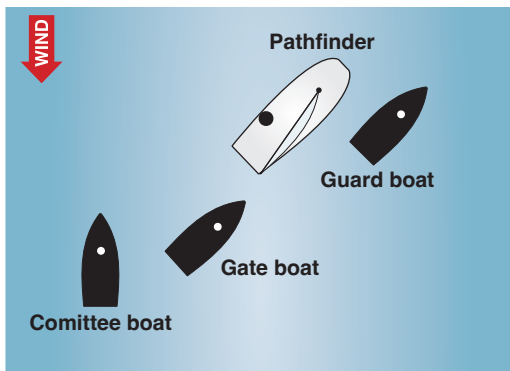


## THE GATE START

A gate start is made by crossing the wake of a boat called the pathfinder which is beating on port tack in front of the fleet. In theory everyone has an equally good start, because the earlier you start the further you have to sail.

The pathfinder, who is selected by the race committee from among the competitors, waits near the committee boat while the usual sound and flag signals are made. About one minute before the start the pathfinder sets off on port tack, accompanied by two motor boats, the gate boat and guard boat, to protect it from over-enthusiastic competitors.



*The gate start formation*

A few seconds before the start a free-floating buoy is dropped over the back of the gate boat to mark the port (left-hand) end of the line. After the starting signal, competitors (on starboard tack) pass closely behind the gate boat. The line gradually lengthens, and boats start one at a time. A late start is no disadvantage, since the pathfinder is sailing up the beat for you while you're waiting.

### HOW CAN I GET A GOOD START?

You need to know the course the pathfinder will take. So, with about four minutes to go, begin beating on port tack from the committee boat. After two or three minutes bear away onto a reach, then tack and wait with your sail flapping (like boat Y in the diagram).

Watch for the pathfinder, and control your speed so that you beat slowly up to the stern of the guard



*Competitors starting on a gate start*

boat. As you go behind it, pick up speed by bearing away slightly and sitting out. Then beat, flat out, to pass just behind the stern of the gate boat.

NEVER reach towards the guard boat like boat X. You have no rights over boats D and E who will push you into the guard boat or gate boat. If you hit either, you will be disqualified. If you find yourself in boat X's position, try to tack onto port and bear away. When you're ready, tack back onto starboard and try again. If all else fails, point into the wind and stop!

### HOW CAN I RECOVER FROM A BAD START?

If you start too far from the gate boat, your only option is to sail through the gate, then tack onto port and sail behind the whole fleet to the right-hand side of the course. If that turns out to be the best side, you could find yourself ahead at the windward mark!

### WHERE SHOULD I START?

Start late if you think you are slower than the pathfinder, if you think the pathfinder will hit a permanent header or if the tide is more favourable to the right of the course. Otherwise start early.