

COLREGs Rule 14

Head-on Situation



- (a) When two power-driven vessels are meeting on reciprocal or nearly reciprocal courses so as to involve risk of collision each shall alter her course to starboard so that each shall pass on the port side of the other.
- (b) Such a situation shall be deemed to exist when a vessel sees the other ahead or nearly ahead and by night she would see the mast head lights of the other in a line or nearly in a line and or both sidelights and by day she observes the corresponding aspect of the other vessel.
- (c) When a vessel is in any doubt as to whether such a situation exists she shall assume that it does exist and act accordingly.

Ship Ahead

If there is a ship ahead you should **alter course to starboard**.

The ship does **not need to be exactly right ahead** – Rule 14 applies to any vessel coming towards you on a roughly opposite course and roughly within half a point (6 or 7 degrees) on either side of your bow.

At night, if you can see the other ship's masthead lights and/or both its sidelights, then Rule 14 applies. If you are not sure, then Rule 14 still applies.

To understand Rule 14, you must also understand Rule 8 on action to avoid a collision and Rule 16 on action by the give-way vessel.

- Rule 8(a) says, 'Any action to avoid collision shall be taken in accordance with the Rules of this Part' ('this Part' being the steering and sailing rules). This means that if you have a vessel fine to starboard, even some distance away, altering to port to increase the 'green to green' clearance may not be in accordance with the COLREGs.
- If there is any **risk of collision** then you should always go to starboard, as Rule 14 says.
- Rule 16 says that if you are to keep out of the way, you must take early and substantial action. This means you should alter your course good and early.
- Do not wait for the other vessel to act. The closer you get, the bigger the alteration you will have to make.

Summary

Always alter course to starboard when you see a ship approaching you from ahead.

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