

Rules of the Road

Knowledge of the Rules of the Road is critical to the safe operation of vessels especially in tight quarters.

Three basic scenarios come into play with respect to all recreational vessels and Rules of the Road. They are:

1. What vessels have the right of way on the water:
 - a. Vessels under paddle (e.g. Canoe, Kayak, SUP) have the right of way under most circumstances, but should be aware that other vessels might not know this.
 - b. Vessels under sail must give way to paddle crafts since they are considered less manoeuvrable.
 - c. Vessels under power must give way to vessels that are less manoeuvrable such as sailboats and paddle crafts.
 2. On larger waterways where there is commercial activity, like ferries or commercial fishing boats, all recreational vessels need to give these the right of way.
 3. When a power boat encounters another powerboat.
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These rules are best understood in terms of one power boat having the right of way and the other having the responsibility to give way. The terms often used are those of the “Stand-On Vessel” and the “Give-Way Vessel” respectively.

The Stand-On vessel has the responsibility to maintain course and speed such that the Give-Way can determine the best action to stay clear. The Give-Way vessel has the responsibility to take EARLY and SUBSTANTIAL action to avoid the Stand-On vessel. Appropriate actions to give way include stopping, slowing down or altering course to go behind the vessel with the right of way.

When your powerboat encounters another powerboat, this diagram will help explain whether your boat will be the **Stand-On** vessel or the **Giveway** vessel. This decision is made by what side of your boat the other powerboat is on (e.g. Left/Port or Right/Starboard).

