

Guidance Notes for CCRC Race Officers

The list of Race Officers is circulated to members before the season starts and is available on the club website. The club depends upon the Race Officer (RO) to run the racing for his or her allocated day and it is therefore the personal responsibility of the person named on the RO list to either attend that duty or make positive alternative arrangements for a replacement RO.

These notes do not form part of the instructions to competitors. If they differ from the RRS, CCRC SIs or RIs, then the latter are deemed to be correct. Read these notes carefully before your RO duty. References to VHF mean VHF Ch M (37), used on low power. ROs should avoid over-speaking other race committees also broadcasting on that channel.

Objectives

- To provide a fair and enjoyable race for all competitors.
- To ensure that all competitors can be off the water in time for the next event.

The Protagonists

1. The Competitors. CCRC members and guest boats who are competing in the day's race.
2. The Race Officer (RO). Responsible for conducting the race from immediately before the Warning Signal until the last competitor has finished. The name and boat of the intended RO is stated in the Race Instructions (RI) for the day's racing but may be substituted at short notice.
3. The Principal Race Officer (PRO). In overall charge of the day's racing including setting and announcing the course. The name and boat of the intended PRO is stated in the Race Instructions (RI) for the day's racing but may be substituted at short notice.
4. The Results Officer (ResO). Responsible for calculating and publishing race results. The name and contact details of the ResO are stated in the Race Instructions (RI).
5. The Sailing Secretary (SS). Responsible for all aspects of racing within CCRC including, producing the schedule of races, allocating ROs and publishing the Sailing Instructions (SI) and Race Instructions (RI).
6. Supporting cast. Commodore, Vice-Commodore, Flag Officers.

Very Important

Read these documents carefully

- The Racing Rules of Sailing (RRS).
- The CCRC Sailing Instructions.
- The Race Instructions for your race.

Preparation

Equipment you need

1. A Committee Boat suitable for the conditions with adequate ground tackle and a mast. It is not necessarily your racing boat but if you are using a different one let the SS know so that it can be identified correctly in the RI.
2. Competent assistants – the more the merrier. ROs have been single-handed but this is not recommended. Two experienced people can manage but three or more is much better.
3. The Committee Boat Kit – see Appendix A. Arrange to collect this from the previous RO.
4. At least two digital watches set precisely to BST. Use GPS time or the speaking clock.
5. Other equipment normally found on a yacht such as hand-held VHF, hand-bearing compass, binoculars, writing materials.

Contact your PRO

Talk to your PRO about seven days before the race. Things you need to discuss include:

- Communications – exchange mobile numbers.
- Getting and handing on the Committee Boat Kit.
- The weather.
- Anything else on which you need advice such as setting start and finish lines and getting to the finish.

Before departure

1. Set up the flag signal yard – see Appendix B. Allow sufficient time to do this. It is infinitely easier on your mooring than when at anchor.
2. Check the weather. Get the latest report from the Solent Coastguard or use one of the websites listed on the CCRC website. Do not only rely upon the main sea area forecast. Wight is a large area and the Solent can be quite different, better or worse! Check what ChiMet and BrambleMet are reading.
3. Check the tides.
4. Check your watches.
5. Have you got everything – flags, paperwork, fuel, crew?
6. VHF on Ch M(37) at low power?
7. Phone charged and on?
8. Set off in plenty of time to get to the start area.. Aim to arrive at least 60 minutes before the first warning signal: time flies while getting ready. Make allowances for weather conditions, particularly if the tide is against you and it's a long way from your berth or mooring. If it is likely to be rough you will need more time and care in setting the line and anchoring your yacht

On the way to the start

The PRO may make an announcement to all competitors not more than 60 minutes before the scheduled start time. Listen out for it on VHF. This announcement may identify the start mark.

The PRO will usually contact you by phone around this time to talk over his plans. If you have any issues to raise, now is the time.

The Start Line

The Start Line is between the start mark and the main mast of the Committee Boat is the other end. The direction of start is towards the first mark of the course

The start mark is a buoy as specified in the RI or announced by the PRO. The PRO will probably have confirmed the mark he intends to use by phone.

Anchor the Committee Boat in a position that will provide a line of the right length and direction taking into account the number and size of competitors' boats, the direction of the first mark, tide and wind direction.

Anchor so that the start mark is left to port and the Committee Boat is at the starboard end of the line.

Start Line Length.

The line should be at least one and half boat lengths x the number of boats participating. 10m is a good average length for CCRC boats so it is likely that the line needs to be between 150m (10 boats) and 300m (20 boats) long.

Start Line Direction.

