

Swale Regatta 2026 - Sailing Instructions

Racing during the Swale Regatta will be governed by the Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS) together with the RYA prescriptions, the Peel Ports and PLA Regulations, the Notice of Race and these Sailing Instructions.

It is expected that the nature of this event will attract many participants who will be unfamiliar with the fine details of some of these rules so the overriding consideration will be to sail safely, fairly and with all due consideration for other competitors. A simple guide to some of the RRS rules most likely to be encountered is attached at appendix A but this guide does not replace or override the wording contained within the RRS. Additional information with regard to local bylaws and regulation is contained within these Sailing Instructions.

All communication with the race officer or the committee will be on VHF channel 37 (M or M1 on some sets) unless directed otherwise.

Any changes to these sailing instructions will be broadcast by the race officer on channel 37 either during the race briefing, or in any event before the start of each race.

Briefing: There will be a race briefing 30 minutes prior to the designated start time on VHF channel 37. The Race officer will announce the course, the method of start and any other necessary administration/instruction (expected shipping movements, request to take times at key marks and such like).

Schedule of Races.

The first race on Friday the 3rd July will start not before 16:30hrs in the vicinity of Harty/Faversham on the Swale and finish in a similar location. The exact location of the finish will depend on prevailing weather conditions.

Racing on Saturday the 4th July will start on the Swale in the vicinity of where racing concluded Friday. The start will not be before 08:00hrs. There may be more than one race on the Saturday depending on prevailing conditions but the final race will finish in the vicinity of Sheerness/Queenborough.

Racing on Sunday the 5th July will start not before 08:00hrs and finish before 14:00hrs. The start and finish will be in the vicinity of Sheerness/Queenborough.

Pennants: All boats – Yellow “Q” flag (or similar) flown from the backstay or appropriate alternative location. A yacht displaying an ensign will be considered not to be racing.

Courses: Courses will be set each day by the race officer depending on the prevailing conditions. Courses may be shortened during a race at the discretion of the race officer. If this is done full details of the revised course will be broadcast on channel 37. This changes RRS rule 32.

Starting will either be across a line between a mark and the committee boat, across a transit line from a mark, or by means of a gate start. An explanation of each method is attached at appendix B.

The race officer will give an audible warning along with an announcement on VHF channel 37 ten minutes before the start of a race. A similar preparatory signal and announcement will be made five minutes before the start, and at the start itself. There will be no visible signals. This changes RRS rule 26.

Recalls: There will be no recalls from a start. Boats deemed to have been over the line prior to the start signal will be notified by the race officer if practicable and expected to take an appropriate penalty. This may be a 360 degree penalty turn, a requirement to drop behind another vessel, or an appropriate time penalty awarded by the committee. This changes RRS rule 29.

Finishing: The finishing line will be as detailed in the pre race briefing. A boat is requested to record her finishing time and her position in relation to other competitors when crossing the line. If the race committee is absent when a boat finishes, she should report her finishing time, and her position in relation to nearby boats, to the race committee at the first reasonable opportunity.

Scoring: Points will be awarded in the order a boat finished on corrected time, with one point for 1st, two for 2nd and so on. A boat that failed to start, or fails to finish, will score the number that finish plus 1. If more than three races are completed then a yacht's worst score will be discarded. The overall Regatta winner will be the boat with the lowest accumulated score. This changes RRS rule 17.

Protests/Penalties: The overriding principal behind the regatta is to promote fair sailing that is both safe and fun. If a boat considers they may have improperly gained some minor advantage they are encouraged to execute a 360 degree penalty turn when safe to do so. Any protest should be reported to the Regatta committee at the earliest opportunity. The committee reserve the right to award an appropriate time penalty and/or disqualify any boat considered to have been sailed outside of this principal. This changes RRS rule 16.

Use of engine: It is permitted for boats to use their engines up until the preparatory signal (five minutes before the start). Engines may also be used to avoid commercial shipping, prevent collisions in drifting conditions and to re-float if aground, or for rescue in man overboard situations. The boat should not gain any race advantage from this action. Any use of an engine after the preparatory signal should be reported to the race officer at the first opportunity.

Spinnakers and cruising chutes must not be flown prior to a competing yacht crossing and going clear of the start line and other yachts.

Lifting Keels: It is permitted to adjust keels, centreboards and dagger boards whilst racing.

Autopilots: These may be used at any time.

