International Formula 18 Class Association

Race Management Guide

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1. Introduction

F18 is one of the most popular catamaran Classes in the world.

The F18 is sailed by a wide range of sailors from various age, size and gender, mixing Olympians and club sailors. The inclusivity of the class is one of its biggest strengths so it is important to ensure every F18 event appeals to all sailors regardless of their position on the scoreboard. F18 events should always deliver high-quality racing, inclusive social events and learning opportunities.

This document focusses on the delivery of high-quality racing and is aimed at anyone looking to run F18 racing at any level. It is in the form of a comprehensive guide but is also useful as a reference source for things such as course lengths, gate distances, wind limits, etc. If you have any comments on the document (including aspects that should be added to it) please contact info@F18-international.org

a. World Sailing Policy

Unless otherwise stated in this document, race officers should consider the World Sailing policy on fleet race management published under "Race Management Policy Documents" located at: https://www.sailing.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/WS-Race-Management-Policies-Fleet-Racing.pdf.

b. Communication with Sailors

Remember we are not here to exercise power but to make a game possible!

Officials should always be transparent with their decision making and be flexible to the needs of the class. Clear, open dialogue with sailors and coaches is crucial.

Daily briefings are a helpful way of setting out the expectations for the day and other methods of communication, such as a WhatsApp group, are useful to keep the race team connected with the competitors.

The staff at F18 are always on hand to offer support and advice to Race Officers and officials. Contact info@F18-international.org any time.

2. Racing Formats:

- Windward/Leeward courses (used for most racing from championships to club racing).
- Trapezoid course may be used when more than one fleet
- Long Distance: a course with no fixed parameters that takes into account local features. May use an upwind, reaching or downwind start.
- Remark: Events may combine both formats.
- Raid: an itinerant route stopping at each stage, including bivouacs
  It is to note Raid courses were at the very origin of Formula 18

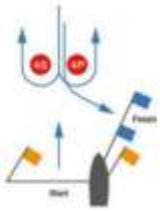
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3. Courses

a. W/L Courses

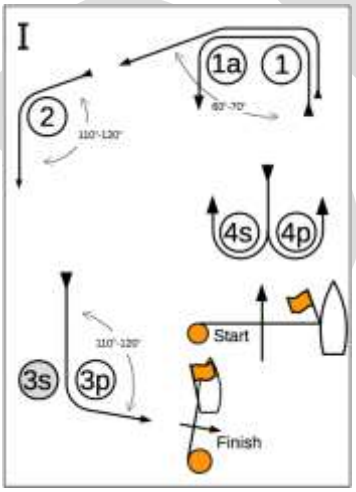
- Recommended Course Diagram:





- Mark rounding order: Start – 1 – 1a – 4s/4p – 1 – 1a – 4p – Finish
  Better to limit to two laps in order to prevent overlapping.
- Mark 1a to be laid 20° upwind Mark 1 (no possible use of gennakers from 1 to 1a)
- Reach to the finish
  Positives:
  - Improves course geometry.
  - Makes recording numbers across the finishing line easier due to a more orderly procession.

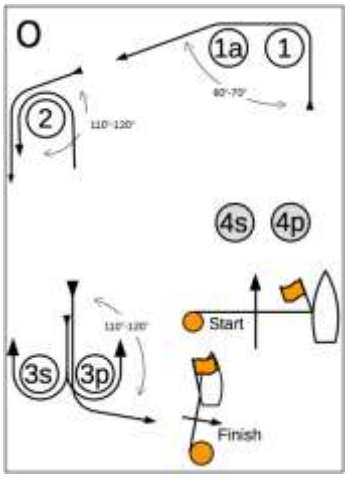
b. Trapezoid Courses



Course I – Inner Trapezoid

Signal	Mark Rounding Order
I2	Start – 1 – 1A – 4s/4p – 1 – 1A – 2 – 3p – Finish

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Course O – Outer Trapezoid

Signal	Mark Rounding Order
O2	Start – 1 – 1A – 2 – 3s/3p – 2 – 3p – Finish

Key Points:

