

COLREGs Rule 17

Action by Stand-on Vessel



- (a) (i) Where one of two vessels is to keep out of the way the other shall keep her course and speed.
- (ii) The latter vessel may however take action to avoid collision by her manoeuvre alone, as soon as it becomes apparent to her that the vessel required to keep out of the way is not taking appropriate action in compliance with these Rules.
- (b) When, from any cause, the vessel required to keep her course and speed finds herself so close that collision cannot be avoided by the action of the give-way vessel alone, she shall take such action as will best aid to avoid collision.
- (c) A power-driven vessel which takes action in a crossing situation in accordance with subparagraph (a)(ii) of this Rule to avoid collision with another power-driven vessel shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, not alter course to port for a vessel on her own port side.
- (d) This Rule does not relieve the give-way vessel of her obligation to keep out of the way.

Is It Giving Way?

Rule 17 is one of the harder rules to understand and to follow. If you are the 'stand-on vessel' then you cannot relax.

Rule 17 has **three** stages and you **must** identify and assess each of them:

- Rule 17(a)(i): when you are the 'stand-on vessel', you must keep your course and speed. You must not do anything unexpected.
- Rule 17(a)(ii): 'as soon as it becomes apparent' that the give-way vessel is not taking appropriate action, then you **may** take your own action to avoid a collision.
- Rule 17(b): when a collision cannot be avoided by the give-way vessel alone, then you **must** take the best action you can to avoid colliding. Your action under Rule 17(b) must still be in time to avoid a collision so you must not leave it too late.

But do not go to port in a crossing situation – if the other ship goes to starboard, as it should, then both ships will turn towards each other.

Do not forget the 'wake up' signal under Rule 34(d) on manoeuvring and warning signals. Blow your horn and flash your lights at the other vessel but think twice before calling it on VHF, because that always takes valuable time during which the **risk of collision** will increase.

Summary

When approaching a give-way ship, maintain course and speed but always be prepared to take action to avoid a collision.

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