**Highlights of the New Rules for 2021-24**

**Definition Mark-Room**The new definition Mark-Room has some new phrases (shown below in quotation marks) but there is no change in meaning to the previous definition. Mark-room is room to round “or pass” the mark “without touching the mark.” The phrase “sail the course” is now in italics because the phrase is a new definition, but it essentially means the same as the previous phrase.

**Hails**The Introduction of the RRS now states that a language other than English may be used for a hail required by the rules provided that it is reasonable for it to be understood by all boats affected; however, a hail in English is always acceptable.  
In Australia – almost always only English would be acceptable – The specific word “protest” be used and in rule 20 “Room to tack” or “You tack” must still be used.

**Rule 14 (Avoiding Contact)**The exoneration part of rule 14 (previous rule 14(b)) has been moved to new rule 43.1(c) (Exoneration) and has been changed such that now only a boat that is actually sailing within the room or mark-room to which she is entitled is exonerated if she breaks rule 14 but causes no damage or injury.

**Rule 1.1 (Safety: Helping Those in Danger)**now includes “support persons,” meaning that parents, coaches and other support persons are required to give all possible help to any person or vessel in danger; and they, and possibly even the boats they are supporting, can be penalized for failing to do so.

**Rule 2 (Fair Sailing)**has been changed back to what it said prior to the previous rule book, which is that the only penalty for breaking rule 2 is a **disqualification that is not excludable (DNE).**

**Basic Principles**In the previous rules, the Basic Principle: Sportsmanship and the Rules, stated that a fundamental principle of sportsmanship was that when a boat broke a rule it would promptly take a penalty, even if the boat was certain it would be exonerated (not penalized) because it was compelled to break a rule by another boat breaking a rule. That unintended anomaly has been corrected with two changes in the new rules. New rule 43 (Exoneration) now automatically exonerates boats that are entitled to exoneration at the time of the incident. And the new statement on sportsmanship in the Basic Principle: Sportsmanship and the Rules, about taking a penalty now excludes boats that are exonerated.

**Definition Start**The new definition Start has eliminated the “crew or equipment” factor. Now a boat need only have its hull behind the starting line at the starting signal; the location of its crew, sails or other equipment is immaterial. This will make it simpler for race committees to call close starts, and anticipates the future use of electronic equipment placed on the bow of boats to assist race committees in calling starting and finishing lines, etc.

**Definition Sail the Course**This new definition Sail the Course is simply the language from previous rule 28.2 (formerly titled Sailing the Course). The intent is to provide one clear meaning of the phrase “sail the course” which appears many times throughout the RRS.

**Definition Party**When the protest committee calls a hearing under rule 60.3(b) (Right to Protest; Right to Request Redress or Rule 69 Action) to consider redress for a boat, the new definition Party makes that boat a party. And the new definition adds these people and boats to the definition: a support person subject to a hearing under rule 69 (Misconduct), any boat that person supports, and a person appointed to present an allegation under rule 60.3(d) (see rule 63.9, Hearings Under Rule 60.3(d) – Support Persons).

**Definition Obstruction**The new definition Obstruction permits the race committee to designate an object that is otherwise too small to be an obstruction as an “obstruction,” and a “line” such as a start/finish line as an “obstruction” in the sailing instructions.

**Rule 18.1 (Mark-Room) and rule 18.2(d) (Giving Mark-Room)**Previous rule 18.2(d) stated that rules 18.2(b) and 18.2(c) no longer applied when the boat entitled to mark-room had been given mark-room. That created a small unintended loophole by leaving rule 18.2(a) still in effect, meaning that a boat clear astern could become overlapped and entitled to mark-room if the boat that had been entitled to mark-room had completed her rounding but was still near the mark. That loophole has been closed by moving the phrase to a new sentence in rule 18.1 which turns all of rule 18 off when mark-room has been given.

**Rule 20.4 (Room to Tack at an Obstruction: Additional Requirements for Hails)**New rule 20.4(a) states: “When conditions are such that a hail may not be heard, the boat shall also make a signal that clearly indicates her need for room to tack or her response.” This is a safety rule for when it is hard to hear hails (such as in strong winds or fast boats that are farther apart). Additional signals will commonly include arm signals, but could also include the use of lights or radios. Note that the notice of race (NoR) can specify an alternative form of communication other than a hail and require boats to use it (see new rule 20.4(b) and rule J1.2(8)).

**Rule 25 (Notice of Race, Sailing Instructions and Signals)**There is a significant shift in the importance of the notice of race (NoR) in the new rules. The NoR contains rules that a boat must comply with before the event, rules that would help competitors decide whether to attend the event, and information that they will need before the sailing instructions become available. However, there was no rule in the previous RRS that stated by when the NoR had to be made available. New rule 25 states: “The notice of race shall be made available to each boat that enters an event before she enters.”

