Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

(a) (i) Where one of two vessels is to keep out of the way the other shall keep her course and speed.

(ii) The latter vessel may however take action to avoid collision by her manoeuvre alone, as soon as it becomes apparent to her that the vessel required to keep out of the way is not taking appropriate action in compliance with these Rules.

(b) When, from any cause, the vessel required to keep her course and speed finds herself so close that collision cannot be avoided by the action of the give-way vessel alone, she shall take such action as will best aid to avoid collision.

(c) A power-driven vessel which takes action in a crossing situation in accordance with subparagraph (a) (ii) of this Rule to avoid collision with another power-driven vessel shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, not alter course to port for a vessel on her own port side.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Possible actions by stand-on vessel

- She **may not** take avoiding action (must keep course and speed)
- She **may** take avoiding action (in case of doubt)
- She **must** take avoiding action (last moment action)

Remark

If a power-driven vessel sees a crossing vessel on her starboard side at a great distance, there is no risk of collision yet and she is not required take any avoiding action. She may in fact still alter her course the way she wants.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Normal action when risk of collision  

Rule 17 (a) (i)

A vessel is only required to maintain course and speed in a two vessels situation.

Stand-on vessel
  Keeps course and speed

Give-way vessel
  Keeps out of the way

Only one vessel takes avoiding action:
THE GIVE-WAY VESSEL
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Exceptions to Rule 17

In a dual action when risk of collision

1. In head-on situation (Section II, Rule 14)
2. In last moment action (Section II, Rule 17 (b))
3. In restricted visibility (Section III, Rule 19)

Both vessels must take action and there is no stand-on vessel.

Both vessels are give-way vessels.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 applies to the stand-on vessel in:

- Rule 12: between sailing vessels
- Rule 13: overtaking situation
- Rule 15: crossing situation between power-driven vessels
- Rule 18: between different types of vessels
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 applies to the stand-on vessel in:

Rule 12: between sailing vessels

With the wind from different sides:
the vessel with the wind on the starboardside is the stand-on vessel

With the wind from the same side:
the vessel at leeside is the stand-on vessel
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 applies to the stand-on vessel in:

Rule 13: overtaking situation:

- the overtaking ship has to keep out of the way
- the overtaken ship shall keep her course and speed; on the open sea she is the stand-on vessel
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 applies to the stand-on vessel in:

Rule 15: crossing situation between power-driven vessels
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 applies to the stand-on vessel in:

Rule 18: between different types of vessels

The sailing vessel shall keep her course and speed (Rule 18 (a) (iv))
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 applies to the stand-on vessel in:

Rule 18: between different types of vessels

A NUC vessel is always a stand-on vessel
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 applies to the stand-on vessel in:

A vessel restricted in her ability to manoeuvre is always a stand-on vessel.

Rule 18: between different types of vessels
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 does not apply to:

Two vessels which are not in sight of one another

If one vessel detects by radar only the risk of collision with a crossing vessel approaching from the portside, she is not obliged to keep her course and her speed.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Rule 17 does not apply to:

Vessels at long ranges

Risk of collision is not considered to apply at long ranges, 
...even though the bearing may not be appreciably 
changing before risk of collision begins to apply

There is no obligation to keep course and speed for a vessel sighted at 
long range, before risk of collision begins to apply
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Permissive action  Rule 17(a) (ii)

If the vessel on the port side does not take action to avoid a collision, the container vessel may take permissive action

Permissive action is the action taken, to prevent the risk of collision being increased, when the give-way vessel does not keep out of the way at all, or not in time.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Reasons for not complying  Rule 17 (a) (ii)

– Ignorance
– Neglect
– Wrong judgement of situation
– Proximity of navigational hazards
– Large detour
– Wrong interpretation of radar image
– Sudden failure of radar
– Etc
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Permissive action Rule 17(a) (ii)

If the give-way vessel does not take action in time to avoid a collision, the stand-on vessel may take action herself. This permissive action is not an obligation. The stand-on vessel may act at an early stage to avoid collision by her manoeuvre alone.

But, if a stand-on vessel fails to take her permissive action in sufficient time to avoid collision, she will also be held at fault if a collision should occur.
The stand-on vessel has the obligation to continuously assess the situation when risk of collision exists.