- One leeward gate to reduce congestion and open tactical options. Gate width 60 to 80 m
  - Pin end changed for pin boat for more than ~40 boats.
  - *Remark: For lower-level events with low numbers and limited resources, the leeward gate could be substituted for a single mark.*

c. Long Distance Racing

- Start (which could be a conventional upwind or a reaching start).
- After that, there are no rules. Make the first leg long enough or use an offset mark to avoid congestion at the first mark/gate and send them where you like.

d. Target Times and Finishing Windows

- Target time for Windward/Leeward races is 45 minutes
- Please refer to Speed Table Appendix to adjust course length: https://www.f18-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Speed-Tables-F18-W-L.pdf

Format	Target Time (nm)	Mark 1 Time Limit (nm)	Race Time Limit (nm)	Finishing Window (nm)
W/L racing	45	20	60	20
Long Distance	None	None	None	30 to 60
Raid	None	None	None	60

4. World & Continental Fleet Championships

a. Schedule

- A typical 5-day championship will include W/L racing, and possibly 1 or 2 Long Distance races *(To be specified in the NoR)*.
- Continental Championships may be sailed 4-5 days
- 3 scheduled Races per day. 4 Races possible when behind schedule or for 4 day events.
- Equipment Inspection: Depending on entries, 2 to 3 days before the racing, prior to Final Registration

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- Over 80 entries, the fleet will be divided into two groups.
    - In that case, a minimum of 6 qualification races will be sailed before splitting the fleet into Gold and Silver Groups.
    - For qualification series, the fleet will be seeded into two groups of similar skill and sizes
    - Race committees will aim to get equal completed races for the two groups. At the end of a day's racing, when minimum of two races have been completed by both groups, the fleet will be re seeded according to provisional race results
    - When necessary, a qualification day will be fully used to sail up to 8 qualification races

b. Special Awards

Special Awards will be awarded to the top three teams in the following categories:

- Mixed
- Family (parent & children, siblings, grandparents & grandchildren)
- Youth (U26)
- Masters
- Female Helm
- Silver Fleet

5. General Principles

a. Don't worry!

- Organizing F18 racing isn't daunting, and the class is full of approachable people who can offer advice.
- Never be afraid to lean on the class representative or sailors for advice.
- We're all aiming for a great experience on the water.

b. Schedule of Races

Consider scheduling a variety of format options depending on the length of the event (see earlier guidance). Allow the option in the race documents to race any format on any day for maximum flexibility.

The following scheduling guidelines are not fixed and may be amended to suit the event.

- A single format per day is a safe choice. Two formats in a single day are possible, but only if the waiting time between formats is short.
- Running a long-distance race using the same starting line as the previous W/L race is a simple way to run two formats in a day.
- W/L racing: schedule 3 to 4 races per day with a maximum of 5 on any one day, subject to Class Rep agreement. Each W/L race typically fits into a time slot of 60 mins from orange flag to orange flag (assuming the target time is met and there are no recalls).
- Long Distance racing at W/L events:
    - Schedule one race per day, or one round trip.

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- Given the spread of the fleet and long finishing window, the long-distance race should be the final race of the day.
- Clear briefing of race management and competitors is crucial.

c. Waiting Time

Although waiting on a F18 may be considered rest, reduce the waiting time between races as much as possible. But ensure that there is a least a five-minute rest for the last boat to finish before a new sequence is started.

Plan the formats, schedule and processes on the signal vessel to minimize delays to the sailor.

d. Visibility; Signals and Marks

Visibility from a F18 can be restricted and some sailors don't get close to the start line / committee boat until approaching to start (at speed).

Do everything possible to increase clarity, for example:

- Use flags to indicate the course where possible (rather than a board in the cockpit or over the transom)
- Use large flags (60 x 80 cm min.)
- Eliminate all unnecessary flags
- Consider mark color / shape choices when defining the course; particularly making the pin mark and leeward gate marks clearly distinguishable from one another. (But better to use a pin end boat when possible).
- Use VHF radio to announce the course, pending start sequence and OCS.

e. Wind Limits

F18 boats allow fair racing within an average range of 5 to 25 knots, depending on current and sea conditions, so no strictly fixed limits here.

