of touching the *mark* or the outside right-of-way boat during your rounding. Note, *mark-room* does not include the space you might want to sail your *proper course*; i.e., the course you might want to sail for tactical reasons such as a wide and tight rounding. (See Case 21 for more discussion of *mark-room*.)

Once you have rounded the *mark* and are on a course needed to begin sailing the next leg, and you can *keep clear* of an outside right-of-way boat without risk of touching the *mark* or fouling another boat, you have been given *mark-room* and you must thereafter *keep clear* of right-of-way boats. This might occur before you have left the *mark* astern, or even after you’ve left the *mark* astern if there’s a strong adverse current.

Note that when an inside boat needs to tack in order to *sail the course*, she is entitled to the space she needs to tack to round or pass the *mark*, but only when she is *overlapped* to *windward* of a boat that is required to give her *mark-room*, and she would be *fetching* the *mark* after her tack. This occurs most commonly at the windward *mark*; it is rare a boat needs to tack around a leeward *mark* in order to *sail the course*.