



Traffic Light System

(Adapted from a Bolton NHS Foundation Trust leaflet)

It is typical for a child to get frustrated when an enjoyable activity is suddenly stopped or taken away. Therefore, the traffic light system is used with a child to reduce frustration at such times by making a child more aware of when an activity is coming to an end. Additionally, the traffic light system can also be used to encourage a child to continue with an activity rather than begin a new one prematurely.

Make cards:

Green circle = "go" (begin with the activity)

yellow circle = "X more minutes" (soon time to stop).

Red circle = "stop"

Show the child the appropriate card at the appropriate time and say a consistent phrase. For the green card you could say e.g. "ball is ready to start". For the yellow card you could say "2 more minutes of ball". This will help warn the child that the activity will end soon or encourage the child to continue with an activity for a little bit longer (depending on why you are using the traffic light system). For the red card you could say e.g. "ball has finished and the ball is then taken away.

The idea is that if this strategy is implemented consistently by everyone working with the child then the child will learn what the colours represent. This will give visual support to a situation which may otherwise be interpreted by a child as being confusing and confrontational. Try creating laminated cards illustrating the symbols below. Wear them round your neck or place them in your pocket so that you have constant access to this resource.

(This resource can alternatively be made by hand using card and felt tip pens)

