

# Optimist Team Race Umpiring

## A Practical Guide



### 1. Introduction

Optimist 4v4 team racing can be fast and furious (and fun). Races are short, incidents happen quickly, one after the other, and the young sailors can become animated. An umpire has to be able to maintain control with prompt and clear decisions, communicated confidently.

This short guide covers the essentials to deliver good umpiring at Optimist team racing events. As it covers umpire / sailor communication, it should also be helpful to sailors and coaches. Feedback to IODA (email [regattasecretary@optiworld.org](mailto:regattasecretary@optiworld.org)) is welcomed and will enable it to be updated and improved. The Chief Umpire should also be familiar with World Sailing's detailed Team Racing Umpire Manual at [www.sailing.org/raceofficials/internationalumpire/document\\_library.php](http://www.sailing.org/raceofficials/internationalumpire/document_library.php).

### 2. The Role of a Team Race Umpire

In team racing, when a boat protests under a rule of Part 2, rule 31 [Touching a Mark] or rule 42, a boat may take a **One-Turn Penalty**. If no boat responds by taking a penalty or clearly indicating she will, the umpires decide the protest and penalise, with a **Two-Turns Penalty**, any boat they decide broke a rule and is not exonerated. In specific circumstances (see Section 5), an umpire may penalise a boat without a protest, or signal that there may be a hearing after the race.

While umpires may assist race management, decisions on abandoning a race, and the scoring of boats that are OCS or sail an incorrect course, are made by race management, not umpires.

There should be two umpire boats ("RIBs" in this guide) per race, each with two umpires ("driver" and "co-driver"). Umpiring incidents involving dinghies as manoeuvrable as the Optimist is very difficult when solo in a RIB. With two umpires per RIB, both boats are watched as an incident develops, and decisions are agreed and then signalled by the co-driver. Consistency across the umpire team is improved, and more experienced umpires may be paired with less experienced.

When there are fewer umpires, they should still umpire two-per-RIB. A race on an Optimist course can be umpired from one RIB, and a 2<sup>nd</sup> RIB may be free to help for the critical last leg.

### 3. Rule Changes in Team Racing (Appendix D, Rule D1 [2022 paragraph numbering],)

- D1.1(b) The zone at a mark is a two-length zone.
- D1.1(c) 18.2(b) is amended to enable boats on starboard at Mark 1 to set mark traps. Standard rule 18.2(b) entitles a leading starboard-tack boat to mark-room from other starboard-tack boats, but not from boats on port tack when she enters the zone. D1.1(b) gives her mark-room from those port-tack boats too.
- D1.1(d) Deletes rule 18.4. There is no requirement for a boat entitled to luff under rule 17 to gybe at a gybe-mark.
- D1.1(e) (*Not used in IODA SIs*) Gives SIs the option to require arm signals with rule 20 hails.
- D1.1(f) Prohibits a boat that has finished from interfering with a boat that has not finished. Boats are required to sail away from the finishing line to minimise interference.
- D1.1(h) Clarifies that team mates can provide assistance; there is no restriction on team mates who have finished hailing oral assistance to those still racing.
- D1.2(b) A required protest flag only needs to be displayed at the time of the incident.

#### 4. **The Umpire Process When a Boat Protests** (Rule D2.2)

- [1] A boat must hail "**Protest**", and display a **red flag**, at the first reasonable opportunity for each after the incident.
- [2] The umpires give time for a boat to **respond**, either by sailing clear as soon as possible and then promptly taking a One-Turn Penalty, or by clearly indicating she will take a penalty.
- [3] If no boat responds, an umpire **signals the decision**: a red flag to penalise one or more boats (which must also be identified); a green and white flag when no boat is penalised.
- [4] A penalised boat must sail clear as soon as possible and promptly take a **Two-Turns Penalty**.

