A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO
THE RULES OF THE ROAD
For OOW, Chief Mate and Master Students

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Preface

The purpose of this book is to provide a form of self teaching of rules of the road and self examination on the navigation lights and related situations that could be seen at sea or asked at the oral examinations for the certificate of competency.

This book is divided into two main sections. The first section contains simple explanations of the rules, while the second section covers more than fifty situations, exam questions and model answers. The rules, explanations and model answers are the views of the author and not necessarily the view of courts and regulators.

Interactive navigation light identification software is available after the explanation of the rules. This contains enough navigation light examples required for the certificate of competency examinations. All questions are asked randomly. You will need to identify the light and then check the answer at each page. You need to master these simple tests before you go for your oral examination.
About The Author

Farhan Saeed joined merchant navy in 1988 and was engaged in worldwide trading as deck officer on General Cargo ships, Container vessels and Passenger vessels with Pakistan National Shipping Corporation.

His marine studies, leading to Master Mariner qualification, have been undertaken in Pakistan Marine Academy, Australian Maritime College and Fleetwood Nautical Campus in the UK. He obtained an MSc, Information Systems, in 2001 from University of Sunderland, UK.

He obtained membership of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers in 2005. He was a prize winner in the subject of ‘Port Agency’ in the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers examinations.

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International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea 1972 (including amendments up to 2001) divided into five main parts and four auxiliary annexes. This is as follows:

PART A  GENERAL
PART B  STEERING AND SAILING RULES
        Section I - Conduct of vessels in any conditions of visibility
        Section II - Conduct of vessels in sight of one another
        Section III - Conduct of vessels in restricted visibility
PART C  LIGHTS AND SHAPES
PART D  SOUND AND LIGHT SIGNALS
PART E  EXEMPTIONS
ANNEX I  POSITIONING AND TECHNICAL DETAILS OF LIGHTS AND SHAPES
ANNEX II  ADDITIONAL SIGNALS FOR FISHING VESSELS FISHING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY
ANNEX III  TECHNICAL DETAILS OF SOUND SIGNAL APPLIANCES
ANNEX IV  DISTRESS SIGNALS

The regulations consist of 38 rules in all.

Part A covers general rules (1-3) covering application of the rules, responsibilities and definitions.

Part B contains the steering and sailing rules (4-19), subdivided into three sections according to the degree of visibility. It is very important to have a thorough understanding of this part. The rules of this part set out the actions of every mariner in all conditions of visibility. Rules of section I (4-10) of part B apply in any condition of visibility. Rules of section II (11-18) are applicable to vessels in sight of one another. Third section consists of rule 19 which is applicable in restricted visibility only.
PART B - STEERING AND SAILING RULES
Section I - Conduct of vessels in any condition of visibility

Rule 4
Application

Rules in this Section apply in any condition of visibility.

Rule 5
Lookout

Every vessel shall at all times maintain a proper look-out by sight and hearing as well as by all available means appropriate in the prevailing circumstances and conditions so as to make a full appraisal of the situation and of the risk of collision.

It is absolutely essential to maintain an all round lookout, at all times, by sight and hearing and by all available means including radar and AIS in all kinds of visibility. Extra lookouts should be posted in restricted visibility. The early detection of a target will help to make an early judgement of the situation, and of the risk of collision.

Rule 6
Safe speed

Every vessel shall at all times proceed at a safe speed so that she can take proper and effective action to avoid collision and be stopped within a distance appropriate to the prevailing circumstances and conditions.

This rule directs every vessel to proceed at a safe speed. It is hard to say what a safe speed is in terms of a number of knots. However, the rule suggests that a vessel shall proceed at such a speed that she can take effective action to avoid collision and, that the vessel can be stopped within appropriate distance. Every vessel must make her own judgement of what a safe speed is, by considering the factors given below.

In determining a safe speed the following factors shall be among those taken into account:
Rule 26

Fishing Vessels

(a) A vessel engaged in fishing, whether underway or at anchor, shall exhibit only the lights and shapes prescribed in this Rule.

