

**J**UST AS THERE ARE RULES THAT APPLY WHEN DRIVING A vehicle on the street, there are waterway rules that apply when you are driving a boat on the water. These rules are used internationally, and they are enforced by the United States Coast Guard and local agencies. You should be aware of these rules and follow them whenever you encounter another vessel on the water.

In various geographic locations, certain rules prevail that may be unique to the locale. Each state also has laws and boating limitations that may be applicable only within their boundaries. It is the operator's responsibility to seek out this information and become familiar with all safety-related information, laws and rules governing boating operation.

The rules presented in this Manual are condensed and have been provided for convenience only. Consult your



The vessel that does not have the right-of-way has the duty to take positive and timely action to stay out of the way of the stand-on vessel. Normally, the give-way vessel should not cross in front of the stand-on vessel. Slow down or change direction briefly and pass behind the other vessel. You should always move in such a way that the stand-on operator can see what you are doing.

## RULES OF THE OPEN WATER

local U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary (USCGA), Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) or Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for a complete set of rules governing the waters in which you will be using your boat. If you plan to travel—even for a short trip—you would be well-served to contact the regional USCGA, DMV or DNR in the area where you will be boating. Often, basic information is available through websites sponsored and prepared by these organizations and governing bodies.

### Steering and Sailing Rules/ Sound Signals

Any time two (2) vessels on the water meet one another, one vessel has the right-of-way. It is called the **stand-on vessel**. The vessel that does not have the right-of-way is called the **give-way** or **burdened vessel**.

These rules determine which vessel has the right-of-way, and accordingly, what each vessel should do.

The vessel with the right-of-way has the duty to continue its course and speed, except to avoid an immediate collision. When you maintain your direction and speed, the other vessel will be able to determine how best to avoid you.

### The General Prudential Rule

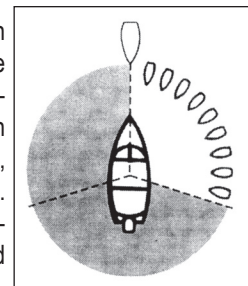
This rule is called Rule 2 in the International Rules and says, "In obeying and construing these rules due regard shall be had to all dangers of navigation and collision, and to any special circumstances, which may render a departure from the above rules necessary in order to avoid immediate danger."

### Rules When Encountering Vessels

There are three (3) main situations in which you may encounter other vessels, and you must avoid a collision. These are:

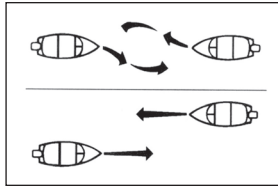
- **Meeting** (you are approaching another vessel head-on).
- **Crossing** (you are traveling across the other vessel's path).
- **Overtaking** (you are passing or being passed by another vessel).

Using the adjacent image in which you are the boat in the center, you should give right-of-way to all vessels shown in the white area. In this instance, you are the give-way vessel. Both you and the meeting vessel must alter course to avoid each other.



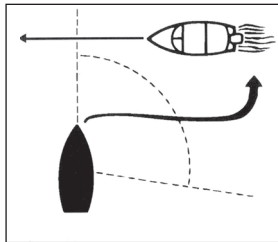
### Meeting

If you are meeting another vessel head-on, and you are close enough to run the risk of collision, neither of you has the right-of-way. Both of you should alter course to avoid an accident. You should keep the other vessel on your port (left) side. (This rule doesn't apply if both of you can clear each other by continuing your set course and speed.)



### Crossing

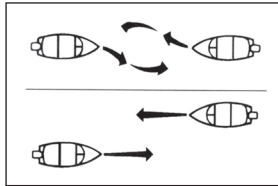
When two (2) power-driven vessels are crossing each other's path close enough to run the risk of collision, the vessel that views the crossing vessel to the starboard (right) side must give way.



If the other vessel is to the port (left) side, and provided the other vessel gives you the right-of-way, maintain your course and direction.

### Overtaking

If you are passing another vessel, you are the give-way vessel. This means that the other vessel is expected to maintain its course and speed. You must stay out of its way as you clear it, altering course and speed as necessary.



Conversely, if you are being passed by another vessel, you should maintain your speed and direction so that the vessel can be steered around you.

### Other Special Situations

There are additional rules to remember when operating your boat around other vessels, such as:

- When navigating in narrow channels, you should keep to the right when it is safe and practical to do so.
- When preparing to go around a bend that may obstruct your view of other water vessels, you should sound a prolonged blast on the horn or with a whistle for four (4) to six (6) seconds. Even if no reply

is heard, you should still proceed around the bend with caution.

### Sailing Vessel Right-of-Way

Sailing vessels should normally be given the right-of-way. The exceptions to this are:

- When the sailing vessel is overtaking the power-driven vessel, the power-driven vessel has the right-of-way.
- Sailing vessels should keep clear of any fishing vessel.
- In a narrow channel, a sailing vessel should not hamper the safe passage of a power-driven vessel that can navigate only in such a channel.



### Fishing Vessel Right-of-Way

Under international rules, all vessels that are fishing with nets, lines or trawls are considered to be fishing vessels; however, boats with trolling lines are not considered fishing vessels.

Fishing vessels have the right-of-way, regardless of position, but these vessels cannot impede the passage of other vessels in narrow channels.

### Reading Buoys and Other Markings

The waters of the United States are marked for safe navigation by the lateral system of buoyage. The markers and buoys you encounter will have an arrangement of shapes, colors, numbers and lights to show which side of the buoy a boater should pass when navigating in a particular direction.

The markings on these buoys are oriented from the perspective of being entered from a seaward direction while the boater is going toward the port. Red buoys are passed on the starboard (right) side when proceeding from open water into port, and green buoys are passed on the port (left) side. When navigating out of port, your position to the buoys should be reversed: red buoys to port (left) and green buoys to starboard (right).

Many bodies of water are entirely within the boundaries of a single state. The Uniform State Waterway Marking Systems have been devised for these waters. This system uses buoys and signs with distinctive shapes and colors to show regulatory or advisory information. These markers are white with black letters and orange borders. The information signifies speed zones, restricted areas, danger areas and general information.

***Remember: Markings may vary by geographic location. Always consult appropriate boating authorities before boating in unfamiliar waters.***