Use of VHF Radio: Boats shall have a VHF radio, all communications to or from the Race Officer will be on Ch 37 and a listening watch must be maintained on this channel. In the case of an emergency Ch 16 should be used to contact the Coastguard. Medway VTS are on Ch 74, PLA Ch 69.

Fixed marks and Standing Instructions: At the Montgomery wreck, all warning buoys shall also be rounded as this is an exclusion zone. There is an exclusion zone of 150 metres (250 metres when gas ship present) around the gas terminals on the North side of the Medway opposite Stangate Creek entrance.

Racing Marks: Marks are charted navigational buoys, beacons and other fixed objects.

Commercial vessels: Every attempt will be made by the race officer to warn of scheduled commercial vessel movements. Small boats are required not to obstruct any commercial vessel restrained by draught to a fairway. Any boat crossing the exclusion zone ahead of such a vessel will be disqualified. The exclusion zone is two hull lengths of the commercial vessel involved.

Time limits: A race shall not continue after sunset. Any boat that has not finished a race by sunset will be scored DNF (Did not finish).

Retirement: A boat that retires must notify the Race Officer.

Swale Regatta Entry Declaration Form 2026

Owners Name:

Boat Name:

Boat Class/Model:

Sail No:

Mobile No:

Email:

Emergency Contact Name:

Emergency Contact Phone No:

RISK STATEMENT

Sailing, by its nature involves an element of risk. By taking part in the regatta each skipper agrees and acknowledges that:

- (a) They are aware of the inherent element of risk involved in the sport and accept responsibility for the exposure of themselves, their crew and their boat to such inherent risk whilst taking part in the event;
- (b) They are responsible for the safety of themselves, their crew, their boat and their other property whether afloat or ashore;
- (c) They accept responsibility for any injury, damage or loss to the extent caused by their own actions or omissions;
- (d) Their boat is in good order, equipped to sail in the event and they are fit to participate;
- (e) The provision of a race officers and other officials and volunteers by the club does not relieve them of their own responsibilities;
- (f) Their boat is adequately insured, with cover of at least £1 000 000 against third party claims;

They agree to be bound by the Racing Rules of Sailing and all other rules that govern our races and events. They confirm that I have read the Regatta Sailing Instructions/Notice of Race and agree that their boat will conform to the requirements set out therein.

Appendix A

RIGHT OF WAY

A boat has right of way over another boat when the other boat is required to keep clear of her. However, there are some rules that limit the actions of a right-of-way boat. Basically if you have right of way and change course the other boat has to have opportunity to keep clear.

KEEP CLEAR

A boat keeps clear of a right-of-way boat

(a) if the right-of-way boat can sail her course with no need to take avoiding action and,

(b) when the boats are overlapped, if the right-of-way boat can also change course in both directions without immediately making contact.

ON OPPOSITE TACKS

When boats are on opposite tacks, a port-tack boat shall keep clear of a starboard-tack boat. If your mainsail boom is on the starboard (right) side of your boat the wind is on your port (left) side so you are on port tack. You need to keep clear.

ON THE SAME TACK, OVERLAPPED

When boats are on the same tack and overlapped, a windward boat shall keep clear of a leeward boat. This is self explanatory, it doesn't matter if you are both on port or starboard tack, if your booms are on the same side the boat to windward must keep clear (but see below).

Remember if you are running with the wind dead astern the windward side is the opposite to your main sail boom.

ON THE SAME TACK, NOT OVERLAPPED

When boats are on the same tack and not overlapped, a boat clear astern shall keep clear of a boat clear ahead. What this basically means is when you are overtaking another boat you must keep clear of her.

You're not allowed to sneak up under their lee side and then use the rule above (Overlapped) to push them out of the way!

WHILE TACKING

After a boat passes head to wind, she shall keep clear of other boats until she is on a close-hauled course. So no tacking straight in front of someone else please!

AVOIDING CONTACT

A boat shall avoid contact with another boat if reasonably possible. So even if you have right of way you are required to take action to avoid any collision.

MARK-ROOM

This is the term used in the rules designed to try and stop us running into each other at turning marks (but not the starting marks). They are quite complicated but in essence they apply between boats when they are required to go round a mark and they are overlapped and on the same tack as they get close to it. "Get close to it" is defined in the rules as within three boat lengths of the mark but lets not make things too complicated, if you are overlapped approaching the mark then please think about this rule....

Basically the boat on the outside of the turn has to leave enough room for the boat on the inside to clear the mark and make her turn, so you're not allowed to squeeze them into it! If you are the boat on the inside you do need to sail your proper course and turn around the mark promptly. Remember if you are in a bunch of boats that are all overlapped with each other you need to talk to each other as you approach the mark to make sure everyone has a plan....