Note that rule 25 and many other new rules now use the term “event” which includes a race or a series of races (see the preamble to Appendix J, Notice of Race and Sailing Instructions). Furthermore, the preamble to Appendix J states: “A rule in the notice of race need not be repeated in the sailing instructions.” Therefore, it is now even more critical that competitors read and hang onto the NoR as well as the sailing instructions for an event.

**Rule 28 (Sailing the Race)**The first sentence of new rule 28.1 states the three elements of sailing a race: “A boat shall ***start***, ***sail the course***and then ***finish***.” The previous title of rule 28 was “Sailing the Course;” the new title includes all three elements. The addition of the term “then” clarifies that boats must do the elements in the order listed. Under new rule A5.1 (Scores Determined by the Race Committee), the race committee can essentially disqualify a boat without a hearing for not sailing the course (see the new “NSC” in rule A10). Deleted from new rule 28.1 is reference to “the course described in the sailing instructions” because there are times the course is not described in the sailing instructions (see rule 27.1, Other Race Committee Actions Before the Starting Signal). The “string rule” in previous rule 28.2 is now the new definition Sail the Course.

**Rule 37 (Search and Rescue Instructions)**New rule 37 states: “When the race committee displays flag V with one sound, all boats and official and support vessels shall, if possible, monitor the race committee communication channel for search and rescue instructions.” Flag V has been added to Race Signals.

**Rule 41 (Outside Help)**Rule 41(a) permits a boat to receive help for a crew member who is ill, injured or in danger (which can include being in the water). The previous rule 41 said that if a boat gained a significant advantage from help received under rule 41(a) it could be protested and penalized. This has been deleted in new rule 41 to remove any motivation for competitors not to avail themselves of help when they are in danger.

**Rule 42.3(c) (Propulsion: Exceptions)**Rule 42.3(c) contains some new exceptions for when boats can pump. Boats may now pump on a beat to windward if they are able to surf down the front of a wave (for instance a large powerboat wake moving to windward), and they may pump as much as they like to initiate foiling (lifting up on hydrofoils).

**Rule 43 (Exoneration)**“Exoneration” means “freed from penalty.” Several rules in the previous rule book contained exoneration provisions (specifically rule 14(b) involving contact, rule 21 involving room and mark-room, and rule 64.1(a) involving being compelled to break a rule). Those rules have now been consolidated into the new rule 43. In the previous rules, the protest committee “exonerated” boats as part of its decision. New rule 43 exonerates boats entitled to exoneration at the time of the incident and says they cannot be penalized. This works with the new Basic Principle: Sportsmanship and the Rules, which says that boats which have broken a rule do not need to take a penalty if they are exonerated. Note that if a boat is protested, the protest committee will decide if the boat is indeed entitled to exoneration or not based on the facts it finds. Rule 43 has been added to rule 86.1(a) (Changes to the Racing Rules) meaning that the notice of race and the sailing instructions cannot change rule 43.

**Rule 48.2 (Limitations on Equipment and Crew)**Rule 48.2 (previously rule 47.2) now clarifies that if a boat is capsized and drifts towards the next mark or across the finishing line without all the sailors on board or in contact with the boat, that is OK. Furthermore, when the crew begins sailing the boat again, anyone in the water simply needs to be in physical contact with the boat, not onboard.

**Part 5 (Protests, Redress, Hearings, Misconduct and Appeals)**The previous standard protest form has been replaced with two forms: a hearing request form and a hearing decision form.

**Rule 60 (Right to Protest; Right to Request Redress or Rule 69 Action)**now clarifies that a boat, or the race or technical committee, can give a report alleging inappropriate behavior by a support person to the protest committee requesting its action under rule 60.3(d) or by any person requesting action under rule 69.2(b) regarding misconduct. Rule 60.4(a) now only requires the technical committee to protest if it decides that a boat or personal equipment does not comply with the class rules or with rule 50 (Competitor Clothing and Equipment).

**Rule 61.1 (Protest Requirements: Informing the Protestee)**The phrases “intending to protest” and “that she was involved in or saw” have been removed from rule 61.1(a). There is no change in meaning. If a boat wants to protest, it must inform the other boat of its intention at the first reasonable opportunity; and if the incident occurred in the racing area, it shall hail “Protest,” and fly a flag if required. Note that a boat can protest an alleged breach of a rule of Part 2 (When Boats Meet) or rule 31 (Touching a Mark) only if it was involved in or saw the incident (see rule 60.1(a), Right to Protest; Right to Request Redress or Rule 69 Action).