- At the bottom of the wind range:
  - The wind should be a minimum of 5 kts for the entire period from the warning until the start and the wind appears to be a minimum of 5 kts over the entire race course.
  - Once the race starts:
    - Monitor the progress of the boats: constant progression, no tricky shifts.
    - The race should not automatically be abandoned if the wind drops to less than 5 kts. At this point, the time limits to the first mark and to the finish will apply. If it becomes clear that these time limits cannot be achieved, the race should be abandoned, or if on the second lap, consider a shorten course at the second weather mark.
    - If the boats get stuck on the course with no wind for more than 3 minutes, abandon the race.
  - The minimum wind limit may be higher if there is current, waves or other elements which makes boat progress difficult.
- Upper wind limit is connected to event level and fleet skill:
  - For a skilled fleet; an average wind speed of 25 knots with perfectly flat-water minus 1 knot for every 0.25m of sea state (so with 1m waves, an average of 21 knots would probably be the top end for most sailors).

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- As well as sea state, sailor ability has a significant impact on the upper wind limit. Loosely follow the formula for the upper wind limit while additionally factoring in the skill of the sailors.
- Also see the safety management section of this document.

f. Launching

Safe and sheltered launching is crucial.

- A wide slipway, or multiple slipways, or sheltered beach with plenty of space to sail out from is ideal.
- Each boat will take approximately 90 seconds to launch without help, or 60 seconds benefiting from volunteers helping with beach wheels.
- If a 40-boat fleet is launching single file one after the other, be prepared for launching to take an hour; if two boats can launch at once, expect 30-40 minutes; and if four boats can launch at once, it may only take 15 minutes to get everybody onto the water.
- When the fleet is split into groups, send launching signals with a 15 minutes difference, according to respective distance to Race Courses
- One may consider a F18 as a relaxing place to wait around on for long periods, but please minimize the waiting time for the first boats that launch.
- Set the time limits from AP removed or Delta displayed deliberately tight to get the fleet moving. Sailors generally are happy to arrive at the course and go straight into sequence. Also, where the fleet is small enough, for maximum flexibility add a provision allowing racing to start “once all competitors have arrived in the starting area”.

6. Windward Leeward & Trapezoid Racing

a. Choosing the Number of Laps

Two laps is the default.

Three laps may be used for a tight venue with a small fleet.

b. Shortening the Course

The procedure and rules are no different to other classes.

If the course needs to be shortened, you have two options:

1. Shorten at the second windward mark
2. Shorten between the gate marks (RRS 32.2(c)).

7. Safety Management

- This section includes some tips on safety that differ for the F18 fleet in comparison to conventional dinghies.
- Race officers are encouraged to consult the class representative on safety procedures and should invite the class representative to safety briefings.
- Race Officers should also be prepared to lean on the top sailors in the fleet for assistance – they are the experts on the boat.

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- Identify these sailors before racing and explain how their help might be needed.
- In the F18 fleet, sailors are always happy to help.

a. Safety Boat Ratio

There is no fixed rule on safety boat ratios (number of rescue boats to competitor boats) – this is up to the organizing authority based on their standard procedures following their National Maritime Regulations.

At large events, coach boats may be included in the ratios providing the appropriate rules for support vessels are outlined in the race documents.

b. Wind limits

The upper wind limit is described in section 5.e as 25 knots minus 1 knot for every 0.25m of sea state. A 25-knot average applies to a good quality fleet in flat water.

