

Rule 8: Action to Avoid Collision

The Rule:

(a) Any action taken to avoid collision shall be taken in accordance with Rules 4-19 and shall if the circumstances of the case admit, be positive, made in ample time and with due regard to the observance of good seamanship.

(b) Any alteration of course and/or speed to avoid collision shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, be large enough to be readily apparent to another vessel observing visually or by radar; a succession of small alterations of course and/or speed should be avoided.

(c) If there is sufficient sea room, alteration of course alone may be the most effective action to avoid a close-quarters situation provided that it is made in good time, is substantial and does not result in another close-quarters situation.

(d) Action taken to avoid collision with another vessel shall be such as to result in passing at a safe distance. The effectiveness of the action shall be carefully checked until the other vessel is finally past and clear.

(e) If necessary to avoid collision or allow more time to assess the situation, a vessel shall slacken her speed or take all way off by stopping or reversing her means of propulsion.

(f)(i) A vessel which, by any of these Rules, is required not to impede the passage or safe passage of another vessel shall, when required by the circumstances of the case, take early action to allow sufficient sea room for the safe passage of the other vessel.

(ii) A vessel required not to impede the passage or safe passage of another vessel is not relieved of this obligation if approaching the other vessel so as to involve risk of collision and shall, when taking action, have full regard to the action which may be required by Rules 4-19.

(iii) A vessel, the passage of which is not to be impeded remains fully obliged to comply with Rules 4-19 when the two vessels are approaching one another so as to involve risk of collision.

Discussion: This Rule begins a new section in the Rules which describe actions to be taken once risk of collision (Rule 7) has been determined. Each element of this Rule is important, and students should carefully read each. The key element of this Rule is that any action taken should be large, early and clearly display your intentions to other vessels. For example, part (c) of the Rule states that course changes may be sufficient to avoid collision. If doing so, mariners should make large course changes – large enough that to another vessel, your intentions are clear. While a certain degree cannot be stated, course changes of 30° are readily apparent to nearby vessels.

While a speed change, or a succession of small course changes could accomplish the same effect, to nearby vessels these changes are less obvious. Good seamanship dictates that if you are to avoid another vessel, you should make your action early and obvious to others, to help remove doubt and ambiguity in the situation.

Test Strategy: There are about 10 questions related to this Rule in the database. However, this is a fundamental Rule that mariners should understand and impacts many other Rules.

Sample Questions:

BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND INLAND. What is a requirement for any action taken to avoid collision?

- A. The action taken must include change the speed of the vessel
- B. The action must be positive and made in ample time
- C. When in sight of another vessel, any action taken must be accompanied by sound signals
- D. All of the above.

BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND INLAND. When action taken to avoid a close quarters situation is taken, a course change alone may be the most effective action provided that _____.

- A. It is a large course change
- B. The course change is to starboard
- C. It is done in a succession of small course changes
- D. It is not done too early

BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND INLAND. When in sight of another vessel and there is sufficient sea room, any action taken to avoid collision must _____.

- A. Not result in another close quarters situation
- B. Be accompanied by sound signals
- C. Include a speed change
- D. All of the above

BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND INLAND. When you take action to avoid collision, you should _____.

- A. Not make any large speed changes
- B. Not make any large course changes
- C. Make sure the action is taken in enough time
- D. All of the above