

# THOLEPIN SAFETY NOTES

## THE RULES OF THE ROAD

Club Requirements derive from US COAST GUARD and International Maritime Organization Rules

Part 1: The rules of the road- international rules and our local waters, some of the steering and sailing rules.

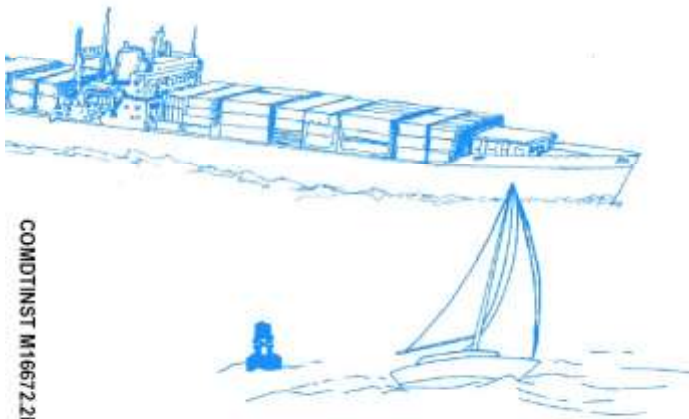
Extracts from United States Department of Homeland Security, Commandant of the Coast Guard Instruction M16672.2D, Navigation Rules International and Inland. Commonly known as “The Rules of the Road” or “COLREGS”.

NAVIGATION RULES

U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**United States  
Coast Guard**



**NAVIGATION RULES**  
INTERNATIONAL—INLAND



COMDTINST M16672.2D

The purpose of this note is to provide the reference for the rules we use on the water to prevent collisions with other vessels. As anyone who owns a boat knows, the COLREGS is the source document governing the conduct of boats and ships in preventing collisions at sea.

The Club published its compilation of the Rules of the Road in the Procedures For All Old Anacortes Rowing and Sailing Society Boats.

In this article, the COLREGS references to “parts” and “rules” are those used in the publication.

Note: The US Coast Guard is now part of the Department of Homeland Security so the cover of the current edition cites US Department of Homeland Security as the governing department of the US Coast Guard instead of the Department of Transportation as it appears in this rendering.

This note will cover the history of the COLREGS, whether OARS vessels operate under International or Inland Rules, and rules about navigating in channels among other types of vessels.

## I. History of the International and Inland Rules pulled directly from the COLREGS:

### International Rules

The International Rules in this book were formalized in the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, and became effective on July 15, 1977. The Rules (commonly called 72 COLREGS) are part of the Convention, and vessels flying the flags of states ratifying the treaty are bound to the Rules. The United States has ratified this treaty and all United States flag vessels must adhere to these Rules where applicable. President Gerald R. Ford proclaimed 72 COLREGS and the Congress adopted them as the International Navigational Rules Act of 1977.

The 72 COLREGS were developed by the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) which in May 1982 was renamed the International Maritime Organization (IMO). In November 1981, IMO's Assembly adopted 55 amendments to the 72 COLREGS which became effective on June 1, 1983. The IMO also adopted 9 more amendments which became effective on November 19, 1989. The International Rules in this book contain these amendments.

These Rules are applicable on waters outside of established navigational lines of demarcation. The lines are called COLREGS Demarcation Lines and delineate those waters upon which mariners shall comply with the Inland and International Rules.

### Inland Rules

The Inland Rules in this book replace the old Inland Rules, Western Rivers Rules, Great Lakes Rules, their respective pilot rules and interpretive rules, and parts of the Motorboat Act of 1940. Many of the old navigation rules were originally enacted in the last century. Occasionally, provisions were added to cope with the increasing complexities of water transportation. Eventually, the navigation rules for United States inland waterways became such a confusing patchwork of requirements that in the 1960's several attempts were made to revise and simplify them. These attempts were not successful.

Following the signing of the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, a new effort was made to unify and update the various inland navigation rules. This effort culminated in the enactment of the Inland Navigational Rules Act of 1980. This legislation sets out Rules 1 through 38— the main body of the Rules. The five Annexes were published as regulations. It is important to note that with the exception of Annex V to the Inland Rules, the International and Inland Rules and Annexes are very similar in both content and format.

The effective date for the Inland Navigation Rules was December 24, 1981, except for the Great Lakes where the effective date was March 1, 1983.

## II. The Rules apply everywhere either as Inland or International

### A. International and Inland waters are divided by Demarcation Lines.

These "lines" appear on nautical charts

### B. The waters we row on are all governed by the International Rules. Part IV states- § 80.1385 Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The 72 COLREGS shall apply on all waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

### § 80.1390 Haro Strait and Strait of Georgia.

The 72 COLREGS shall apply on all waters of the Haro Strait and the Strait of Georgia.

**§ 80.1395 Puget Sound and Adjacent Waters.**

The 72 COLREGS shall apply on all waters of Puget Sound and adjacent waters, including Lake Union, Lake Washington, Hood Canal, and all tributaries.

