

# Collision rules

February 2011

## Navigation rules, speeding and lights

### International regulations

Everyone using the waterways should know the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, commonly referred to as the 'ColRegs'.

Like rules of the road, these form the basis of safe navigation by dictating navigation rules, speed restrictions, lights and sound signals.

### Navigation rules

Navigation rules are often called 'rules of the road at sea' and apply to all boats. These rules give a clear indication about passing, approaching, giving way and overtaking to avoid collisions with other boats. They apply equally to all boats on the water.

### Lookout

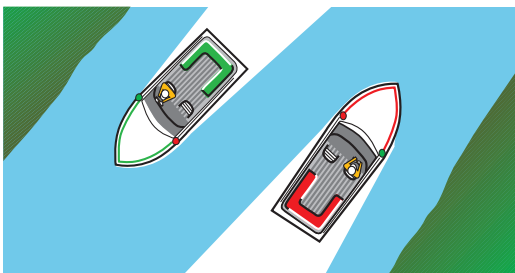
Most importantly, you must keep a good lookout at all times. By being aware of what is around you, it will be easier to see, hear and avoid possible dangers.

In general:

- If you must give way, do it in good time and make a move that will be obvious to other boats.
- Power boats have to keep out of the way of sailing and fishing boats and those hampered by dredging and cable laying and so on.
- Always follow the golden rule – 'look to the right, give way to the right, turn to the right and stay to the right'.

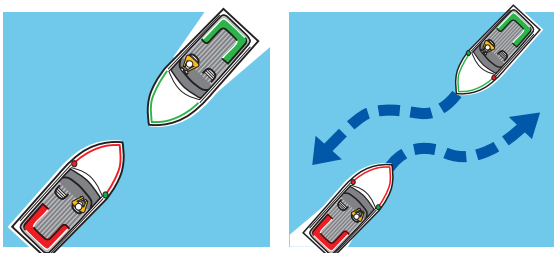
### Rivers and channels

A boat must always be navigated on the starboard side (right) of the river or channel (opposite to the road).



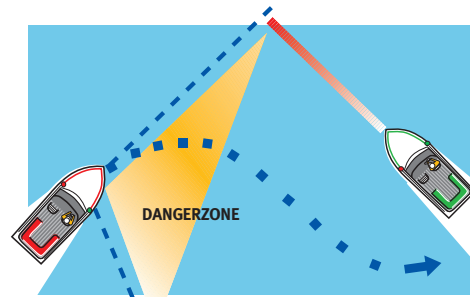
### Approaching head on to another boat

Each boat alters course to starboard (right) and passes port to port (left). Always assume this is the case when passing another boat.



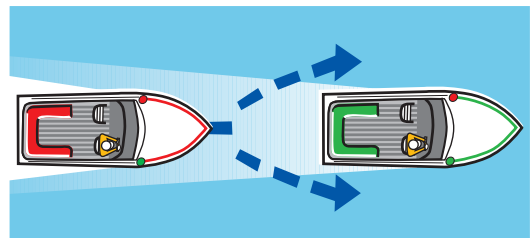
### Power-driven boats crossing

The boat approaching from starboard (right) hand side has right of way. However, if the other boat does not give way, the boat with right of way must act to avoid a collision.



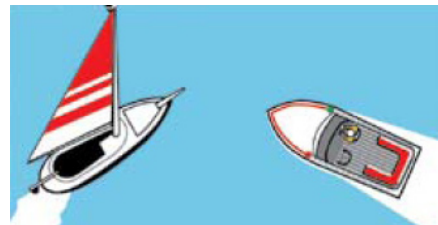
### Overtaking

Overtaking boats are required to keep out of the way of the boat being overtaken. This applies to both sail and power.



### Sailing boats and power-driven boats

Power usually gives way to sail. However, this does not always apply. Larger boats (for example, ferries or large ships) may have difficulty manoeuvring. Other boats should always use common sense and seamanship by giving them plenty of room.



### Sailing boats

- When two sailing boats have wind on different sides, the boat with the wind on the port (left) side gives way.
- When both boats have wind on the same side, the boat to windward shall give way to the boat leeward.



## Sound signals

All boat operators should be familiar with sound signals. They are mostly used by ships and larger vessels with restricted manoeuvrability. Boats over 12 metres should carry sound signals, either horns or bells. Sound signals should also be used when visibility is restricted to alert other boats to their position.

- One short blast ... I am altering course to starboard (right).
- Two short blasts ... I am altering course to port (left).
- Three short blasts ... I am operating engines astern (reversing or stopping).
- Five or more short blasts ... alerting the other boat ... I am unsure of your intentions (often supplemented by light signals).

## Speeding

Many boating areas have maximum speed limits which are enforceable. For safety reasons, it may be necessary to stay well below these limits depending on the conditions.

Boat operators must consider:

- **Visibility** – drive slowly in rain, fog, mist, smoke and glare. Take special care when travelling at night as potential hazards are harder to see.
- **Other boats** – slow down in busy areas and when near moored or anchored boats and remember working boats and larger ships may have difficulty manoeuvring.
- **Navigation hazards** – slow down in shallow areas and when boating in unfamiliar water. Water depth can vary and change quickly, particularly in freshwater.
- **Wind, wave and currents** – these may affect a boat's stopping and turning ability. The type of motor, hull and design will all impact on the boat's manoeuvrability.

Before boating in unfamiliar areas find out if there are any speed restrictions through the local marine authority and obey speed restriction signs.

