Fog, lookout and wind

Three sound signals, one watchkeeping decision and one weather report.

Name / group: _____

Use the International COLREGs. All three vessels below are 30 m long, in or near fog, by day or night. They have no special operating status beyond the situation stated.

1. Match the signal to the situation

Choose A, B or C for each case. Add the maximum repetition interval and a reason.

A

B

about 2 s gap

C

3 strokes + rapid bell + 3 strokes

Solid bar = one prolonged whistle blast (4-6 s). Thin stroke = one distinct bell stroke. Hatched bar = rapid bell ringing (about 5 s). Schematics are not time-scaled.

1. A power-driven vessel making way. The vessel moves through the water in fog.

Pattern: ____ Maximum interval: _____ Reason:

2. The same vessel, stopped with no way. It is neither anchored, made fast to shore nor aground.

Pattern: ____ Maximum interval: _____ Reason:

3. A vessel aground. It rests on the bottom of a shoal; it is not floating at anchor.

Pattern: ____ Maximum interval: _____ Reason:

2. Decide what changes on the watch

At night near a busy harbour, shore lights hide small craft, the radar picture is unclear, a following current raises speed over ground and shoals leave less room to stop. Is keeping the open-water speed justified? Name two actions and three factors to reassess.

3. Read this fictional wind report

Wind measured at 10 m: 10-minute mean 19 kn; highest 3-second gust 30 kn. Swell also arrives from a distant storm. Beaufort bands: force 5 = 17-21 kn; force 7 = 28-33 kn.

Which force describes the prevailing wind? Can you conclude that waves are 2 m high? Explain.

Continue studying - free, no sign-in required

https://ialacolreg.com/en/sound-signals
https://ialacolreg.com/en/colreg/rule-5
https://ialacolreg.com/en/colreg/rule-6
https://ialacolreg.com/en/weather/beaufort-scale

Fog, lookout and wind

Suggested 15-20 min: 5 min signals, 4 min watch, 3 min wind, 3-8 min discussion. This timing is an editorial classroom suggestion.

1. Expected signals and reasoning

Case 1 -> A | Rule 35(a)

One prolonged whistle blast, 4-6 s. Repeat at intervals no longer than 2 minutes. Making way concerns movement through water; stopping the engine alone does not remove way.

Case 2 -> B | Rules 3(i), 35(b)

Two prolonged whistle blasts, 4-6 s each, with about 2 s between them. Repeat the pair at intervals no longer than 2 minutes. The vessel is still underway; stopped is not anchored.

Case 3 -> C | Rules 35(g), 35(h)

Three distinct bell strokes immediately before and after rapid ringing for about 5 s. Repeat the whole sequence at intervals no longer than 1 minute. These are bell strokes, not whistle blasts. At 30 m, no gong is required.

Solid bar = one prolonged whistle blast (4-6 s). Thin stroke = one distinct bell stroke. Hatched bar = rapid bell ringing (about 5 s). Schematics are not time-scaled.

2. Decide what changes on the watch | Rules 5-6

Reassess speed and reduce as necessary for effective avoiding action and stopping within the available space. Maintain lookout by sight and hearing, using appropriate available means including radar. Consider traffic, background lights, visibility, current, hazards, manoeuvrability and draught/depth. There is no universal safe speed in knots.

3. Read this fictional wind report

Force 5: the 19 kn mean lies in 17-21 kn. The 30 kn gust falls in the speed band associated with force 7; it does not turn the mean into force 7. Keep the readings separate. No: a table's 2 m is a reference for well-developed open-sea wind waves. Check swell and wind-wave height, period and direction separately.

Teaching scope

Fictional study cases, not a passage plan, forecast or qualification. Vessel size/status and local rules can change the signal required. Other weather products may use different averaging periods. Ask learners to explain the status or measurement that determines each answer.

Primary sources - checked 10 September 2026

USCG: International Rules 3, 5, 6, 32, 35
https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/navigation-rules-amalgamated

Met Office: Beaufort scale
https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/guides/coast-and-sea/beaufort-scale

Met Office: wind measurements
https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk/guides/observations/how-we-measure-wind

NOAA / NWS: wave detail
https://www.weather.gov/marine/WaveDetail