##### **Notes on the process:**

- a. **Hail of "Protest"** This must be loud enough to be heard by a nearby umpire and, unless there is good reason, made immediately after the incident. If umpires do not hear an immediate hail, they should promptly decide "Incident closed". If a protest is later made in respect of the incident and no boat takes a penalty, an umpire should display a green and white flag.
- b. **Red Protest Flag** IODA Sailing Instructions require the flag to be attached to the sailor, displayed at arm's length, and concealed after display. Wrist-attached flags that cannot be concealed do not comply. The best arrangement is for the flag to be attached by elastic, and tucked inside the sailor's buoyancy aid / PFD when not displayed.
- c. **Respond** When a boat responds following an incident, umpires make no signal, even if they have decided the other boat broke a rule. However if a boat responds by clearly indicating she will take a penalty, and then fails to do so, she breaks rule D1.3(b) and the umpires should penalise her with a Two-Turns Penalty for this breach, whether or not there was a protest.
- d. **Well Clear** Rule 44.2 requires a boat to "get well clear" and then take the penalty. Boats should be encouraged to take the penalty in a reasonable place as soon as possible, and should not be penalised further if they need to interrupt a penalty to keep clear of other boats (Call L2). However a boat that starts to take a penalty in a place that plainly will not be clear of other boats (e.g. on the start line 5 seconds before the start) has not sailed "well clear".
- e. **Time to Signal** A decision should be signalled as soon as the rules allow. This is helpful to the sailors, and maintains the umpires' control of the race. Rule D2.2(b) requires the umpires to give boats time to respond; a reasonable time to give an Optimist to sail clear and start her penalty is 2 - 3 seconds. In crowded situations it may be longer, but the sailor must be trying to sail clear, and may instead respond by hailing "I'm turning" or words to that effect. The time may be shorter when both boats protest and neither shows any intention of responding, especially if another incident is likely to follow as a consequence of the first.
- f. **Exception** When in a single incident two boats break a rule and are not exonerated, if both boats protest, but only one responds, the umpires should penalise the other in response to the outstanding protest (rule D2.2(d)). The only common incident where this might apply is when a windward boat breaks rule 11 and leeward breaks rule 17.
- g. **Signalling** Umpire signals must be clear to all competitors and spectators. Whistles should be long and loud, and flags held overhead for 2-3 seconds if possible. The clearest way to signal a penalty is to hold the red flag overhead, and point with an arm at the penalised boat, hailing her number or country, until she starts to turn. If during a race the co-driver is holding the red flag, a penalty can be signalled without delay or loss of eye-contact with the race.

- h. **Monitoring Penalties** After displaying a red flag the umpires should agree who will watch to check that the penalty is completed - normally the co-driver. To avoid error, an umpire should say "started on port" (or starboard) when a boat begins her penalty turn. The action to take if a penalty is delayed or incomplete is covered in section 5.
- i. **Multiple Signals or Errors** If two RIBs are watching the same incident and signal differently, any boat penalised must take a penalty. To minimise the chance of conflicting decisions, when one of the RIBs is confident of the decision, the co-driver should hold an arm vertically. If an umpire makes a signalling error, such as raising the wrong flag or signalling a penalty on the wrong boat, and immediately realises the error, the signal should be corrected.

## 5. **Umpire-Initiated Penalties and Other Responsibilities Afloat** (Rule D2.3)

Umpires may only penalise a boat without a protest from a boat for the eight rule breaches below. Unless otherwise stated, the penalty is two turns and is signalled with a red flag.

- a. **Rule 42** when the boat does not take a penalty.
- b. **Rule 31 Touching a Mark** when the boat does not take a penalty and is not exonerated.
- c. **A rule of Part 2 when there is contact with a team-mate or a boat in another race.** If neither boat takes a penalty, an umpire should penalise the boat that broke a rule.
- d. **Clearly Indicating an Intention to Take a Penalty, then not doing so.** This breaks rule D1.3(b).
- e. **Delayed or Incomplete Two-Turns Penalty.** When a boat fails to complete a Two-Turns Penalty, or delays completing it, she has not exonerated herself in accordance with D2.5 and an umpire should signal another penalty. When a boat delays the start of a Two-Turns Penalty, an umpire should promptly signal another penalty, clarified with a hail of "four turns". However with inexperienced Optimist sailors, it may be more appropriate to advise the sailor how to complete the first penalty rather than signal another penalty.

**If a One-Turn Penalty is incomplete,** no boat has responded. An umpire only signals if there was a valid protest, and then penalises the boat, if any, that the umpires decide broke a rule.

- f. **Gaining an Advantage Despite Taking a Penalty.** An umpire should further penalise a boat that broke a rule when she or her team has gained an advantage despite taking a penalty.

**A boat gains an advantage** if she is not behind the other boat at the conclusion of the penalty; she should be penalised with two turns (more if necessary) to remove this advantage.

