Boating Tip #52: Memory Aids & Rhymes

Anyone who ever sat through a navigation class or spent time aboard a boat with experienced sailors, has certainly heard some of these common rhymes that help sailors remember information on weather and navigation.

Red, right, returning

Under IALA System B (International Association of Lighthouse Authorities), this is a reminder to keep red lateral buoys or marks on the vessel’s starboard (right) side when returning from the sea in the U.S. and North America. Note: IALA System B which is the opposite (green, right, returning) is used in Europe, Australia – and actually, in most of the rest of the world.

Even red nuns carry odd green cans

Reminder that red lateral buoys have even numbers and pointed tops, and green buoys have odd numbers and flat tops.

Identifying Lights

Red over red, the captain is dead
Red, white, red, restrictions ahead
Red, red, red, no clearance below
Red over white, eating fish tonight
Green over white, eating shrimp tonight
White over red, the pilot’s ahead
Red over green, I’m a sailing machine
Green, green, green
Flashing blue, the law’s got you
Yellow over white, hawser’s tight
Yellow over yellow, I’m a tug pushing tow
2 whites in a row, is a tug and a tow
3 whites in a row, is a tug and long tow
1 sternlight will show, when tug touches tow
Flashing yellow, inland tug
Old & New Rods Catch Fish So Purchase Some OK

Used to help determine vessel priority:
O  Overtaken
N  NUC (Not Under Command)
R  RAM (Restricted in Ability to Maneuver)
C  CBD (Constrained By Draft)
F  Commercial fishing vessels or trawlers
S  Sailboats
P  Power Driven Vessels
S  Seaplanes
O  Overtaking

East is least, West is best

Helps the navigator to remember which scale to read on a triangle when finding course.

Correcting and uncorrecting the compass

True Virgins Make Dull Company, Add Whiskey
TVMDC +W, -E

Can Dead Men Vote Twice At Elections
CDMVT +E, -W

Port wine is red

Helps boaters remember that the red running light is on the port side of a boat.