Here is more detail to consider:

- The upper wind limit is on a sliding scale depending on wind strength, sea state, quality of the fleet, safety resource and location of the course.
- Sea state is crucial to the F18. There is 1.40 m of daggerboard below the boat, so conditions with waves over 1m high could be challenging. The wave height in the formula doesn't take into effect the wave period. A 1m steep chop will be much more challenging than a 1m rolling swell.
- Quality of the fleet is another important factor.
    - The class representative will be able to advise here.
    - In 20+ knots, a Race Officer can expect to have resources stretched to the maximum during the first race. Don't get spooked – natural selection will usually run its course, and the fleet will get smaller and higher quality as the day goes on!
    - People should always be encouraged to sail, but if the decision on whether to sail is in the balance, a friendly word of caution at the briefing advising sailors to make a sensible call, referring to RRS Fundamental Rule 3, Decision to Race, is worthwhile.
- Location of the course can be a critical factor in deciding whether to go afloat.
    - It is far easier to sail the F18 upwind than downwind when it is windy and wavy. If the course is upwind of the launch area and the conditions are on the edge, sailors may be able to competently sail to the course area but could struggle to get downwind to the shore again!
    - A Race Officer can be more confident instructing the fleet to launch if the course is downwind of the launch area because sailors can always make it home and the weaker sailors soon realize the conditions are too much when they can't get downwind to the start.
- It is helpful to identify to the sailors a safe haven upwind of the course if there is one available, even if this isn't the launch area. An alternative sheltered beach where boats can land in an emergency if safety crews are too stretched to take them ashore can preserve the capacity of the safety team.

c. Other windy weather considerations:

- Brief the sailors to stay in the vicinity of the starting line before and between races to minimize

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the strain on the safety team.

- Some racing is better than no racing. If the safety resource is too small for the entire fleet, as a last resort the fleet could be split in half with only half the fleet racing at one time. It would require some changes to the SIs and cooperation from the sailors, but everybody will support some racing over no racing.

d. Turning Points

Turning points are risk areas in F18 racing.

It is critical the gates are square so the fleet evenly divides itself between the marks. If in doubt, make the gates big to start with and make them smaller after the first race if needed.

e. Safety Brief

The following points should be included in a safety briefing for volunteers:

- Helmets are recommended for all sailors.
- The most common injuries are knee and ankle twists where a sailor crashes with their feet stuck under the foot strap.
- Capsizing will be very common. Do not panic – place the safety boat in a position to pick up a sailor if they are separated from the boat. Only directly assist a boat if they call for help or it is clear they are in danger.

f. Rescue Boat Guidance

Here is a quick reference sheet that can be provided to rescue boat operators:

- Check to verify both sailors are hanging on to the boat, mast or sail.
- If one or more sailors have separated from the boat, pick them up into your boat. Note that capsized F18s on their side travel very quickly downwind with the trampoline serving as a sail. If the F18 is in an upside down (turtle) position the boat will travel slowly downwind.
- Return the sailor(s) to the capsized boat by going about one boat length downwind of the F18 and have the sailors jump in the water. Then the F18 will drift down to them.
- Determine if the boat is at risk of drifting onto rocks, pilings, anchored boats or other objects. If so, offer the team a line to attach to their dolphin striker so that you can slowly pull the F18 away from the danger.
- Otherwise, stand-off and observe the sailors righting their capsized boat. Look to see if one of the sailors becomes separated from the boat during the righting.
- The sailors will do the following before righting the boat:
- Release all cleated sheets (mainsail and jib).
- Retrieve the spinnaker into the snuffer if capsized with the spinnaker up.
- One person grabs the righting line which for most boats is carried in a ready position under the trampoline.
- One person swims the boat so they bow is heading into the wind.
- Second person gets on righting line to pull the boat up.
- At least one person grabs the dolphin striker as the boat is righting to keep it from capsizing in the other direction. The other person may climb on the boat as it is righting.
- Only provide aid with righting the boat if the sailors request it. Note that lighter teams under 150 kg could have more difficulty righting the boat.
- The safest way to provide assistance is with a “rescue swimmer” who is prepared to enter the water and

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provide a third person's weight for righting the boat. Then there is no risk of a collision between the power boat and F18.

- If requested by the crew to assist righting the F18, approach with your boat the top of the mainsail head-on. With one person at the bow of your boat, grab the top of the mast and lift it out of the water until the wind gets under it. Hopefully that will be enough for the boat to right.
- Once the boat is upright, continue to observe both crew members to ensure they get back on the boat. It could be possible that one gets separated from the boat while moving from the dolphin striker to the back of the boat.

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