Whenever possible the PRO will set a course with a windward start so that boats cross the start line close-hauled. **For a windward start set the start line at 90° (right angles) to the WIND DIRECTION.** Example: the wind is from 270°; the bearing of the start mark from the Committee Boat should be 180°. Experienced ROs may change the angle slightly to allow for tidal flow or to keep competitors way from the Committee Boat. Do the best you can and keep in mind that anyway the wind may shift between the time you set the line and start time.

If a windward start is not possible set the start line at 90° (right angles) to the direction of the first mark of the course.

Example: the first mark bears 180° from the Committee Boat; the bearing of the start mark from the Committee Boat should be 90°

At the start line

1. Set the start line by anchoring as described above.
2. Once you have anchored **hoist the orange flag** to the **top of your main mast** to indicate to competitors that you are a Committee Boat on station at a start line and that your mainmast is an end of the start line. Tie the **CCRC burgee** on your **backstay** as this identifies you as the **CCRC Committee Boat**. Don't forget the anchor ball.
3. If you have not already done so, allocate jobs to your crew. This is a busy time and it is crucial that everyone knows their role. Tasks include
 - Recording the boat names and sail numbers of competitors
List the sail number, name and class for each yacht participating on one of the CCRC Recording Sheets in the Committee Boat kit. If a boat comes out without a sail number (unlikely) record the name of the boat. It is essential to do a count of all yachts to check against your written list.
Guest yachts, that is yachts not registered as CCRC members, may be competing. They must be identified and recorded in the same way as registered yachts provided they are flying the correct class flag and displaying a sail number.
 - Timing and calling out minutes and seconds before the next signal.
 - Hoisting flag signals.
 - Making sound signals.
 - Watching the line for infringements such as OCS. (*on course side*)
 - VHF communication.

Do not fail to record a yacht simply because it is unfamiliar

Course announcement

Having decided on the course to be sailed the **PRO announces** it to competitors at **20 minutes** before the **warning signal** on VHF Ch M(37). **Write it down** if you have not already done so.

After this announcement the PRO invites the **RO to read the course** back to him. **Do so slowly**, at dictation speed.

The **PRO will repeat** the course announcement at **10 minutes** before the **warning signal**. The **RO is not expected to read it back**.

From this point the RO is in charge of the race.

The start sequence

CCRC races with Committee Boat starts are started in accordance with RRS 26 (5-4-1-go). The SIs allow for separate starts for each class but normally both fleets start together so there is one warning signal 5 minutes before the scheduled start time as published in the RI.

Make sure you are familiar with RRS 26 then **follow it to the letter**. The sequence is -

| <i>minutes before starting signal</i> | <i>visual signal</i> | <i>sound signal</i> | <i>means</i> |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 5 | class flags | one | warning signal |
| 4 | P | one | preparatory signal |
| 1 | P removed | one long | one minute |
| 0 | class flags removed | one | starting signal |

All signals must be made at precisely the correct time. Note that times are taken from point when visual signals are hoisted. Sound signals draw attention to visual signals and are advisable but not mandatory.

Be prepared for Individual and General Recalls.

Record the exact **time of day** of the start, according to your watch, on the Recording Sheet.

Things can go wrong

If something goes wrong during the start sequence, for instance a timing mistake or the wrong flag, **do not attempt to correct it**; it is not possible. Instead **hoist the AP flag with two sound signals**, confer with the PRO, sort yourself out and start again.

Remember to **lower the AP** with **one sound signal 1 minute before the new warning signal**.

VHF communication from the RO

There is **no requirement** for the RO to communicate with competitors around the time of the start, other than to repeat the first course announcement. However the RO may choose to broadcast the following information to assist competitors.

1. A time-check against his or her own watch prior to the warning signal.
2. A count down, typically 10 seconds, to each signal in the start sequence.
3. A statement that no boats were OCS – “*Line clear, line clear*”.
4. The sail numbers of any boats that were OCS – “*X-Ray GBR2773R...*”

Note that, except in an emergency, the RO need not communicate on VHF with individual competitors from 5 minutes before the warning signal until after the end of the start sequence (SI 4.5).

Postponing or abandoning the start

Under normal circumstance CCRC races start at the time stated in RI. If however a race has to be postponed or abandoned then **this decision is made by the PRO** (except the RO may postpone as discussed under *Things can go wrong*).

The PRO will announce that decision to the RO and competitors. What the RO does next depends:

Postponed Bay Race

Hoist flag AP (*Indefinite Postponement*) with **two sound signals**.

Wait until the PRO decides that conditions are appropriate for racing. He will give you a revised start time and announce it and the course to the fleet. To get things underway quickly the PRO may use the *abbreviated announcement sequence* (SI 7.3) and the RO is not required to read back the course.

