



IALA Buoyage I: Lateral Marks

The marks that line a channel — and the one fact that flips between Region A and Region B: which side is red. The direction of buoyage decides everything.

DIR Direction of buoyage

- Conventional direction = generally **coming from seaward**
- Or as defined on the chart (e.g. clockwise around a landmass)
- Lateral marks only make sense relative to it

A · P Region A — port hand

- **Red** can, red light, red can topmark
- Keep red **to port** entering from seaward
- Most of the world (Europe, Africa, Asia, Aus) is Region A

A · S Region A — starboard hand

- **Green** cone (point up), green light, green cone topmark
- Keep green **to starboard** entering
- Shape is your backup when colour is hard to judge

B Region B — reversed

- The Americas, Japan, Korea, the Philippines
- **Red to starboard** — "red right returning"
- Green to port — the exact mirror of Region A

SHP Shapes & topmarks

- Port = **can** (flat top); starboard = **cone** (point up)
- Topmark repeats the body shape (single can / single cone)
- Shapes are the **same** in both regions — only colour swaps

LGT Lights

- Any rhythm **except** composite group-flashing (2+1)
- Region A: red light to port, green to starboard
- Often port odd / starboard even numbering — not guaranteed

PCM Preferred channel

- Where a channel divides, the mark shows the **preferred** route
- Region A, preferred to starboard: red can, **red-green-red**
- Region A, preferred to port: green cone, **green-red-green**

2+1 Preferred-channel light

- Light rhythm = composite group-flashing (2+1)
- Colour matches the top band (red = treat as port-hand)
- The one rhythm reserved away from plain lateral marks

TRAP Easy marks to lose

- "Red right returning" is **Region B only** — opposite in A
- Confirm the **region & direction** before trusting colour
- Composite (2+1) flash = preferred channel, not a plain lateral

ORAL What the examiner wants

- State the **region** first, then the colour-to-side rule
- "Can to port, cone to starboard — Region A from seaward"
- Shape & topmark save you when the light colour is ambiguous

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