



## Race Starting Considerations and Tips

The Russell Boating Club's starting line between the Russell wharf and yellow five-knot buoy makes for great spectator viewing of our evening and weekend races. It can also make for challenging and sometimes stressful race starts for the competitors, with race boats crisscrossing this confined area along with ferries, moored boats, kayakers, etc., and in gusty and unpredictable winds.

Here are some race starting considerations and tips to help keep things fun and safe:

1. Be alert to and respectful of other users of the water around our start line. The Club's use of this area of water for our races is a privilege and we should all try to avoid incidents that could put the Club's use in jeopardy.
2. The Club welcomes and encourages boats and crew that are new to racing or still learning. Please be accommodating to less experienced boats at race starts and on the course.
3. Motoring at the start. RBC's [Club Rules](#) specify that no competitor shall be under power within **five minutes** of the start. If you are late for a race, and motoring to get to the start line, to comply with this rule, you should no longer be motoring five minutes before the race start. Note that this is different to and overrides the [Racing Rules](#) that prohibit using your engine while *racing*, which commences after the four minute preparatory signal.
4. The yellow start buoy is generally the favoured end of the start line, and as a result, competing boats typically converge at this point. Sometimes it can be more advantageous to stay back a bit and start further away from the buoy and thus avoid the inevitable entanglements.
5. Luffing – under Rule 11, a *windward* boat shall keep clear of a *leeward* boat. Note that Rule 17, which can prohibit a *leeward* boat from sailing above her *proper course*, does not apply before the race start, because there is no *proper course* until the race starts. As a result, subject to

giving room to keep clear and other applicable rules (see more below), a *leeward* boat can freely luff up a *windward* boat while *racing*, but before the race starts. Once the race starts, the *leeward* boat must then sail her proper course if required by Rule 17.

6. Avoiding contact – Rule 14 requires boats to avoid contact if reasonably possible. This applies even if a boat has right of way.
7. *Room to keep clear*. Rule 15, Acquiring Right of Way, states that when a boat acquires right of way, she shall initially give a boat *room to keep clear*, unless she acquires right of way because of the other boat's actions. Due to crowded starting conditions, the give way boat at times will not have *room to keep clear* when right of way is established. This can happen for example when a *leeward* boat luffs a *windward* boat up, but there are one or more other boats to the windward. Each *windward* boat must luff up to make room before the *leeward* boat can safely luff up, which often can take considerable time. Another example is when a starboard tack boat approaches a group of boats starting on port tack. Often the port tack boats do not all have room to tack away and *keep clear*, and as a result, the starboard boat is forced to tack away or duck behind the fleet. Also note that when a give way boat fails to keep clear because it does not have room to *keep clear*, it is exonerated by Rule 21, and is not required to take a penalty.
8. Mark room – Note that Rule 18 pertaining to Mark Room does not apply to the start buoy at the race start. However it does apply later in the race, when this buoy is being used as a rounding or finishing buoy.
9. Barging – This is a common problem at race starts and there is no mention of barging in the Racing Rules, resulting in confusion regarding this term. Barging commonly refers to a *windward* boat sailing between a leeward right of way boat and the start buoy when it does not have right of way. In this situation, the *windward* boat should slow down and sail behind the leeward right of way boat or tack way to avoid the right of way boat and the starting buoy. Note that if the *windward* boat will clearly pass in front of the *leeward* boat without the *leeward* boat needing to take avoiding action, then the “barging” does not break a rule. This can be a risky race start strategy however. [More guidance on barging here](#).
10. *Obstructions* - Moored boats surrounding the start line are *obstructions*. Under Rule 19 a right of way boat may pass an *obstruction* on either side, however she must give an inside overlapped boat room to pass between her and the *obstruction*, unless unable to do so. This means an outside overlapped boat

cannot luff up the inside boat such that it does not have room to pass between the outside boat and the *obstruction* unless by doing so, the outside boat chooses to pass on the other side of the *obstruction*.

11. Mill Island is a continuing *obstruction* since boats are required to pass its west side under RBC [Club Rules](#). It is risky to try to sail close to and between Mill Island and the other boat if your overlap began from behind. Under Rule 19.2(c), an inside boat that became overlapped from clear astern when there is no room to pass inside a continuing *obstruction* is not entitled to room to pass between. An outside boat, however, must give an inside boat room to pass if there was room to pass when the overlap began, or if the outside boat is the overtaking boat.
12. Over the start line early? You must sail back and re-cross the start line, otherwise you will be subject to a time penalty as specified in the RBC Club Rules. When sailing to the pre-start side of the start line, you must stay clear of other boats that have properly started.
13. Monitoring channel 77 – Please monitor channel 77, particularly during race starts.

If you have questions about the Racing Rules or other aspects of our Club races, please don't hesitate to ask.

Happy Racing!

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