

ROOM

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.

This definition is central to applying rule 15 (Acquiring Right of Way); rule 16 (Changing Course); rule 18 (Mark-Room); rule 19 (Room to Pass an Obstruction); and rule 20 (Room to Tack at an Obstruction).

“Room” is “space.” It is the space on the water a boat “needs” at the time. For instance, when the term is used in rules 15 and 16, it is the space the keep-clear boat needs to *keep clear* of the right-of-way boat. When the term is used in the definition *Mark-Room*, it is the space the inside boat needs to sail to and around the *mark*. When used in rule 19, it is the space the inside boat needs to pass between the outside boat and the *obstruction*.

Note the word “promptly” which means “performed readily, quickly, almost immediately.” This builds in a time element to the definition. Therefore when a *leeward* boat (L) luffs near a *windward* boat (W), rule 16.1 requires L to give W *room* to *keep clear*, but W must respond “promptly” or risk losing the protection of *room*. The same is true when a *port-tack* boat (P) tacks close in front of, or to *leeward* of, a *starboard-tack* boat (S) and rule 15 applies.

To expand on “seamanlike,” I would say “seamanlike” means “responsible, prudent, safety conscious.” In other words, it is “seamanlike” never to put your or another boat’s crew, boat or equipment at risk of damage or injury. Further-more, “seamanlike” describes the way competent, but not expert, sailors handle their boat. Case 21 says, “[“seamanlike way”] implies that an outside boat must provide enough space so that the inside boat need not manoeuvre in an extraordinary or abnormal manner.”

Note that “room” includes the space a boat needs to comply with the rules in Part 2, which include the right-of-way and *mark-room* rules, and rule 31 (Touching a Mark). For instance, if three boats are approaching a *mark*, and the inside boats are entitled to *mark-room*, the outside boat has to give the middle boat “room” to comply with her obligation to give the inside boat “room” to sail between her and the *mark*. (See Case 114.)



“Does the definition *Room* take into account the experience or the number of the crew on board the boat?”

No. 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.”

Furthermore, Appeal 20 talks about tactical *mark* roundings and says in essence that *room* does not include all the space an inside boat might like to take to make a tactically desirable rounding.