In case of doubt, she must use the signal prescribed in Rule 34(d): “At least 5 short blasts.”
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Permissive action  Rule 17(a) (ii)

Purpose of action by stand-on vessel

To avoid collision

- Action shall be positive
- Be made in ample time
- With regard to good seamanship
- Be readily apparent
- Be sufficient to maintain a safe passing distance
- No course alteration to port for a vessel on her port side
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Permissive action Rule 17(a) (ii)

How to manifest your doubts

Sound signal

- At least 5 short blasts
- At least 5 short rapid flashes (as supplement)
- VHF
- AIS
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Permissive action Rule 17(a) (ii)

Be sure that the give-way vessel will not take action herself

- Stand-on vessel has very few criteria about the give-way vessel
- ARPA, AIS
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Permissive action  Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Elements that help to determine when to take a permissive action

1. Does risk of collision effectively exist
2. Alterations of compass bearings
3. Alterations of ranges measured with radar
4. Reaction on sound and light signals
5. The presence of navigational hazards
6. Results obtained with ARPA
7. Reaction from VHF and AIS
8. Etc.

The range and the rate of change of the range will usually help in determining the earliest moment to take the permissive action.
1. When risk of collision starts to exist:
   the stand-on vessel must keep course and speed;
   the give-way vessel must keep out of the way and
   take substantial action resulting in passing at a safe distance

2. If it becomes apparent that the give-way vessel fails to take action (or sufficient action) in ample time
   to achieve a safe passing distance: at that moment
   may the stand-on vessel take action
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Action to be taken by the stand-on vessel

- Must give at least five short blasts with the whistle
- May supplement with at least five rapid flashes: very effective as a “wake-up” signal at distances over 2 miles
- Call the Master
- Change to manual steering
- Put the engine on stand-by
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Action to be taken by the stand-on vessel

Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Put the engine on stand-by
In the open sea, a give-way vessel crossing and approaching to a distance of about two miles can be considered to have waited too long.

The distance depends also upon:

- the size of the vessels
- the manoeuvrability of the vessels
- the rate of approach
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Example of permissive action

Classical crossing situation between two power-driven vessels

Vessel B must take avoiding action and avoid passing ahead of vessel A.

Vessel B must take early and substantial action.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Example of permissive action  Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Vessel B doesn’t seem to take any avoiding action

Vessel A gives the warning signal

Vessel A also uses her AIS to identify ship B but receives no response
Example of permissive action  

Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Vessel A is now convinced that Vessel B is not complying with Rule 15 and decides to take action herself in compliance with Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Vessel A uses her permissive action and alters course to starboard
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Example of permissive action Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Vessel A decides to make a round turn of 360° and steers now a course almost parallel with vessel A
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Example of permissive action

Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Vessel A now steers a course almost opposite to vessel B
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Example of permissive action    Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Vessel A is now almost passed and clear of vessel B
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Example of permissive action  Rule 17 (a) (ii)

After vessel B is clear of vessel A, vessel A resumes her original course.

In compliance with Rule 17 (c), vessel A did not alter her course to port.
In this situation, vessel B is again the give-way vessel and vessel A the stand-on vessel.

Vessel B should avoid crossing ahead of vessel A and alter course to starboard.

If vessel B doesn’t comply with Rule 15, vessel A will again make use of her permissive action.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Example of permissive action

Rule 17 (a) (ii)

Due to the shore on her starboard side she is unable to alter course to starboard and decides to reduce speed or even to stop her engines by applying astern propulsion. She gives three short blasts.
Vessel A must also make proper use of her radar, AIS and VHS and follow vessel B very closely to detect if at the last minute she B does not alter her course to starboard anyway.

These types of actions can be very awkward and have sometimes led to collisions, especially if at the last minute the give-way vessel changes her mind.
General remarks

- When the stand-on vessel is not proceeding at full speed, an increase of speed associated with helm action may be appropriate: “Quick ahead”

- “Speed reduction” versus “Helm action”
  A change of speed is usually slow to take effect and is less readily apparent to the other vessel than a helm action

- An alteration of course is very often the safest manoeuvre if it is made in sufficient time: turning away from the other vessel will at least slow down the rate of approach
For a vessel approaching from less than 60° on the bow:

Turn away until the other vessel is abeam.