**Note:** Speed limits applying to jet skis and other information relevant to jet ski riders is available in the Ride Smart factsheet available from [www.msq.qld.gov.au](http://www.msq.qld.gov.au).

The following restrictions apply to boats other than personal watercraft throughout Queensland whether signs are present or not.

## Speed limits

Speed restrictions are usually indicated by signs, however the rules apply whether the signs are there or not.

**Note:** Six knots (about 11 km/h) is equivalent to a brisk walking pace.

Six knots:

- within 30 metres of
  - boats anchored, moored to the shore or aground
  - jetty, wharf, pontoon or boat ramp
  - people in the water
- in boat harbours and marinas.

Boats must stay at least 30 metres off a float or structure showing a diver below, Code A flag (shown right).



Learn how to judge distances, for example, 30 metres is 10 times longer than a three metre boat and five times longer than a six metre boat.

Even at slow speeds your boat will create a wash. Look behind at your wash and be aware of the effect this can have on other boats, people in the water, or the shore. Travelling at the speed shown on a speed restriction sign does not guarantee you are not creating excessive wash.

## Areas exempted from speed limit:

All smooth waters have a 40 knot speed limit except:

- Moogerah Dam at Aratula
- Perseverance Dam, via Toowoomba
- Somerset Dam on the Brisbane River
- Bjelke-Petersen Dam at Murgon
- Sandy Hook Reach of the Burnett River
- Awonga Dam at Gladstone
- upstream of barrage on the Fitzroy River
- Fairbairn Dam at Emerald
- Peter Faust Dam at Proserpine
- Ross River and Ross Dam at Townsville
- Tinnaroo Dam in the Atherton Tableland
- Trinity Inlet in front of the Esplanade at Cairns
- Marian Weir
- Plantation Creek known as Hutchings Lagoon.

## Mooring areas

Special mooring areas are located around Queensland with some marked on boating safety charts (shown below marked 'Small Craft Anchorage'). Be aware of moored boats at all times, especially at night. When navigating near, in or through a mooring area drive slowly, keep wash to a minimum and keep a lookout for people in the water, small dinghies and trailing ropes.

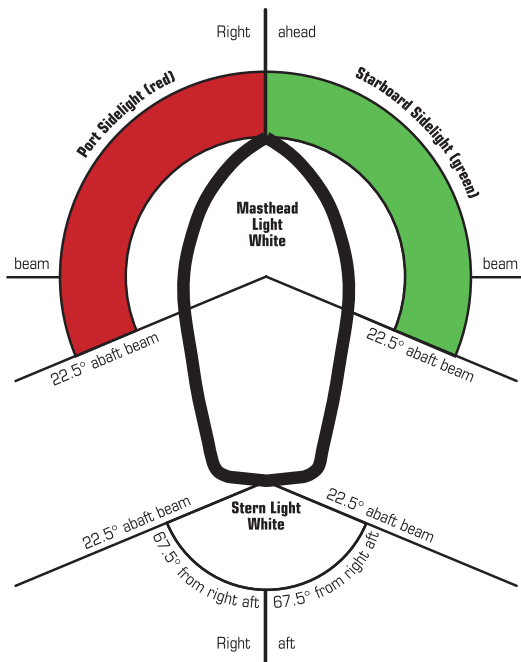


## Navigation lights

By law, boats operating from sunset to sunrise, whether at anchor or under way, must display the correct lighting.

Navigation lights must also be used in daylight hours during periods of restricted visibility or in other circumstances when it is deemed necessary.

Lights must be placed and displayed appropriately to the size and class of your boat. These lights tell other boat operators about the boat and what it is doing – whether it is at anchor, under sail or motoring.



## Minimum required lights

### Power boats

Power-driven boats must show sidelights and either an all-round white light or a stern and masthead light. Remember sailboats under engine power are classified as a power-driven boat and must show the same lights.

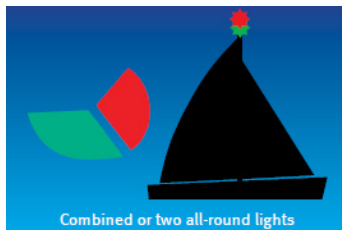


### Sailing boats

Sailboats less than seven metres and boats under oars must have a torch or lantern showing a white light ready to display in time to prevent a collision.



In a sailing vessel less than 20 metres in length, the side lights may be combined in one lantern and carried at or near the top of the mast where they can best be seen.



### Non-powered boats and tenders

Boats being rowed must have a torch or lantern showing a white light, ready to display in time to avoid a collision.

Ships engaged in rowing activities (training or competition) on the Brisbane River need to be fitted with an all-round, white, flashing light if they operate between the hours of sunset and sunrise.

Tenders (boats operating within two nautical miles from the mother boat) are subject to the same navigation light requirements as any other boat.

## Navigation at night

It is unsafe to navigate a boat with lights illuminating the water directly ahead because it will deprive you and other boat operators of night vision. Spotlights can be used to identify specific hazards, but this should only be done when operating at a very slow speed and without affecting other waterway users.

The speed of travel should be much less than that travelled by day. Remember:

- Not all navigation hazards have lights (especially shallow areas, oyster leases and many navigation markers).
- It is difficult to judge distances at night.
- Background lighting on the shore can cause confusion.
- All boats (except certain moored boats in approved mooring areas) are required to show some form of lighting.
- Keep an extra good lookout.

## Anchored vessels

All vessels when anchored must display an all-round white light at night.