Lower the AP flag, with **one sound signal**, precisely **one minute** before the **new warning signal** then proceed with the start sequence as usual.

Postponed Passage Race

Hoist flag AP (*Indefinite postponement*) with **two sound signals**.

The PRO may decide to reposition the start to a mark nearer the intended finish in which case he will make an announcement to you and the competitors. **Hoist flag L** (*Follow me*), with **one sound signal**, **lower the orange flag** (the Committee Boat is no longer on station), proceed as quickly as possible to the new start mark and await the PRO's instructions.

Abandoned Race

Follow the PRO's instructions which may be to **hoist flags N over A** (*No more racing today*) with **three sound signals**.

After the start

The start line remains **open for 15 minutes after the start** (SI 11.1.3) so **lower the orange flag** precisely **15 minutes** after the start. Meanwhile you can begin to pack away the Committee Boat Kit. If a competitor crosses the start line after the 15 minute time limit, record the sail number and time on the Recording Sheet.

What happens next depends:

Bay Races

At some stage you need to move the Committee Boat to set a finish line. It is your decision as to when to do that but note that being on the move may enable you to more easily monitor the competitors and shorten the race if required.

Passage Races

It is imperative that you make every effort to get to the finish mark and set up a line before the leading boat arrives, so get under way promptly (not forgetting to lower the orange flag). If there is a good breeze competitors can complete the course remarkably

quickly so motor as fast as you can and try to get ahead of the leading boats. Do not even think about sailing unless you are certain that this will be quicker than motoring after allowing for the time to hoist and lower sails.

During the race

Monitor the progress of competitors. Be aware of the location of the first and last boats. If you are unsure where boats are try calling one or more on VHF.

If a boat reports to you that it is not going to finish the race, note this on the Recording Sheet.

Shortening the course

“More races are ruined by failing to shorten than by shortening too soon.”

The usual reason for shortening is that no boat will complete the course within the time limit specified in the RI. Note that one boat finishing within the time limit sets a further time limit for the last boat to finish within (SI 14.2) so, if the fleet is well spread out, this is another reason for shortening (see *Objectives*).

It is clearly understood that the decision to shorten is the RO's alone because the PRO et al are usually competing and so may have an interest. Nevertheless there may be occasions when the inexperienced RO may wish to seek the opinion of a more experienced PRO by mobile phone!

Note that it is entirely permissible, and sometimes advisable, to shorten one fleet and not the other. For passage races it can be difficult to identify a suitable mark to permit this but for multiple lap bay races one fleet could do one fewer lap yet all competitors finish at the same mark.

Having decided to shorten the next decision is where to finish. Even on a near straight-line passage race the prudent PRO inserts marks that can be used for this purpose. Choose one, go there and set up a finish line.

“If in doubt, shorten” is an excellent maxim.

The Finish Line

The **Finish Line is between the last mark** (or another mark of the course if you are shortening) of the course and **the main mast** of the Committee Boat.

If the PRO announced that the Finish Mark is to be left on a specified side (port or starboard) or you are shortening (when the mark always has a specified side) then it is advisable to anchor the Committee Boat such that competitors leave the Finish Mark to that side. Note however that this is not essential (RRS Definition of *finish*) and you can anchor on the other side if necessary perhaps because the water is too shallow or too deep or because of some obstruction like an anchored boat.

Finish Line Length

About 40m or **four boat lengths**.

Finish Line Direction

At 90° (right angles) to the direction of the prior mark of the course. Example: the prior mark bears 45° from the Committee Boat and the Finish Mark is to be left to starboard; the bearing of the Finish Mark from the Committee Boat should be 315°

At the Finish Line

Make sure you are familiar with and understand RRS Definition of Finish which is

*“A boat finishes when **any part** of her hull or crew or equipment in the normal position crosses the line from the course side”*

1. Set the Finish Line by anchoring as described above.
2. Once you have anchored hoist the **blue flag** to the **top of** your **mast** to indicate to competitors that you are a Committee Boat on station at a finish line. The CCRC burgee on your backstay identifies you as the CCRC Committee Boat. Don't forget your anchor ball.
3. If you are shortening, as the first boat approaches to within, say, 400m, **hoist the S flag** (*Course shortened*) with **two sound signals** in a prominent position.

If you are shortening one fleet and not the other then it is the leading boat of the fleet being shortened that determines when the S flag is hoisted. Also hoist the shortened fleet's **class flag immediately below the S flag**.

You can announce on VHF that you are shortening but do not do so until the leading boat is approaching.

