

## **Name of strategy:** Traffic Light Cups

### **Description of how strategy works:**

Every pupil is issued three cups – a green, amber and red – which they stack on top of each other. When set an extended writing task the class are told to work in silence for a set amount of time – maybe 10-15 minutes? When they are working there is a ‘no hands up’ policy. If a pupil is struggling they should place the red cup at the top. If they have a query that is not urgent then they should place the amber cup at the top. If they are fine then they should leave the green at the top (see below).



The teacher can target interventions accordingly. Pupils can continue with their work while they wait for the teacher to come to them. This avoids pupils disturbing peers or sitting and doing nothing with their hand up. It is a useful strategy to get quiet pupils who generally do not put their hands up to engage and ask for help and support. The teacher can also see at a glance whether the class are clear about the task. Obviously if there are lots of red or amber cups then the lesson will need stopping and the issues dealt with before resuming.

### **The Ten Top Tips for using Traffic Light Cups:**

1. When first introducing traffic lighting, model the approach for pupils so that they understand what you are trying to achieve. Use the technique often so that it becomes a normal classroom routine.
2. Use traffic light cups, not cards or discs as cups are much more easily seen in a busy classroom of, perhaps, 30 active pupils.
3. Have clear definitions for each of the coloured cups so that all know exactly how to indicate their understanding – for instance does amber mean ‘I want to ask a question’ or ‘I’m not sure’? It could be either, but make certain that you, the pupils and any in class support teachers are clear. Display the meanings in colour around the classroom and perhaps initially on cards on desks.

4. When looking for feedback from pupils, vary who you ask first. Perhaps for a difficult topic, start by asking the pupils displaying green cups, so that you can gauge the level of understanding. For other topics, possibly ask simple questions to those displaying amber cups. The important aspect is for pupils not to always expect you to ask the same group first – they are sometimes the masters of avoidance!
5. Combine using traffic light cups with a ‘no hands up’ rule – this way every pupil in a class knows that they may have to provide a comment or answer and not just the eager beavers who are always first up with the hands.
6. Have marking trays differentiated by traffic light colour so that when pupils hand in work they choose which tray to leave work in – green to indicate ‘Yes – I’ve got it and am confident I don’t need help’; amber to indicate ‘I am unsure about some of my work’ and red to indicate ‘I need help’. This way you can decide where you will concentrate your marking time and make decisions about your next teaching steps.
7. Try grouping pupils displaying the same colours together to either provide more support or to set extension tasks.
8. Put greens in groups together with reds to help the reds. This will further test the knowledge of the greens while you help the ambers. Obviously, you will have to ensure that there are no misconceptions by the greens, perhaps with a quick round of carefully thought out questioning.
9. To extend active learning, have corners of the room as designated colours in plenary sessions. Get pupils to move to the corner of the room which matches their perception of their own understanding and then either have pre-prepared tasks or questions ready to complete or have groups question each other.
10. Use traffic light cups, which are a low tech and low budget approach to highly effective assessment for learning, at the beginning of the next lesson in your starter to indicate the level of recall and understanding from your previous teaching.