**A team gains an advantage** when its other boats' positions improve significantly. Further penalising the boat that broke a rule, so she is in a clear 8<sup>th</sup> place, will usually remove the team's advantage. However there are incidents when penalty turns alone cannot remove the advantage. For example, approaching the last mark, a team is in a losing 2,5,6,7. The boat in 2 breaks a rule which impedes 3 and 4, so her team-mates overtake and start the final beat in a safe winning 2,3,4. In such a situation an umpire should further penalise the boat, and also display a black and white flag (see below). This enables the protest committee to consider the incident after the race and if appropriate increase the boat's score under rule D3.1(e)(2).

- g. **Rule 2 Sportsmanship.** Foul or abusive language, and reckless sailing likely to cause serious damage or injury, should be penalised. In extreme cases a black and white flag may also be displayed, enabling the protest committee to deduct race wins from the team (rule D3.1(e)(3)).
- h. **Rule 14 when there is Damage or Injury.** Reckless sailing should be penalised as a breach of rule 2. Damage is normally a Race Committee responsibility, and it can protest after the race.

**Black & White Flag**

This is displayed to indicate there may be a hearing after the race. When displayed for “gaining advantage”, this may result in increasing a boat’s race score (rule D3.1(e)(2)). When displayed for a breach of rule 2, it may result in a deduction of half or more race wins from the team’s score (rule D3.1(e)(3)). The boat in question should continue racing.

After the race the Chief Umpire decides whether to proceed with a hearing. If it is to be held ashore later, the umpire should write a brief report as soon as possible after the incident, recording, in the case of gaining advantage, the positions of all boats at the time.

**Sailing an Incorrect Course**

If a boat breaks rule 28.1 (Sailing the Course), 6 points are added to her finishing score (rule D3.1(e)(1)). This normally requires the umpires to protest, and a quick hearing to be held, after she finishes. However IODA Sailing Instructions allow the Race Committee to add these points without a hearing. Umpires do not fly a flag, but should inform the Race Committee of the relevant facts.

**Penalties Taken at the Finishing Line**

When a boat takes a penalty near the finishing line, she must complete the penalty and then cross (or re-cross) the line. If a boat crosses the line on two occasions, once before the penalty and once after, an umpire should advise the Finish Boat which crossing was the boat’s finish.

When a boat starts her penalty with a gybe, she completes the penalty when she reaches a close-hauled course after a tack. This may be close in time to when she crosses the finishing line. If an umpire is confident that the boat crossed the line before completing the penalty, he should advise the Finish Boat to score the boat DNF (i.e. 8 points); see Team Racing Call K1.

**Rule 42**

Umpires should be alert to the following breaches of rule 42.1 in Optimist team racing.

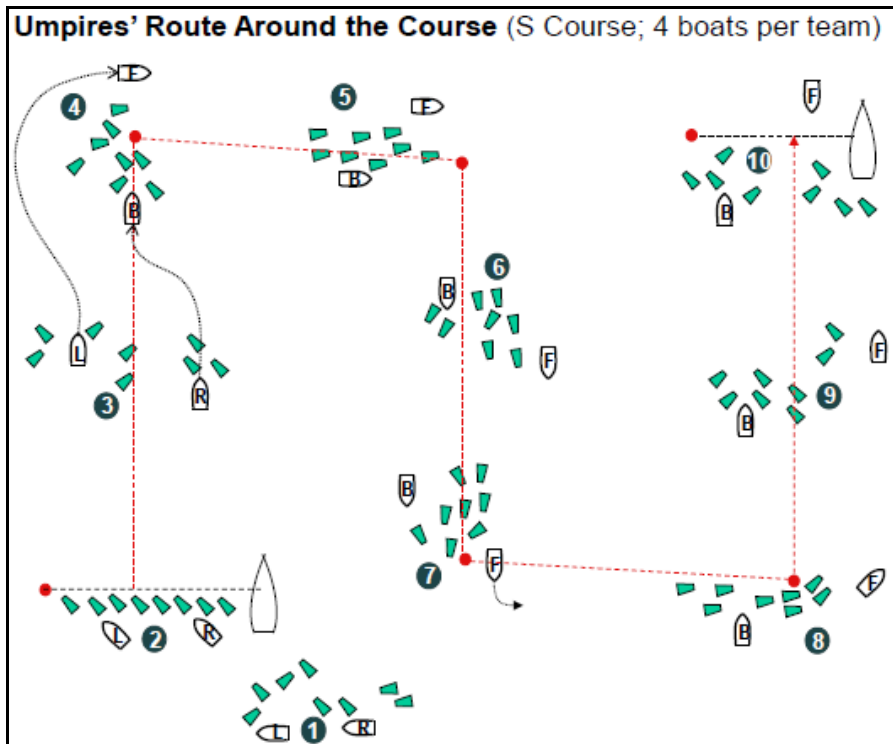
- a. A single rock at the start that propels the boat.
- b. A roll tack or gybe when on completion the boat is travelling faster than it would otherwise have been, observed by seeing a deceleration immediately after its completion. A roll gybe may be used to try to break an overlap approaching Mark 3.
- c. Repeated tacks or gybes unrelated to wind conditions or tactical considerations.
- d. Repeated tacks or gybes for tactical reasons that cause a boat to make faster progress than boats that are not doing so.
- e. Two roll tacks, one immediately following the other, when the boat does not reach close-hauled at the end of the first tack. As the boat does not complete the first tack, the exception in rule 42.3(b) does not apply, so she breaks 42.2(b)(1) and probably also rule 42.1.
- f. Sculling to turn at a mark after slowing to execute a mark trap (most likely at Mark 2).