Whistle signals are very important when taking action at a relatively late stage in order to reduce the possibility of conflicting action by the other vessel.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

For a vessel overtaking or approaching from near the beam:

Turn away on to a parallel or slightly diverging course.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Alteration of course by the stand-on vessel  Rule 17 (a) (ii)

The presence of:
- other vessels,
- the proximity of hazards
- and other factors must be taken into account in deciding how to manoeuvre
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Last minute action  Rule 17(b)

When two vessels are so close to one another that collision cannot be avoided by the action of the give-way vessel alone.

In that case, the stand-on vessel must take such action as will be most effective to avoid the collision.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

**Last minute action** Rule 17(b)

Do not confuse “Permissive Action” with “Last Minute Action”

**Permissive action**

The stand-on vessel **MAY** take avoiding action when the give-way vessel fails to act herself.

**Last minute action**

The stand-on vessel **MUST** take avoiding action when the give-way vessel cannot avoid a collision alone.

Hence, when there is risk of collision, the stand-on vessel can find herself in two different avoiding actions.
The distance at which the action of the stand-on vessel becomes **compulsory** depends on:

- the direction and speed of approach
- the manoeuvring characteristics of the vessels
- eventually the size and type of give-way vessel
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Last minute action Rule 17(b)

Precautionary measures by last minute action

- Sound one or several warning signals
- Verify if navigation lights are burning (at night)
- Keep engines on stand-by
- Call the master
- Etc.
Vessel B does not alter course and vessel A is not making use of her right to take permission action.

Both vessels are so close to each other that collision can only be avoided by the manœuvres of the two ships and A MUST take action as well.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Last minute action  Rule 17(b)

1. Vessel B waited too long before changing her course to starboard
2. Vessel A kept her course and speed

BOTH SHIPS COLLIDED
BOTH SHIPS WERE TO BLAME

Vessel B was at fault not to comply with Rule 15 and 17(d)

Vessel A was at fault not to comply with Rule 17(b)
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Last minute action  

• The distance at which the action by the stand-on vessel becomes a compulsory action is difficult to determine

• The stand-on vessel should preferably take action before reaching the stage where the action becomes compulsory

• In the open sea and in a crossing situation, a stand-on vessel should not let a vessel approach to a distance of less than 12 ship’s lengths (own length) without taking avoiding action (permissive action)

• For a vessel approaching from the portside and at close quarters, an alteration of course to starboard could be dangerous if there is insufficient time to get clear
A stand-on vessel should not let a vessel approach to a distance of less than 12 ship’s lengths (own length) without taking avoiding action (permissive action).
For a vessel approaching from the portside and at close quarters, an alteration of course to starboard could be the worst possible action to take ... if there is insufficient time to get clear.

In this “last minute” manoeuvre, both ships must take action to avoid collision.

Rule 17(c) does not apply: a power-driven vessel may alter course to port for another power-driven vessel on her port bow when in the grips of 17(b).
Case (1) in which the best helm action for the stand-on vessel to avert collision would be to turn to port.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Last minute action  Rule 17(b)

Case (2) in which the best helm action for the stand-on vessel to minimize the consequences of a collision would be to turn to port.

When collision is inevitable, the OOW must manoeuvre his ship to reduce the effects: the consequences are more serious if the vessel is strucked at a large angle near the mid length.

A glancing blow is better than a direct impact.
Collision has not been avoided.

Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Last minute action Rule 17(b)

Collision has not been avoided
Collision has not been avoided

The impact will be least serious if the impact is taken forward of the collision bulkhead

Collision has not been avoided
Do not alter course to port for a vessel crossing on your own port side

To avoid a collision, vessels must go further away from one another and not approach one another

Paragraph (c) applies only to power-driven vessels
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Avoid altering course to port  Rule 17 (c)

The stand-on vessel should avoid taking action which could conflict with the probable action of the give-way vessel.

