



Number of Headsails Frequently Asked Questions

IRC 2024 Rule and Definitions state:

21.7.1 Boats shall not carry on board more than the number of headsails on their IRC certificate while *racing*, excluded from the number of headsails are one storm jib and/or one heavy weather jib as defined by the Offshore Special Regulations. Headsails may be set simultaneously.

Headsail ERS G.1.3(d) shall not apply. Any **sail** tacked down forward of the foremost **mast** which does not meet the definition of a spinnaker or flying headsail. A headsail may be hoisted from above the forestay rigging point.

<https://ircrating.org/irc-rule/>

Q: What sails are included in the headsail count? Are staysails included?

Any sail that is defined and measured as a headsail in accordance with IRC rules and definitions is included; this therefore includes staysails and any other headsail whether set on the forestay or not. (i.e. if it is not a spinnaker or IRC defined flying headsail it shall be included). The only exceptions are OSR safety headsails, see below.

Q: Are safety headsails required by the Offshore Safety Regulations (OSR) included in the headsail count, i.e. OSR storm jib and/or heavy weather jib?

You may carry one OSR compliant Heavy Weather Jib and/or one OSR compliant Storm Jib which are not included in the headsail count. See below regarding maximum sizes and other requirements.

Q: Are Spinnaker and/or Flying Headsails (as defined in IRC) included?

No. The number of spinnakers and flying headsails carried are declared separately.

Q: How many headsails should I carry so I don't see a rating change?

This depends on a number of factors including the size of boat, and it is not an exact integer number. For example, a 10m boat will see a minimal rating change for around 3 to 4 headsails declared and a 15m boat will see a minimal rating change for around 4 to 5 headsails declared. The actual configuration of your boat and decimal rounding may change the specific rating effect for your boat.

See also: <https://ircrating.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/IRC-Notice-2023-01-Number-of-Headsails-rating-effects-Sept-2023-updated-Oct-2023.pdf>

Q: Can I still declare a single furling headsail and get a rating reduction?

Yes, if it is a single furling headsail eligible and used in compliance with IRC rule 21.8.1. In the 2024 IRC Rule there is no longer an option to declare a 'single furling headsail + heavy weather jib'; you may carry one OSR compliant Heavy Weather Jib and/or one OSR compliant Storm Jib as permitted by rule 21.7.1.

Q: Are Classic yachts catered for, as they often carry more headsails?

Yes, there is consideration for classic yacht features within the IRC rating formulation.

Q: What are the maximum sizes and the technical requirements for the Heavy Weather Jib and Storm Jib?

These are defined in the Offshore Special Regulations 4.27; you should check the most up-to-date version which can be found online: <https://www.sailing.org/inside-world-sailing/rules-regulations/offshore-special-regulations/>

For additional advice regarding sizes only, please see the Heavy Weather and Storm Jib sizes PDF on the IRC website on this page <https://ircrating.org/irc-certificate/measurement/> in the Rig and Sails section.