**Damage & Breakdowns**

When boats are supplied, the umpires may be asked to advise the OA on which boat is responsible for causing damage. Following contact that might have caused damage, an umpire should record this, and inspect the boats after finishing.

When a boat displays a red flag to claim a score change for a breakdown, an umpire should acknowledge the flag and record the positions of all boats at the time, and the impact of the breakdown on the boat’s speed. This information will assist the RC when it makes its decision.

## 6. Umpires' Route Round the Course & Which RIB Watches Which Boats



Each RIB watches half the fleet (initially split left / right; then from Mark 1 split front / back), and follows a standard route round the course.

The route ensures the RIBs work as a pair covering the whole fleet, and are in consistently good positions to see all incidents including those occurring in rapid succession.

A standard route also leads to improved and more "automatic" positioning as the event progresses.

The umpire team should have a standard agreement for which RIB starts a race on the right and which on the left, and normally maintain this for the day. Changing arrangements during the day increases the risk of poor positioning leading to incorrect decisions.

To ensure all incidents are watched, and that both RIBs do not watch the same incident, each driver "calls" the two boats of the lower numbered or lettered team that are in his "half" of the fleet. The co-driver calls all the other team's boats as they engage with the driver's two boats.

**Exception:** if umpires in a RIB briefly need to watch two separate pairs of boats that are not in the same field of view, it is better for one umpire to watch one pair and the other to watch the other.

### Position 1: Pre-start

Maintain a relatively static position. RIGHT aligns with the pair 2<sup>nd</sup> furthest right, and LEFT with the left-most pair. If a pair separates from the rest of the fleet, it is usually better to watch that pair from these static positions.

As pairs of boats reach towards the line, it is best to be to leeward of the left-most boat to judge the overlap and to be in a good position to see the gap between the boats when they luff.

### Position 2: The Start

Maintain LEFT / RIGHT positions behind the fleet. Give boats space to return or take a penalty.

### Position 3: First Beat

Maintain LEFT / RIGHT, driving a head-to-wind direction. A port / starboard cross, more likely on LEFT's side, is best viewed from level with the boats and at an angle of 45° to each boat's course. Port tacking to leeward of starboard, more likely on RIGHT's side, is best viewed from astern.

About ¾ way up Leg 1, LEFT moves forwards to become FRONT, level with the leading pair. It is better if LEFT is able to make this move by passing between boats rather than around them. When LEFT moves to FRONT, RIGHT becomes BACK, and should move to the centre, astern of the boats.

**Position 4: At Mark 1**

When the first boat enters the zone, FRONT moves to 3 – 4 lengths to windward of Mark 1 and stops there. BACK approaches the mark to leeward of the last boats. A position directly to leeward of the mark helps judge incidents and gaps between boats as they luff at the mark.

FRONT leaves the mark when the first 4 boats have rounded it, and moves quickly to be to windward of the front of the fleet. BACK moves off to leeward of the boat in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> position.

**Position 5: Approaching Mark 2**

FRONT must be alert to boats luffing and should accelerate slightly if in their path. FRONT calls zone entry for the first half of the fleet, and then continues round the mark. The leading boats are likely to continue on port after the mark.

BACK calls zone entry for the second half of the fleet. BACK must stay close to leeward of the boats and stop 2 lengths from Mark 2 to watch the rounding and any mark traps. BACK's position needs to be high enough to be out of the way of boats that gybe and turn sharply at the mark.