STARTING.

Starts are always good fun but they can be particularly stressful with lots of boats all wanting to be in the same place at the same time.

Remember.... the marks at the start of a race are NOT included in the Mark-Room rule. At the start the port/starboard and windward/leeward rules all apply so if you are reaching down to the line make sure you're not going to get squeezed out by a close hauled boat to leeward of you.

If in doubt keep clear of the other boat, go the wrong side of the mark and then turn round to have another go at passing on the correct side. Please remember this is a fun event and ultimately we all want to be just exchanging drinks in the bar afterwards, not insurance details!

GIVING ROOM AT AN OBSTRUCTION

Because we are racing on rivers with shallow water all around this is something we need to understand. It is all pretty obvious so it's fairly easy. Basically you're not allowed to run someone aground or into anything at the side of the river!

When boats are overlapped, the outside boat shall give the inside boat room between her and the obstruction.

While boats are passing a continuing obstruction (for example shallow water) if a boat that was clear astern and required to keep clear becomes overlapped between the other boat and the obstruction (ie: they are overtaking), and at the moment the overlap begins there is not room for her to pass between them, the overtaking boat is not entitled to room. While the boats remain overlapped, the overtaking boat shall keep clear. What this means is if you are trying to overtake someone don't go between them and the shallow water and then expect them to give you room.....

ROOM TO TACK AT AN OBSTRUCTION

If you are approaching the side of the river (or another obstruction) and you need to tack to avoid it then you can ask another boat to give you room if they are in your way. If you are asked to give this room you can either tack straight away or tell the other boat to tack and you will avoid them. You can't ignore them and run them aground!

If there is another boat in your way that would prevent you from tacking away then you can ask them to give you room, and they must either tack or give you that room.

The advice here is that if you find yourself in a line of boats approaching an obstruction start talking to each other early so that nothing comes as a surprise!

Appendix B

Start procedures.

Mark/Buoy - Committee boat. This is the easiest to understand and work out. It's an imaginary line on the water between a buoy or mark (called the Pin end) and the committee boat. To start you must pass over this line in the correct direction **AFTER** the start signal.

Mark/Buoy - Transit. This is another imaginary line on the water with a mark or buoy at one end. There is no clearly defined "other" end of the line as it extends away from the mark or buoy either over the horizon or onto land..... You know when you are on the line when the mark or buoy is in transit (lined up with) a mark or object beyond it. This may be another buoy or a feature on land. To start you must pass through this transit in the correct direction **AFTER** the start signal has been given.

Gate Start. This is a method of starting that sounds complicated, but in practice is very easy. It is particularly useful if restarting a race in an impromptu location as it can be done without any fixed marks or outside references. It is best done to windward as this presents the most even start opportunity for all competitors but it can be done effectively on a run if necessary. It is particularly good on a river as the natural boundaries give clear start and finish points for the line and it also reduces the impact of any tide.

Start to Windward.

The procedure is for the race officer (or designated start boat) to place themselves on the port/left side of the proposed start line area and to give the fleet their start warning. The start sequence then proceeds in the prescribed manner and at the start signal the start boat will begin sailing close hauled on port tack across the start line area. The fleet

should anticipate this and position themselves in such a manner that after the start signal they can sail on starboard tack and pass BEHIND the start boat. Once they have passed astern of the start boat they have crossed the line and are free to tack and sail at will. The start boat will continue to sail on port tack until she reaches the end of the start line. This could either be a fixed point (for example the other side of the river) or after a predetermined period of time, (one or two minutes depending on the room available and the size of the fleet). By this time all competitors should have passed astern of her and be racing. The speed of the start boat across the start area should be as close as possible to an average speed of the fleet to windward. This encourages the faster boats to cross her stern early, and the slower boats later.

Start to leeward (Down wind).

This is done in the same manner as the windward start except it will be from right to left, so the race officer/start boat remains on port tack. The start boat must be sailed (or motored) at such an angle and speed as to give late starters as equal an opportunity as possible as early starters so to this end it helps if they are a fast boat.

The start boat may well trail a buoy or fender a short distance behind them. This is to be considered an extension of the start boat and it is designed to discourage keen competitors from inadvertently removing the starter boats rudder.....

Points to note. Please do not get in front of or otherwise obstruct the start boat. If you are planning on reaching across towards the line take care of any boats to leeward of you sailing a higher course as they may force you up into the path of the start boat, and that's a head on situation.....