IN A CROSSING SITUATION between power-driven vessels, the give-way vessel must avoid passing ahead and will most probably alter course to starboard.

For the stand-on power-driven vessel, the permissive action will likely consist in a round turn to port or a reduction of speed.
Vessel A puts her engine full astern
B alters course to starboard at the last minute,
the action of A will contribute to the collision

This sort of action is likely to conflict with the
probable (and late) action of the give-way vessel
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Avoid altering course to port  Rule 17 (c)

Most probable manoeuvre of the give-way vessel

OK

NO
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Avoid altering course to port  Rule 17 (c)

A is the “stand-on” power-driven vessel in a crossing situation.

She makes use of her right to take permissive action but alters course to portside in contravention with Rule 17(c).
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Avoid altering course to port  Rule 17 (c)

Vessel A alters course to port in contravention with Rule 17(c)

If, at the same time, B alters course to starboard, as would be expected, both vessels will come in collision.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Avoid altering course to port \textit{Rule 17 (c)}

Both vessels collided as expected
Avoid altering course to port  

Rule 17 (c)

Here, vessel B keeps her course and speed.

The crossing situation ends up with a close-quarters situation.

Both vessels are in contravention with Rules 15 and 17 of the Colregs.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Avoid altering course to port  Rule 17 (c)

Overtaking situation
In the Strait of Dover, many overtaking manoeuvres between vessels navigating in the TSS end in «near miss encounters».

- Out of 125 overtakings:
  - 5 ships passed at a distance of 1 cable or less
  - 15 ships at a distance of 2 cables or less
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Avoid altering course to port     Rule 17 (c)

Vessel B intends to overtake A at close-quarters on her starboard side
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Avoid altering course to port     Rule 17 (c)

Vessel A alters course slightly to starboard in order to keep vessel B on her portside.
The small alteration of course of vessel B ends up in a near mis encounter involving:

- passing each other at an unsafe distance
- risk of collision
- risk of interaction effects

Both ships are in contravention with the Colregs
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

Duty of the give-way vessel

Rule 17 (d)

The give-way vessel is not relieved of her obligation to take early and substantial action to achieve a safe passing distance…Even when the stand-on vessel takes action
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

General considerations

THE FOUR STAGES IN A COLLISION SITUATION

1. At long range/ Action not yet compulsory but permitted:
   Before risk of collision exists both vessels are free to take action

2. Risk of collision begins to apply:
   The give-way vessel must take action
   The stand-on vessel must keep course and speed

3. When it becomes apparent that give-way vessel is not taking appropriate action:
   The stand-on vessel gives the required whistle signal R34(d) and takes action to avoid collision by her manoeuvre alone

4. Collision cannot be avoided by the give-way vessel alone:
   The stand-on vessel is required to take action to contribute to the avoidance of collision
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

General considerations

Vessel at long range

Crossing vessel is more than 5 - 8 miles away

Avoiding action in not yet necessary and both vessels may alter their course and speed

The give-way vessel must be continuously monitored

STAGE ONE
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

**General considerations**

Vessel is now less than 5 miles away

The stand-on vessel must now keep her course and speed

The give-way vessel should start to take avoiding action
Vessel is now about 2 - 3 miles away

The stand-on vessel may now take permissive action. She must give the required signals.

She shall by all means avoid to alter course to port in case the give-way vessel lately alters course to starboard.
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

General considerations

STAGE FOUR

Vessel is now less than 1 miles away

Both vessels must now take avoiding action

This is the so-called “last minute action”
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

General considerations

The distances at which the various stages apply will vary considerably:

- Great for high speed vessels in crossing situation
- In open sea, crossing situation between power-driven vessels:
  a) outer limit to “keep course and speed” is about 5 to 8 miles
  b) outer limit for permissive action is about 2 to 3 miles

Summary

Action required
Action permitted
Signal required
Keep course and speed
Action not yet compulsory but permitted
Rule 17 - Action by stand-on vessel

General considerations

The Four Stages in a Collision Situation

- Less than 1 mile: Action required
- About 2 to 3 miles: Action permitted, Signal required
- Between 5 and 8 miles: Keep course and speed
- Between 5 and 8 miles: Action not yet compulsory but permitted