***Box Course:** because Mark 3 is to starboard, FRONT must stop at Mark 2 and judge the rounding for all eight boats, enabling BACK to “overtake”. BACK becomes FRONT-RIGHT after Mark 2, taking over the leading boats as they leave the mark. FRONT umpire becomes BACK-LEFT.*

**Position 6: Down the Run**

Maintain FRONT-LEFT and BACK-RIGHT positions (or FRONT-RIGHT and BACK-LEFT on the Box Course). The leading pair of boats can be expected to stay on the left side of an “S” course.

**Position 7: At Mark 3**

FRONT calls the first boat's entry into the zone, then crosses Leg 4 as close to the mark as possible as the first boat approaches Mark 3. FRONT decelerates and makes a tight left turn, stopping if boats stop at the mark, or continuing on Leg 4 to leeward of leading boats if they round the mark.

BACK calls the back half of the fleet into the zone from a position level with the zone and about 4 lengths from the mark. FRONT and BACK are now in a good position to call the mark. They call which boats have to give mark room as each boat enters the zone, and whether keep-clear boats with mark-room are “in corridor” or “wide”. BACK is alert to whether luffing boats leave the zone.

As soon as the 5<sup>th</sup> boat starts to round the mark, BACK quickly moves onto Leg 4 to leeward of her.

**Position 8: At Mark 4**

On Leg 4, both RIBs are to leeward of the fleet. FRONT calls zone entry for the leading boats, and stays level with the boats if they are ahead / astern, or moves ahead of them (as shown in the diagram) if they are overlapped to see the gap between them as they luff round the mark.

BACK stops at the zone and turns to point head-to-wind, ready to move off as BACK-LEFT (BACK-RIGHT on the Box course).

**Position 9: On Leg 5**

FRONT is outside and level with the leading pair; BACK is astern of the fleet on the other side. They remain FRONT and BACK when the fleet is well spread. However, if the fleet is bunched, it is better to revert to LEFT and RIGHT, each umpiring the two pairs closest to them.

**Position 10: The Finish**

FRONT should plan ahead to be above the finish line when the boats finish, in a position facing the

fleet from where boats approaching on starboard can be seen. BACK is close behind the fleet, on the left side. Incidents are likely here and will happen on either tack.

Umpires should briefly remain to answer any questions from competitors, and to advise the Finish Boat on scoring boats that took penalties at the finish, but must depart in time for their next race. The race CHUMP should check whether the Finish Boat has any questions for umpires, and to confirm if any boats have been seen to have broken rule 28.1 (Sailing the Course).

### Tips on Driving

- a. **Be up with, or ahead of, the action.** It is easy to slow; it is always harder, and sometimes not possible, to catch up. FRONT should normally be aligned with the bow or stern of boat 2, BACK with boat 6. These positions can then be adjusted to reflect where the pressure points are, and the need to call accurately zone entry and overlaps.
- b. **Drive round the course at the same speed as, and level with, the boats,** including when penalising or watching a penalty turn. Move early when rounding a mark outside the fleet to minimise the acceleration needed; decelerate or stop if on the inside.  
Best is to be 1 - 2 lengths from the nearest boat. Always **know in advance what you will do** if a nearby boat suddenly turns towards you. A small acceleration is usually the right action.
- c. **On upwind legs, drive in a head-to-wind** direction as much as possible. This reduces wash and gives a good position when watching two pairs. Boats will tack back towards the RIB when they reach the lay-line.
- d. **Whenever stationary,** point the RIB in the direction of the next travel and check the engine is aligned. When turning 180°, turn away from the fleet.
- e. **Minimise turning;** it is usually better to continue to point in the right direction, and adjust position by accelerating or slowing.

If umpiring a race from one RIB, it is normally better to drive FRONT, and then to adjust position to be close to any race-deciding incidents. On the final beat it is usually best to be FRONT LEFT.

## 7. Umpire Dialogue

Each umpire “calls” the boat he is watching, stating the boat’s rights and obligations, and her actions. Clear and simple words are used; **“Right”** is used for ‘I have right-of-way’ and **“Give”** for ‘I must keep clear’. As a result, the other umpire in the RIB, while watching only his boat, knows what the other boat is doing, and can apply the rules to any incident between the boats.

As soon as a rule is broken (e.g. a boat is not keeping clear), one umpire proposes the decision (**“Penalty me”** or **“Penalty you”**) and the other umpire agrees or disagrees. The umpires then wait to see if a boat protests. If there is a protest, and no boat responds, the umpires signal the decision they have already agreed. If umpires disagree, the signal is a green and white flag.

