

Play Punctuation Red Light, Green Light

Back in preschool, kids learned “Red Light, Green Light” as a fun field game that also taught important traffic rules. Chances are, the game is still a blast in first grade...but here’s a way to give it one more educational twist. With nothing more than a flat, open space and some lively kids, you can reinforce key concepts of punctuation while having lots of fun. This activity is great for a warm day filled with lots of kids and nothing to do.

What You Need:

- 4 pieces of construction paper, each one with one giant punctuation mark on it: a period, a comma, a question mark, and an exclamation point (you and your child can draw these or cut them out and put them onto the construction paper)
- Flat, open field space
- Some energetic first graders



What to Do:

1. Set it up: Explain to your child and her friends that because they are such "old pros" at Red Light, Green Light, you're going to add a twist. First, briefly review key first grade reading and writing skills in punctuation: periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation points.
2. Line the children up across one side of your big, open space (this activity works best outside in a backyard or a park. Then you will go to the other end of the space. Make sure to leave enough space between you and those energetic first graders to give them plenty of room to run around. When you shout “green light, readers!” they can start running forward. But when you shout, “yellow light, readers!” they need to look at you right away to see what sign you will hold up. Hold up a sign, and they must immediately obey it or go back to the beginning. The winner is the first one to make it across the finish line by following all the punctuation mark traffic commands.
 - Comma means: slow down and WALK.
 - Exclamation point means: Hop and wave your hands!
 - Question mark means: Stop, tilt your head, and put your hands on your hips.
 - Period means: STOP right now!

Above all, have fun. They'll get great practice identifying key punctuation marks and their meaning. This is an extremely important part of learning to read and write.& Moreover, this activity is a great way to demonstrate how punctuation isn't just a flat, two dimensional part of learning to read and write. We divide sentences as a way to communicate clearly—just as we use red and green lights to communicate clearly, so that we can all go about our world safely, without colliding.

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