

Basic Guide to Class 8 Racing

Buggy Priority Collisions can seriously injure all pilots involved. So learn the rules of the road!

Basically you must guard the front and the right side of your buggy.

If you are on a head-on collision course, turn right and the other pilot should do the same. In all other situations, watch for pilots coming from your right and avoid them. Pilots coming from your left will avoid you, so don't confuse them by changing course.

You may overtake on the right or left but it is your responsibility to avoid a collision with the overtaken pilot.

Wind direction makes no difference to these rules. For old-timers, the starboard rule no longer applies, but as a matter of interest if both pilots are beating (going upwind, a common situation), the new 'guard your right' rule is exactly the same.

There is a grey area between overtaking and converging. I guess you are overtaking if you are going faster and your angle of approach is more from behind than from the right. Use your common sense and be careful if it looks questionable.

In some situations you must make a conscious effort to look right because it isn't natural; for example when the wind is coming from your right.

Kite Height:

The upwind buggy must fly high and the downwind buggy must fly low. This is really just common sense. If you don't do it you will tangle.

The kite height rule is nothing to do with buggy priority; you must never use your kite to block anyone. Kite height rules apply whenever you are close enough to tangle with another kite. It is the responsibility of both pilots to comply. In the event of a tangle the pilot whose kite was at an unreasonable height is at fault. If you can't control your kite properly, you shouldn't be flying it.

Opposing:

Things happen quickly as bunches of buggies are opposing at a closing speed of 60 mph (a situation that often arises during slalom races). First pick a gap on the ground for your buggy using the priority rules. It's often a good idea to look behind you. If the rest of your bunch is going for a different gap, will the 'weave' work? Having picked a buggy gap, look for the corresponding kite gap and get your kite to the right altitude to slot it through.

Overtaking:

You must raise and lower whether you are overtaking or being overtaken.

At a mark:

If there's a line of pilots jibing (turning) a mark, the leaders will be downwind of the followers after the mark. Therefore kites must come in high and go out low. Down turns are often most effective.

Equipment:

Wear a helmet.

Lines:

Don't use Kevlar or similar abrasive lines. Length, from handles to back of last kite is no more than 164 ft.

Harness:

You must be able to release your kite in case of emergency. Open hook (windsurfing harness or roller bearing) or a quick release system is considered OK. A strap around your back isn't.

Buggies

Upper limits 9.84 ft wide, 11.48 ft long, 26 inch wheels, not inflated over 29 psi; 44 lbs of extra weight with no sharp edges can be added to the buggy.

Displaying your number:

You should have a minimum of 2 number placards with digits at least 5.5 inches high, 2 inches in width using a .75 inch letter stripe width, (Font: Helvetica), in black on a white background. One should be visible from each side a third placard can be added to the back of a buggy. For those pilots using kite skates, dirt surfers or ATB/Land boards you must visibly display your number on your chest and back on some type of garment possibly like a vest, (the high visibility green or orange vests are readily available at most home centers or safety equipment stores) The number size requirements are the same as with the buggies.

Racing:

You must attend the pilot's meeting. There may be important information about safety, exclusion zones and race layout. You may be disqualified for not attending.

The start is a 'rolling start', and is announced by flags and noises at 5 minutes, 2 minutes and 1 minute, 30 seconds, then a 10 second countdown. Try to cross the start line at reasonable speed at zero. It helps to have a watch.

Races are usually triangular, so you have to buggy in a variety of directions. Hint: going down-wind is worth practicing.

You must not overturn any mark.

You can change equipment in the race, but only off the course.

It's an individual sport. Assistance during a race is not allowed unless it is for safety reasons.

After a set period of time (usually about 20 minutes) or the number of pre determined laps have been completed, the checkered flag will come out. All racers finish when they pass the checkered flag.

Race Scoring:

First place in a race gets 0 points, 2nd gets 2, 3rd gets 3 etc. At the end of a series you add up all your points and the lowest score wins. Penalty points may be added to a pilot, by the Race Master if he/she has concluded that the pilot had incurred a penalty. In a series there are usually some discards. So in a 10 race series only 8 Scores might count and you're worst 2 would be discarded.

There are other tie breakers for when the scores are identical.