In Optimist team racing, judging rule 16.1 is critical. The right-of-way boat (RIGHT) changes course, the keep-clear boat (GIVE) reacts, and there is contact. Which boat should be penalised?

The umpire calling RIGHT says either **“Holding”** or **“Changing”**. When the umpire says **“Changing”** rule 16.1 applies, and RIGHT must give GIVE room to keep clear. GIVE must react promptly in a seamanlike way. The umpire calling GIVE says either **“Reacted immediately; doing all I can”** or **“Reacted late; not doing all I can”**. If there is contact, these GIVE words determine the decision.

**“Holding”** and **“Changing”** should therefore only ever used to describe the action of RIGHT. Also when exceptionally one umpire has to watch both boats, it is better to say the actions of GIVE.

Another critical judgement is mark-room. When a boat with mark-room is sailing in the mark-room to which she is entitled (**“In corridor”**) and breaks a rule, she is exonerated (rule 43.1(b)) and the other boat breaks rule 18.2. Whereas if she is not in corridor (**“Wide”**), then rules 10-16 decide any incident. So the critical fact is whether the boat with mark-room is **“In corridor”** or **“Wide”**.

A good dialogue includes only the facts that determine the decision, so umpires need to know which these are. In practice there are only four types of Part 2 incident, listed below. Type 1 always applies; in some incidents Type 2, 3 or 4 will also apply.

- Type 1: Right of Way / Keep Clear** incidents decided by rules 10-13, 15, 16, 21
- Type 2: Proper Course** incidents decided by rule 17 (or occasionally rule 23.2)
- Type 3: Passing Marks and Obstructions** decided by rules 18, 19, 43.1(b)
- Type 4: Room to Tack** decided by rule 20.

The table below shows the words (facts) needed to decide each type of incident.

Decision Type	Type 1 rules 10-13, 15, 16, 22		Type 2 rule 17 (& 24.2)	Type 3 rules 18, 19, 43	Type 4 rule 20
<b>Set-up Words</b> Say once only	<b>Starboard right / Port give</b> <b>Leeward right / Windward give</b> <b>Ahead right / Astern give</b>				
<b>New Fact Words</b> Say once only	<b>Overlap / Clear Tacking; Done</b> (Gybe)		<b>No luffing rights</b> (or <b>17 on</b> )	<b>Zone (rule 18)</b> <b>Obstruction</b>	<b>20 on Hail</b>
<b>Action Words</b> Say promptly after set-up words. Repeat through incident	<u>Right-of-way boat</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Holding</b></li> <li>• <b>Changing</b></li> </ul> Avoid “giving room”. This is a conclusion from keep-clear’s words	<u>Keep clear boat</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>(Not) Keeping clear</b></li> <li>• <b>Reacted immediately / doing all I can</b></li> <li>• <b>Reacted late / can do more / on me</b></li> </ul>	<u>Right-of-way boat</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Above</b></li> <li>• <b>Proper</b></li> <li>• <b>Below (24.2)</b></li> </ul> Type 1 conversation continues	<u>Boat with (mark) room</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In room (corridor)</b></li> <li>• <b>Wide</b></li> </ul> If “wide”, revert to Type 1 conversation	<u>Hailed boat</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Luff; tacking</b></li> <li>• <b>You tack</b></li> <li>• <b>No response</b></li> </ul> <u>Hailing boat</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Luff; tacking</b></li> <li>• <b>No response / late</b></li> </ul>

**Set-up Words**, said once only, always relate to Type 1, and should always be followed by an **Action Word** (e.g. **“Starboard right, holding”**; **“Port give, keeping clear”**).

**New Fact Words**, said once only, indicate a change to the Type 1 relationship, or that a Type 2, 3 or 4 relationship now also applies. **“Done”** means ‘tack complete’.

**Action Words** are repeated through the incident as follows:

- a. Type 2 incident, the Type 1 conversation continues.
- b. During a Type 3 incident, when the boat entitled to room is sailing in that room, **“in (mark)-room”** or **“in corridor”** should be repeated. If she then fails to keep clear, or breaks rule 15 or 16, rule 43.1(b) exonerates her, and the other boat breaks rule 18 or 19.  
 However if the boat entitled to room leaves that room, **“Wide”** should be said to indicate that rule 43.1(b) no longer applies and the incident has reverted to Type 1.
- c. During a Type 4 incident, if the hailed boat responds **“You tack”**, Type 1 ceases to apply until the hailing boat has tacked.

Further guidance on dialogue can be found in the World Sailing TR Umpire Manual, section 7.