



Lights & Shapes — Cheat Sheet

Every navigation light and day shape of Rules 23–31, seen from ahead, from each side and from astern.

EDITION OCTOBER 2026



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HOW TO READ IT

Each row is one vessel. The first four columns show her lights at night from ahead, from her starboard side, from astern and from her port side. The last column is her day shape, seen from ahead.

LIGHT COLORS

- White — masthead, stern, all-round
- Red — port sidelight, all-round status
- Green — starboard sidelight, trawler
- Yellow — towing, air-cushion flash
- Dashed ring: flashing light
- nothing shown from that side

DAY SHAPES

- Ball
- ▼ Cone, apex down
- ⚡ Two cones, apexes together
- ◆ Diamond
- ▮ Cylinder

RULE 23 Power-driven vessel

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY		AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Power-driven vessel — two masthead lights shown ≥50 m					—	Power-driven vessel — one masthead light shown <50 m					—
Power-driven vessel < 12 m — simplified <12 m					—	Power-driven vessel < 7 m, maximum speed ≤ 7 kn — white light; sidelights also required if practicable <7 m					—
Air-cushion vessel, non-displacement mode ≤50 m					—	WIG craft taking off, landing, or IN FLIGHT near the surface ≤50 m					—

RULE 24 Towing & pushing

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY		AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Tug < 50 m — tow ≤ 200 m ≤50 m					—	Tug ≥ 50 m — tow ≤ 200 m ≥50 m					—
Tug < 50 m — tow > 200 m ≤50 m						Tug ≥ 50 m — tow > 200 m ≥50 m					
Pushing ahead < 50 m — not composite ≤50 m					—	Pushing ahead ≥ 50 m — not composite ≥50 m					—
Towing alongside < 50 m ≤50 m					—	Towing alongside ≥ 50 m ≥50 m					—
Composite unit < 50 m — one power-driven vessel ≤50 m					—	Composite unit ≥ 50 m — one power-driven vessel ≥50 m					—
Vessel or object being towed					—	Inconspicuous, partly submerged object < 25 m wide and < 100 m long; total tow ≤ 200 m					

Inconspicuous, partly submerged object <25 m wide and <100 m long; total tow > 200 m



RULE 25 Sailing vessel

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Sail only → main option: 3 separate lights					
Under sail and propelled by machinery — power-driven lights and cone apex down					
Under oars → white light ready to show if needed <20 m					

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Sail only — optional red/green all-rounds at masthead, not with tricolour					
Sail only < 20 m — single tricolour lantern at masthead, replaces the 3 separate lights <20 m					
Sailing vessel <7 m, prescribed lights impracticable — white light ready in time to prevent collision <7 m					

RULE 26 Fishing vessel

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Trawler making way through the water — without the optional masthead light <50 m					
Fishing vessel making way through the water — not trawling					
Trawler making way through the water — masthead light abaft and above the green light ≥50 m					
Fishing other than trawling: Fishing vessel making way through the water, gear > 150 m to starboard					
Fishing other than trawling: Fishing vessel not making way through the water, gear > 150 m to starboard					
Fishing vessel <20 m — two cones apex to apex by day <20 m					
Trawler ≥50 m shooting nets, not making way — while fishing in close proximity to other fishing vessels, Annex II requires two white lights ≥50 m					

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Trawler not making way through the water — without the optional masthead light <50 m					
Fishing vessel not making way through the water — not trawling					
Trawler not making way through the water — masthead light abaft and above the green light ≥50 m					
Fishing other than trawling: Fishing vessel making way through the water, gear > 150 m to port					
Fishing other than trawling: Fishing vessel not making way through the water, gear > 150 m to port					
Trawler ≥20 m and <50 m shooting nets, not making way — while fishing in close proximity to other fishing vessels, Annex II requires two white lights <50 m					
Fishing-type vessel not engaged in fishing <50 m					

RULE 27 NUC / RAM / dredging

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Vessel not under command, making way through the water					
RAM vessel making way through the water — one masthead light shown <50 m					
Vessel restricted in ability to manoeuvre, not making way through the water					
RAM vessel at anchor — two anchor lights shown ≥50 m					

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Vessel not under command, not making way through the water					
RAM vessel making way through the water — two masthead lights shown ≥50 m					
RAM vessel at anchor — one anchor light shown <50 m					
RAM: servicing navigation mark, submarine cable, or pipeline <50 m					

RAM: replenishment or transfer underway <50 m					
Dredging vessel making way through the water — obstruction port, pass starboard — one masthead light shown <50 m					
Dredging vessel making way through the water — obstruction port, pass starboard — two masthead lights shown ≥50 m					
Dredging vessel at anchor — obstruction port, pass starboard					
Restricted towing vessel — tow ≤ 200 m — without the additional aft masthead light <50 m					
Restricted towing vessel — tow > 200 m — without the additional aft masthead light <50 m					
Diving vessel too small for the full 27 display — 27 red-white-red and rigid Code flag A at least 1 m high					
Mineclearance vessel underway — two masthead lights shown ≥50 m					
Mineclearance vessel at anchor — two anchor lights shown ≥50 m					

RAM: launching or recovering aircraft <50 m					
Dredging vessel making way through the water — obstruction starboard, pass port — one masthead light shown <50 m					
Dredging vessel making way through the water — obstruction starboard, pass port — two masthead lights shown ≥50 m					
Dredging vessel at anchor — obstruction starboard, pass port					
Restricted towing vessel — tow ≤ 200 m — additional masthead light abaft the forward group ≥50 m					
Restricted towing vessel — tow > 200 m — additional masthead light abaft the forward group ≥50 m					
Mineclearance vessel underway — one masthead light shown <50 m					
Mineclearance vessel at anchor — one anchor light shown <50 m					
Vessel < 12 m exempt from Rule 27 signals, except diving operations <12 m					

RULE 28 Constrained by draught

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Vessel constrained by draught — one masthead light shown; optional red lights and cylinder shown <50 m					

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Vessel constrained by draught — two masthead lights shown; optional red lights and cylinder shown ≥50 m					

RULE 29 Pilot vessel

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Pilot vessel underway; engaged on pilotage duty					
Pilot vessel at anchor — two anchor lights shown; engaged on pilotage duty ≥50 m					
Pilot vessel not on pilotage duty ≥50 m					
Pilot vessel not on pilotage duty at anchor ≥50 m					

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Pilot vessel at anchor — one anchor light shown; engaged on pilotage duty <50 m					
Pilot vessel not on pilotage duty <50 m					
Pilot vessel not on pilotage duty at anchor <50 m					

RULE 30 Anchored / aground

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Vessel at anchor — one anchor light shown <50 m					

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Vessel at anchor — two anchor lights shown ≥50 m					

Vessel at anchor — deck illumination shown ≥ 100 m



Vessel aground — one anchor light shown < 50 m



Vessel < 12 m aground — exempt from the additional aground red lights and three balls, not from applicable anchor signals < 12 m



Vessel < 7 m at anchor, not in or near a narrow channel, fairway, anchorage or waters where other vessels normally navigate — Rule 30 exemption < 7 m



Vessel aground — two anchor lights shown ≥ 50 m



RULE 31 Seaplanes

	AHEAD	STBD	ASTERN	PORT	DAY
Seaplane, lights and shapes as closely similar as practicable					



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