4. If you have not already done so, allocate jobs to your crew. Tasks include
 - Watching the line for finishers and calling out as they cross. This does not mean that the complete boat has to cross before the time is recorded
 - Recording (see below).
 - Time keeping
 - Hoisting signal signals.
 - Making sound signals.
 - VHF communication.

Recording boats finishing

On the same Recording Sheet that you used at the start, record the **exact time of day** to the **nearest second** that each boat crosses the finishing line. If a boat appears to finish but was not recorded as starting, add it to the sheet – you may have missed it at the start. Make a note of any boat flying a protest flag. (Int code flag B)

It is customary and courteous, but not essential, to give each boat a sound signal as it crosses the line. (Do not give a sound signal to boats with an outstanding starting infringement.)

Important

Remain on station until you have accounted for every known starter. This may involve calling on VHF to ascertain where any stragglers may be. Record non-finishers.

After all competitors have been accounted for

Close the Finish Line by removing the blue flag and large CCRC Burgee, before moving off and transmit the information on the Recording Sheet as rapidly as possible to the ResO or, if the ResO is not available, to the PRO or SS so that results can be calculated.

Methods of transmitting the Recording Sheet data include:

- Physically handing it over
- Verbally by phone
- Textually by SMS text or email
- Photographically by taking a picture of it with your phone and transmitting that.

The paper copy may be needed for future reference so hand it to the ResO or, if not available, take it home with you.

Do not leave the Recording Sheet on the Committee Boat.

Make your way to your mooring and hand over the Committee Boat Kit to the next RO before the next race.

And finally

Relax and enjoy the plaudits of your fellow club members while remembering that, in every yacht race, someone will come first, someone will come last and someone will complain. Don't worry about the latter.

Appendix A: Committee Boat Kit

The Committee Boat Kit consists of Signal Yard with guys and halyards and a bag containing:

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------|---|
| Answering Pennant AP | ..... | postponement, warning signal will be made 1 minute after removal |
| Code Flag A | ..... | with AP – postponed, no more races today |
| Code Flag H | ..... | with AP – postponed, see further signals ashore |
| Code Flag L | ..... | come within hail or follow this boat |
| Code Flag N | ..... | races started are abandoned, warning signal will be made 1 minute after removal |
| Code Flag N | ..... | with A – all races abandoned, no more races today |
| Code Flag P | ..... | preparatory signal |
| Code Flag S | ..... | course has been shortened |
| Code Flag X | ..... | individual recall |
| Code Flag Y | ..... | Lifejackets to be worn |
| Code Flag First Substitute | ..... | general recall, warning signal will be made 1 minute after removal |
| Pennant no 1 | ..... | with AP – postponed 1 hour |
| Pennant no 2 | ..... | with AP – postponed 2 hours |
| Pennant no 3 | ..... | CCRC Alpha Class flag |
| Pennant no 4 | ..... | CCRC Beta Class flag |
| Pennant no 5 | ..... | spare |
| Pennant no 6 | ..... | spare |
| Orange Flag | ..... | Committee boat on station at the start |
| Blue Flag | ..... | Committee boat on station at the finish |
| Large Club Burgee | ..... | identifies CCRC Committee boat |
| Sound signal horn | | |
| Supply of Recording Sheets | | |
| Set of these notes | | |

Appendix B: Visual Signals and the Signal Yard

Large CCRC burgee: On the backstay, low down to not mask the signal flags.

Orange start and Blue finish flags: They need to be visible from some distance so hoist them as high as possible – preferably to your mast head or at least to your spreaders.

Starting sequence flags

Flags used during the start sequence are hoisted on the **signal yard**.

The signal yard itself should be hoisted as high as possible and clear of the boom so flags can be seen from a distance. Where you hoist the yard depends very much on the layout of the Committee Boat. Many find that hoisting it up the backstay on the boom topping lift or main halyard works well. There is a pair of guys at either end of the yard to steady it. These can be secured to the port and starboard guard rails. Using the backstay means you can work the signals from the cockpit and the flags fly well in clear air.

The signal yard has six halyards. Before the start you must have them ready to hoist (or to break out)

- The class flags, one above the other.
- The Blue Peter (P).
- The First Substitute in case of a general recall,*
- Flag X in case of an individual recall flag.*
- Flag AP in case of a postponement.

*Alternatively First Substitute and Flag X can be taped to opposite ends of a boat hook so that they can be quickly deployed by the person at the mast who is calling the line.

Allow plenty of time to set up the signal yard especially if doing so for the first time. This operation is much more easily achieved on your mooring than when under way or at anchor.

S flag, L flag

If the signal yard is not available then a signal halyard to the spreaders is a good place for these.

If all else fails, tape them on where best you can, but remember to replace any flags you lose!