

Racing Rules of Sailing

New Case

A submission from the Royal Yachting Association

Purpose or Objective

To provide a clear statement of the requirements on a boat that hails for room to tack.

Proposal

Delete existing Case 54 and replace with this new case.

NEW CASE FOR RRS 2017 TO 2020

*Based on rule 20 amended as proposed by submission nnn-15, Rule 20 and Terminology.
If approved, this new case is to take effect from 1 January 2017*

CASE XXX

Rule 20, Room to Tack at an Obstruction

A boat that hails for room to tack at an obstruction must give the hailed boat sufficient time to respond before tacking herself.

If the hailed boat does not respond, the hailing boat should, if possible, repeat her hail. The lack of a response from the hailed boat does not require the hailing boat to hold her course.

The hailing boat is entitled to hail as soon as safety requires her to act under rule 20.

The hail must make the intention clear, be as loud as necessary to be heard under the conditions and may, if appropriate, include additional non-verbal signals.

Assumed Facts

Boat A is sailing close-hauled on port tack towards an obstruction that she must tack to avoid. Boat B is sailing close-hauled one boat length to windward and one boat length astern of A. A hails B for room to tack.

Question 1

How long must A wait for B to respond?

Answer 1

Rule 20.2(c) requires B to respond either by immediately replying “you tack” or by tacking as soon as possible. If there is no immediate hail of “you tack”, A must give B the time required, in the prevailing conditions, to prepare for and execute her tack in a seamanlike manner.

Question 2

What should A do if B does not respond to her hail?

Answer 2

Although the rule does not require a further hail, it is strongly recommended that, if the circumstances permit, A should hail again as loudly as possible.

The lack of a response from B does not mean that A must hold her course. In the situation described, A is right of way boat and is entitled to luff as far as head to wind provided that, in doing so, she gives B room to keep clear (rule 16.1). However, if A passes head to wind, she must keep clear of B (rule 13).

Question 3

As A is approaching the obstruction, how soon is she entitled to hail for room to tack?

Answer 3

A may hail for room to tack at the time that, to avoid the obstruction safely, she needs to begin the process described in rule 20. She may hail at the moment that allows her sufficient time, in the prevailing conditions, to:

- hail B for room to tack, then;
- give B time to respond (see Answer 1, above), then;
- as soon as possible thereafter, tack herself in a seamanlike manner to avoid the obstruction.

Question 4

What action by A constitutes a hail as required by rule 20?

Answer 4

A hail is primarily a verbal signal. Rule 20 requires the words ‘room to tack’ to be used. The hail must be as loud as is required, in the prevailing conditions, to be heard by B. If the conditions are such that even the loudest possible hail may not be heard, it is prudent for A to make additional non-verbal signals to draw the attention of B to the obstruction and of A’s need to tack to avoid it. Such non-verbal signals might include, for example, physical gestures, radio transmission, or, at night, light signals.

Current Position

Case 54, temporarily withdrawn in early 2013.

Reason

Hailing for room to tack and responding to this hail continue to be difficult and contentious matters for competitors and often result in inconsistent decisions from protest committees. This case provides clarification on when a boat should hail so that the hailed boat may respond in a seamanlike way and the responses then required from both boats.