(b) A vessel when engaged in trawling, by which is meant the dragging through the water of a dredge net or other apparatus used as a fishing appliance, shall exhibit:

(i) two all-round lights in a vertical line, the upper being green and the lower white, or a shape consisting of two cones with their apexes together in a vertical line one above the other;

(ii) a masthead light abaft of and higher than the all-round green light; a vessel of less than 50 metres in length shall not be obliged to exhibit such a light but may do so;

(iii) when making way through the water, in addition to the lights prescribed in this paragraph, sidelights and a stern light.

(c) A vessel engaged in fishing, other than trawling, shall exhibit:

(i) two all-round lights in a vertical line, the upper being red and the lower white, or a shape consisting of two cones with apexes together in a vertical line one above the other;

(ii) when there is outlying gear extending more than 150 metres horizontally from the vessel, an all round white light or a cone apex upwards in the direction of the gear;

(iii) when making way through the water, in addition to the lights prescribed in this paragraph, sidelights and a sternlight.

(d) The additional signals described in Annex II to these Regulations apply to a vessel engaged in fishing in close proximity to other vessels engaged in fishing.

(e) A vessel when not engaged in fishing shall not exhibit the lights or shapes prescribed in this Rule, but only those prescribed for a vessel of her length.
Vessel engaged in trawling, probably 50m or more in length, making way through the water

Vessel engaged in trawling, less than 50m in length, making way through the water
Situation - 01

Q. You are the OOW of a power-driven vessel and you see these lights. What do the lights indicate to you?
A. A power-driven vessel probably 50m or more in length, port side on, underway.

Q. You see this vessel four points on the starboard bow. What action would you take?
A. I will take a series of compass bearing of an approaching vessel and, if the compass bearing did not change appreciably, then the risk of collision exits.

Q. The bearing is constant and range decreasing. What action would you take now?
A. As per rule 15, my vessel is the give-way vessel and the other is to stand-on. I will sound one short blast and make a broad alteration of the course to starboard and pass well clear of the other vessel.
Situation - 02

Q. You are the OOW of a power-driven vessel. You see these lights. What do the lights indicate to you?
A. A power driven vessel less than 50m in length, underway, end on.

Q. You see this vessel right ahead. What action would you take?
A. As per rule 14, my vessel is the give-way vessel and the other is also give-way vessel. I will sound one short blast and then make a broad alteration of the course to starboard and pass well clear of the other vessel.
TSS AND NARROW CHANNEL SITUATIONS
Situation - 01

Q. You are the OOW of a power-driven vessel. You are in a Traffic Separation Scheme and proceeding in an appropriate traffic lane in the general direction of traffic flow for that lane. You see these lights. What do the lights indicate to you?
A. A power driven vessel probably 50m or more in length, port side on, underway.

Q. You see this vessel four points on the starboard bow. What action would you take?
A. I will take a series of compass bearing of an approaching vessel and, if the compass bearing did not change appreciably, then the risk of collision exits.

Q. The bearing is constant and range decreasing. What action would you take now?
A. As per rule 15, my vessel is the give-way vessel and the other is to stand-on. In this situation I will make sure there is enough room behind my ship and reduce speed to let other vessel pass ahead of me.

Q. There is a vessel right behind you. You cannot reduce your speed.
A. In that case I will sound one short blast and make a broad alteration of the course to starboard to pass well clear of the other vessel and, if necessary, go to inshore traffic zone to avoid collision.

Q. But you are in a Traffic Separation Scheme. Can you go into an inshore traffic zone?
A. Rule 10 does not relieve any vessel of her obligation under any other rule. So as to avoid collision with a vessel on my starboard side, I shall alter course to starboard and go into the inshore traffic zone.
RESTRICTED VISIBILITY SITUATIONS
Q. You are the OOW of a power-driven vessel. The vessel is proceeding in restricted visibility. You observe one radar target at four points on the starboard bow. What action would you take?
A. I will start systematic plot to ascertain if risk of collision exists.

Q. How many observations will you take?
A. I will take at least three equal time-interval observations.

Q. After three observations the plot shows bearings constant and range decreasing. What action would you take now?
A. As per rule 19 a vessel shall avoid altering course to port for a vessel forward of the beam. In this case I will make a broad alteration of course to starboard and start a new plot.

Q. Would you sound any manoeuvring signal while altering?
A. No. The vessel will only sound restricted visibility signals. I am already sounding one prolonged blast at intervals of not more than two minutes.