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THE WATERS WE NORMALLY PLY ARE GOVERNED BY THE INTERNATIONAL RULES OF THE ROAD. THAT MEANS WE ONLY NEED TO LEARN ONE SET OF RULES!

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**III. Do the Rules apply to rowboats?**

- A. Part A Rule 1 states that the rules apply to all vessels.
- B. Part A Rule 3 defines various “vessels”:

- (a) The word “vessel” includes every description of water craft, including non-displacement craft, 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 maneuverability, but does not include a vessel fishing with trolling lines or other fishing apparatus which do not restrict maneuverability.
- (e) The word “seaplane” includes any aircraft designed to maneuver on the water.
- (f) The term “vessel not under command” means a vessel which through some exceptional circumstance is unable to maneuver 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 maneuver” means a vessel which from the nature of her work is restricted in her ability to maneuver as required by these Rules and is therefore unable to keep out of the way of another vessel.

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A ROWBOAT IS A “VESSEL” GOVERNED BY THE RULES.

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**IV. The Rules are designed to prevent collisions by prescribing steering, lighting, and sound signals.**

- A. STEERING RULES prescribe actions of vessels in sight of one another.
  - 1. Narrow Channels like the Cap Sante Marina entrance channel have special rules: Part B Rule 9 states the following:
    - A vessel proceeding along the course of a narrow channel or fairway shall keep as near to the outer limit of the channel or fairway which lies on her starboard side as is safe and practicable.
    - A vessel shall not cross a narrow channel or fairway if such crossing impedes the passage of a vessel which can safely navigate only within such channel or fairway. The latter vessel may use the sound signal prescribed in Rule 34(d) if in doubt as to the intention of the crossing vessel (i.e. 5 short blasts).
    - A vessel shall, so far as practicable, avoid crossing traffic lanes but if obliged to do so shall cross on a heading as nearly as practicable at right angles to the general direction of traffic flow.

2. The remaining steering situations cover the actions each vessel will take on Meeting Head On, Crossing, Overtaking, and of Responsibilities between Vessels.
  - HEAD ON: vessels are to pass port side to port side. Part B Rule14
  - CROSSING: the vessel which has the other on her own starboard side shall keep out of the way of the other and shall avoid crossing ahead of the other. Part B Rule15
  - OVERTAKING: the vessel approaching from astern shall keep out of the way of the other. Part B Rule 13
  - RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN VESSELS: Part B rule 18-

This “pecking order” prescribes which type of vessel should avoid the other:

Vessels shall keep clear of the type above it in this list:

*Not Under Command*

*Restricted in Ability to Maneuver*

*Constrained by Draft*

*Fishing*

*Sailing*

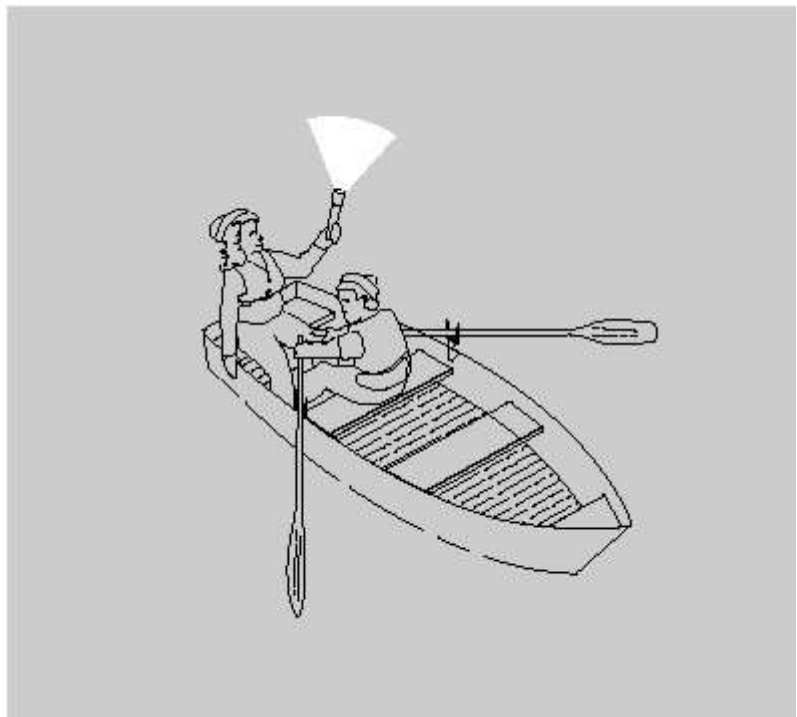
*Power Driven (rowboats fall here)*

*Seaplane*

A vessel shows its type by display of special lights or shapes in the case of the top 5 in the list.

- B. LIGHTING RULES prescribe those red, green, yellow, and white lights seen on ships and boats and the SHAPES displayed during daylight.
  1. ROWBOAT LIGHTING: Part C Rule 25

*A vessel under oars may exhibit the lights prescribed in this Rule for sailing vessels, but if she does not, she shall have ready at hand an electric torch or lighted lantern showing a white light which shall be exhibited in sufficient time to prevent collision.*



Next part: more steering rules, lights, and sound signals.