**62 (Redress)**Rule 62.1(b) has been changed so that now, in order to be entitled to redress based on injury or physical damage caused by another boat that was racing, the offending boat needs to have taken a penalty or be penalized by the protest committee first. This will require boats to protest in order to become entitled to redress under rule 62.1(b) if the offending boat does not take a penalty.

Rule 62.1(d) has added “support persons” to the list of offenders that may entitle a boat to redress

Rule 62.2(a) now states that on the last scheduled day of racing a request for redress based on a protest committee decision shall be delivered no later than 30 minutes after the decision was posted.

**Rule 63.6 (Taking Evidence and Finding Facts)**Rule 63.6(a) now requires protest committees to take “hearsay evidence.” “Hearsay evidence” is the testimony or information of a person not present at the hearing, presented to the protest committee by another person. “Hearsay evidence” includes oral reports, written statements and photographic evidence. Reasons for this change include (a) protest committees often do not know the evidence is “hearsay” until after they have heard it, (b) often “hearsay evidence” can be useful, such as a list of mark roundings from a member of the race committee, and (c) often it is impractical to bring the videographer into the hearing. Rule 63.6(a) now also gives the protest committee the right to exclude evidence which it considers to be irrelevant or unduly repetitive.

Rule 63.6(c) still gives each party the right to question any person giving evidence. In the case of “hearsay evidence” the person “giving” the evidence is the originator of the evidence (the person who wrote the written testimony or told the party their account of the incident). The protest committee must protect the party’s right by allowing the party to call the person giving the evidence as a witness, and to reconvene or reopen the hearing if needed.

New rule 63.6(d) states that the protest committee must consider the credibility of any evidence and assign “weight” to it before deciding the facts and making its decision. The World Sailing Judges Manual advises that hearsay evidence of the description of a racing incident should be given little or no weight.

Finally, Appendix M, which is advisory, contains one bullet point that likely should have been deleted. It is in rule M3.2, bullet 9, which advises the protest committee to not accept written evidence from a witness who is not available to be questioned unless all the parties agree. This of course would violate the protest committee’s obligation to accept all the parties’ evidence in rule 63.6(a), so should be ignored.

**Rule 64.1 (Decisions: Standard of Proof, Majority Decisions and Reclassifying Requests)**provides a basic standard of proof for protest committees. It says “A protest committee shall make its decision based on a balance of probabilities, unless provided for otherwise in the rule alleged to have been broken.” The rule goes on to state some other procedural actions for protest committees.

**Rule 64.5 (Decisions Concerning Support Persons)**clarifies that a support person or a boat that person supports can only be penalized if they are a party to a hearing held under rule 60.3(d) (Right to Protest; Right to Request Redress or Rule 69 Action) or rule 69 (Misconduct).

**Rule 64.6 (Discretionary Penalties)**New rule 64.6 states “When a boat reports within the protest time limit that she has broken a rule subject to a discretionary penalty, the protest committee shall decide the appropriate penalty after taking evidence from the boat and any witnesses it decides are appropriate.”

**Rule 66.3 (Reopening a Hearing)**This new rule requires the protest committee to at least consider all requests it receives from parties to reopen a hearing (note, rule 66.2 permits parties to make written requests within the time limit in rule 66.2); and to add at least one new member, if practicable, when it is considering a request to reopen a hearing based on a claim that the protest committee made a significant error.

**Rule 69.1(b)(2) (Misconduct: Obligation not to Commit Misconduct: Resolution)**“Misconduct” is now conduct that may bring, or has brought, the sport into disrepute.

**Rule 90.3 (Race Committee; Sailing Instructions; Scoring: Scoring)**New rule 90.3(e) allows the notice of race to put a time limit on making changes to race or series results, including the correction of errors; and it provides a default time limit of 24 hours after the protest time limit for the last race, being informed of the protest committee decision after the last race, or the results are published. This allows race organizers to state an “end” to the event. The rule of course makes an exception to certain scoring change actions such as appeals and rule 69 hearings, etc.

**Appendix A5 (Scores Determined by the Race Committee)**Rule A5.1 now requires the race committee to basically disqualify boats without a hearing that do not sail the course correctly (score them “NSC”, meaning “Did not sail the course”; see rule A10, Scoring Abbreviations). In the previous rules, the race committee was required to protest boats that failed to sail the course correctly. Under the new rules, boats scored NSC will have to request redress under rule 62.1(a) (Redress) if they dispute the race committee’s judgment.

**If you would like to read about more rule changes you can read the study version of the RRS which tracks all the changes since the last rule book in minute detail.**

[**2021-2024 Racing Rules of Sailing World Sailing Study Version**](https://cdn.revolutionise.com.au/site/wpsdt2ddgdez1csi.pdf)