

Part A

General

Rule 1

Application

- (a) These Rules shall apply to all vessels upon the high seas and in all waters connected therewith navigable by seagoing vessels.
- (b) Nothing in these Rules shall interfere with the operation of special rules made by an appropriate authority for roadsteads, harbours, rivers, lakes or inland waterways connected with the high seas and navigable by seagoing vessels. Such special rules shall conform as closely as possible to these Rules.
- (c) Nothing in these Rules shall interfere with the operation of any special rules made by the Government of any State with respect to additional station or signal lights, shapes or whistle signals for ships of war and vessels proceeding under convoy, or with respect to additional station or signal lights or shapes for fishing vessels engaged in fishing as a fleet. These additional station or signal lights, shapes or whistle signals shall, so far as possible, be such that they cannot be mistaken for any light, shape or signal authorized elsewhere under these Rules.
- (d) Traffic separation schemes may be adopted by the Organization for the purpose of these Rules.
- (e) Whenever the Government concerned shall have determined that a vessel of special construction or purpose cannot comply fully with the provisions of any of these Rules with respect to the number, position, range or arc of visibility of lights or shapes, as well as to the disposition and characteristics of sound-signalling appliances, such vessel shall comply with such other provisions in regard to the number, position, range or arc of visibility of lights or shapes, as well as to the disposition and characteristics of sound-signalling appliances, as her Government shall have determined to be the closest possible compliance with these Rules in respect of that vessel.

Rule 2

Responsibility

- (a) Nothing in these Rules shall exonerate any vessel, or the owner, master or crew thereof, from the consequences of any neglect to comply with these Rules or of the neglect of any precaution which may be required by the ordinary practice of seamen, or by the special circumstances of the case.

(b) In construing and complying with these Rules due regard shall be had to all dangers of navigation and collision and to any special circumstances, including the limitations of the vessels involved, which may make a departure from these Rules necessary to avoid immediate danger.

Rule 3

General definitions

For the purpose of these Rules, except where the context otherwise requires:

(a) The word *vessel* includes every description of water craft, including non-displacement craft, wing-in-ground (WIG) craft and seaplanes, used or capable of being used as a means of transportation on water.

(b) The term *power-driven vessel* means any vessel propelled by machinery.

(c) The term *sailing vessel* means any vessel under sail provided that propelling machinery, if fitted, is not being used.

(d) The term *vessel engaged in fishing* means any vessel fishing with nets, lines, trawls or other fishing apparatus which restrict manoeuvrability, but does not include a vessel fishing with trolling lines or other fishing apparatus which do not restrict manoeuvrability.

(e) The word *seaplane* includes any aircraft designed to manoeuvre on the water.

(f) The term *vessel not under command* means a vessel which through some exceptional circumstance is unable to manoeuvre as required by these Rules and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel.

(g) The term *vessel restricted in her ability to manoeuvre* means a vessel which from the nature of her work is restricted in her ability to manoeuvre as required by these Rules and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel. The term *vessels restricted in their ability to manoeuvre* shall include but not be limited to:

- (i) a vessel engaged in laying, servicing or picking up a navigation mark, submarine cable or pipeline;
- (ii) a vessel engaged in dredging, surveying or underwater operations;
- (iii) a vessel engaged in replenishment or transferring persons, provisions or cargo while underway;

- (iv) a vessel engaged in the launching or recovery of aircraft;
- (v) a vessel engaged in mine clearance operations;
- (vi) a vessel engaged in a towing operation such as severely restricts the towing vessel and her tow in their ability to deviate from their course.

(h) The term *vessel constrained by her draught* means a power-driven vessel which, because of her draught in relation to the available depth and width of navigable water, is severely restricted in her ability to deviate from the course she is following.

(i) The word *underway* means that a vessel is not at anchor, or made fast to the shore, or aground.

(j) The words *length* and *breadth* of a vessel mean her length overall and greatest breadth.

(k) Vessels shall be deemed to be in sight of one another only when one can be observed visually from the other.

(l) The term *restricted visibility* means any condition in which visibility is restricted by fog, mist, falling snow, heavy rainstorms, sandstorms or any other similar causes.

(m) The term *wing-in-ground (WIG) craft* means a multimodal craft which, in its main operational mode, flies in close proximity to the surface by utilizing surface-effect action.

Part B

Steering and sailing rules

Section I

Conduct of vessels in any condition of visibility

Rule 4

Application

Rules in this section apply in any condition of visibility.

Rule 5

Look-out

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

Rule 6

Safe speed

Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

In determining a safe speed the following factors shall be among those taken into account:

- (a) By all vessels:
 - (i) the state of visibility;
 - (ii) the traffic density including concentrations of fishing vessels or any other vessels;
 - (iii) the manoeuvrability of the vessel with special reference to stopping distance and turning ability in the prevailing conditions;
 - (iv) at night the presence of background light such as from shore lights or from backscatter of her own lights;
 - (v) the state of wind, sea and current, and the proximity of navigational hazards;
 - (vi) the draught in relation to the available depth of water.

- (b) Additionally, by vessels with operational radar:
- (i) the characteristics, efficiency and limitations of the radar equipment;
 - (ii) any constraints imposed by the radar range scale in use;
 - (iii) the effect on radar detection of the sea state, weather and other sources of interference;
 - (iv) the possibility that small vessels, ice and other floating objects may not be detected by radar at an adequate range;
 - (v) the number, location and movement of vessels detected by radar;
 - (vi) the more exact assessment of the visibility that may be possible when radar is used to determine the range of vessels or other objects in the vicinity.

Rule 7

Risk of collision

- (a) Every vessel shall use all available means appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions to determine if risk of collision exists. If there is any doubt such risk shall be deemed to exist.
- (b) Proper use shall be made of radar equipment if fitted and operational, including long-range scanning to obtain early warning of risk of collision and radar plotting or equivalent systematic observation of detected objects.
- (c) Assumptions shall not be made on the basis of scanty information, especially scanty radar information.
- (d) In determining if risk of collision exists the following considerations shall be among those taken into account:
- (i) such risk shall be deemed to exist if the compass bearing of an approaching vessel does not appreciably change;
 - (ii) such risk may sometimes exist even when an appreciable bearing change is evident, particularly when approaching a very large vessel or a tow or when approaching a vessel at close range.