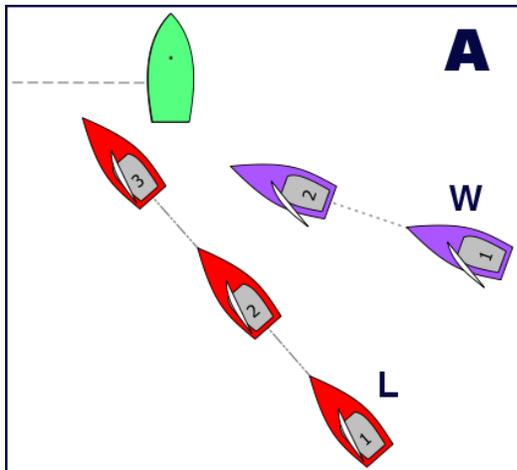


## BARGING AT THE START

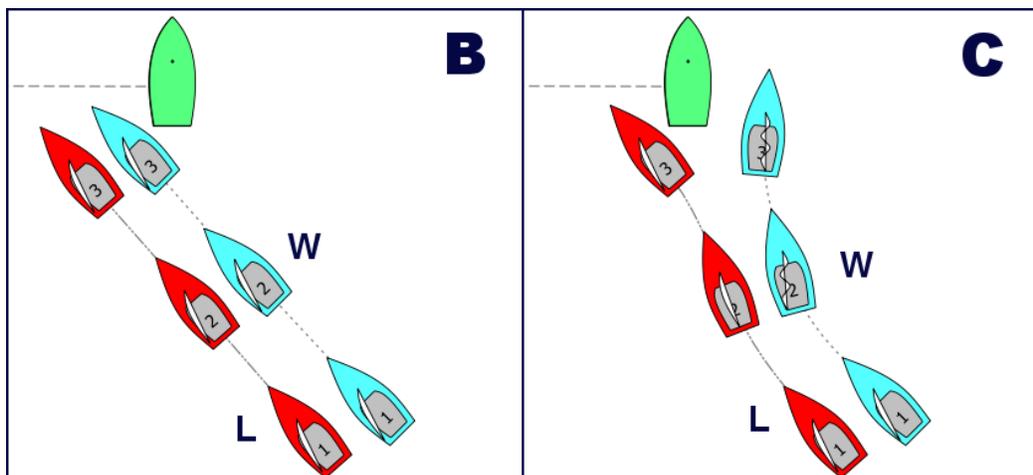
Perhaps the most frequent breach of the Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS) occurs when boats "barge" at the start. This is especially true for starts with lots of novice and less-experienced sailors. The term "barging" isn't used in the 2017-20 RRS and there is no specific "anti-barging" rule. So, the relevant rules that prohibit "barging" can sometimes be a bit confusing.

Part 2 of the RRS sets forth the right-of-way rules that apply when racing, while Section C of Part 2 provides rules that generally entitle boats to "room" or "mark-room" at obstructions (RRS 19) and marks (RRS 18). When the RC boat is one end of the starting line it is a starting mark so you might think RRS 18 would apply. However, that isn't always true. The Preamble to Section C says that "from the time boats are approaching [starting marks] to start until they they have passed them" the Section C rules don't apply. In other words, when a boat is approaching the starting line to start neither RRS 18 nor RRS 19 will apply and the boat will not be entitled to "room" or "mark-room" to sail below the RC boat.



Consider Diagram **A**. At position 1, there is less than 20 seconds to go to the starting signal. The purple boat (W) is a windward keep-clear boat aiming to go between the RC boat and the red boat (L), a leeward right-of-way boat. Because the boats are "approaching to start" RRS 18 does not apply between them. L is on a straight-line course to start just after the starting signal. L is going to have to turn down to avoid a collision with W. When L turns down then W breaks RRS 11, *On the Same Tack, Overlapped*, because L had to take "avoiding action" and therefore W did not "keep clear" of her. This is the classic "barging" situation – W is taking or attempting to take room that she is not entitled to and is "barging" between L and the RC boat; W therefore breaks RRS 11 by failing to keep clear of L.

Sometimes the RC boat end of the starting line is favored, either because it is farther upwind or because it is important to be able to tack onto port right after the start. In that case, your best strategy for a good start is to sail a close-hauled course to a point just below the stern of the RC boat, as the red boat is doing in Diagram **A**. Boats to windward of you won't be entitled to room and are "barging" but to get a good start you are going to have to hail them early or they will ruin your start if you have to turn down to avoid a collision at the last minute.



A slightly different but somewhat similar situation arises when two close-hauled boats are approaching to start just below the RC boat. Consider Diagrams **B & C**. The red boat (L) and blue boat (W) are each on a close-hauled course to start. W does not need room to sail below the RC boat if she sails a straight-line course. However, L doesn't want W on her windward side when the boats start. Since the boats are approaching the starting line to start, RRS 18 doesn't apply between them and so W is not entitled to "mark-room" to pass below the RC boat. But, if L luffs W then L must comply with RRS 16.1 and give W the "room" W needs to keep clear of L and avoid hitting the RC boat. So, if L wants to luff and force W to tack away or go head to wind then L must luff early and give W "room" (time and space) to tack away and avoid the RC boat in a seamanlike manner. An early hail by L of what she intends to do helps her to establish that W had plenty of room and space to avoid the RC boat when L does luff. Of course, if there is another close-hauled boat to leeward of L then L might be in the same situation as W vis-a-vis that other boat and needs to keep that in mind when planning her approach to start.

**Favored End** – The RC usually sets a starting line that favors the pin end to spread the boats out along the entire length of the starting line. The advantage at the pin end might be small or it could be significant but it usually exists. However, novice or inexperienced racers tend to start at the RC boat end regardless, even when the pin end is heavily favored (and, at the start, might be 2 or even more

boatlengths upwind!). In starts with lots of novice or inexperienced racers, the boats generally all want to start at the unfavored RC boat end and so with most boats trying to start in the same place "barging" is common. When the pin end is favored in a start with mostly experienced sailors, boats will recognize that the RC boat is a less-advantageous place to start so barging happens much less often.

**Approaching to Start** – The Part C rules, and RRS 18, do not apply when boats are "approaching to start" but can apply at other times during the starting sequence. For example, if two boats are aiming to sail below the RC boat with 2-3 minutes to go so they can sail farther down the starting line before starting then they are not "approaching to start." In that situation, a windward boat would be entitled to "room" from a leeward boat to sail below the RC boat as RRS 18 can apply.

**RC Boat as "Obstruction"?** – When the RC boat is one end of the starting line it is an official "obstruction" per RRS *Definition, Obstruction*, however it is also an official "mark" per RRS *Definition, Mark*. This is true all throughout the starting sequence – the RC boat is both an "obstruction" and a "mark." Per RRS 19.1(a), RRS 19, *Room To Pass an Obstruction*, does not apply between boats at a mark when RRS 18 applies. When boats are **not** "approaching to start" then RRS 18 can apply so RRS 19 will not apply. And, when boats **are** "approaching to start" the Preamble to Part C says that neither RRS 18 nor RRS 19 will apply. The bottom line is that during a boat's starting sequence RRS 19 will never apply at an RC boat that is one end of the starting line.