

Facilitator Guide

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Purpose

Red Light - Green Light helps players develop risk awareness by learning to recognize danger signals before they appear during actual gameplay.

The activity is designed to teach players how to evaluate risk using information available at the table, including discards, exposures, wall depth, and player behavior. Through discussion and guided practice, players begin to develop a shared language around safe, cautionary, and dangerous situations.

The goal is not to eliminate risk. The goal is to improve judgment.

Recommended Learning Sequence

This activity is most effective when completed in two phases:

Phase 1: Risk Calibration

Players use scenario cards to practice evaluating risk in a low-pressure environment.

Purpose:

- Build awareness of common warning signs
- Practice reading table clues
- Learn how other players evaluate risk
- Establish a shared understanding of green, yellow, and red situations
- Strengthen defensive thinking before play begins

The goal is not to get every answer correct. The goal is to calibrate judgment.

Phase 2: Live Application

Players then participate in a live game using the Red Light, Green Light token system.

Purpose:

- Apply risk awareness in real time
- Recognize danger while managing an actual hand
- Observe personal decision-making patterns
- Develop stronger defensive habits

The scenario activity teaches players: "What does danger look like?"

The live game teaches players: "Can I recognize danger while I'm playing?"



Phase 1: Risk Calibration

Each player begins with:

- Green Token; placed in the upper-left corner of the rack
- Yellow Tokens; nearby
- Red Tokens; nearby
- 🎫 Tickets (held by facilitator)

How It Works

The facilitator reads a scenario card aloud.

Players independently determine whether the situation is:

- Green Light — Low Risk
- Yellow Light — Proceed with Caution
- Red Light — High Risk

Once everyone has committed to an answer, reveal the card's assigned risk level.

Scoring

Correct Answer

The player remains at their current token level.

Incorrect Answer

The player advances one step:

- Green → ● Yellow
- Yellow → ● Red
- Red → 🎫 Ticket

After receiving a ticket, the player returns to:

- Green

Play continues through selected scenarios.



Winning

At the end of the activity:

- Count tickets earned.
- The player with the fewest tickets wins.
- Ties may be declared co-winners or resolved with a bonus scenario card.

Facilitator Debrief Questions

After each card, ask:

- What clues were available?
- Which clues mattered most?
- What information reduced risk?
- What warning signs increased risk?
- What alternative decisions were available?

Encourage players to explain their reasoning before revealing the answer.

The discussion often provides more value than the card itself.

Transition to Live Play

Before beginning the game, ask:

- What warning signs will you watch for today?
- Which situations create the most uncertainty?
- What clues deserve more attention?
- What does a Red Light situation look like?
- What helps you stay Green?

Explain that the goal is now to apply the lessons from the scenario challenge to real gameplay.



Phase 2: Red Light – Green Light

Each player begins the game with:

- Green Token; placed in the upper-left corner of the rack
- Yellow Token; nearby
- Red Token; nearby

Tickets may be tracked with raffle tickets, poker chips, tally marks, or another scoring method.

How It Works

As risky decisions occur during gameplay, players move through the traffic-light system.

● Green → ● Yellow

The player makes a risky discard or triggers a designated risk.

● Yellow → ● Red

The player repeats risky behavior.

● Red → 🎫 Ticket

The player commits another risky action while holding a Red token.

After receiving a ticket, the player returns to:

● Green

Facilitators should decide in advance what behaviors will trigger movement through the traffic-light system.

Choose triggers that align with the learning objective.

Examples:

Charleston

Focus: Gather; hand development, information management, and avoiding self-inflicted damage.

- Passing a pair or a flower
- Passing like numbers, two winds, or two dragons
- Stopping the Charleston when between categories or hands



Begin Game

Focus: Commit; determining the best category and avoiding premature commitments.

- Claiming a discard to make an exposure as an underdog
- Claiming a second discard to make an exposure as a contender
- Straddling categories after the 80-tile mark

Middle Game

Focus: Adapt; risk assessment, reading the table, and adapting to changing conditions.

- Having a weakened or wounded hand and passing the Pivot Sweet Spot
- Having a useless pair and passing the Joker Bait Sweet Spot
- Holding risky discards passed the 50-tile mark

End Game

Focus: Protect; risk awareness and push-fold judgment.

- Discarding a risky tile with an unacceptable impact as an underdog or contender
- Discarding a risky tile with an unacceptable impact as a frontrunner with a weak wait
- Discarding a winning tile

End-of-Game Reflection (distribute the Risk Reflections Worksheet)

Ask players to consider:

- What decisions earned risk markers?
- Which warning signs were missed?
- Which risks were necessary?
- Which risks were avoidable?
- What situations felt most uncomfortable?
- What defensive habits need improvement?

Closing Discussion

- What did you learn about risk?
- Which clues proved most useful?
- What surprised you?
- What defensive habits will you strengthen?
- What will help you stay Green longer next time?



Remind players: Tickets are not failures. They are learning opportunities.

The objective is not perfect play. The objective is to recognize risk before it becomes a problem.

Instructor Tip

Keep the atmosphere light, curious, and reflective.

Players learn more when discussing their reasoning than when defending their results.

Focus conversations on: "What can we learn?" rather than: "What should you have done?"

The goal is awareness, judgment, and growth.



Phase 2 Red Light Green Light

Each player receives three tokens on their rack (e.g., buttons, glass beads, or BINGO chips) in traffic light colors:

- **Green** – All clear
- **Yellow** – Caution
- **Red** – Final warning

Place all three tokens near the upper right of each player's rack or on the table in front of them.

Start each player with their **green** token on the top left of the flat part of their rack.

How It Works:

As risky decisions occur, players change out their tokens:

1. **Green → Yellow**

If a player discards a tile that another player uses to declare mah jongg, they swap the green token for a Yellow one.

2. **Yellow → Red**

If the same player discards *another* winning tile, they replace the yellow token with a red one.

3. **Red → Ticket**

If they discard yet another winning tile while the red token is showing, they've "**run the red light.**"

- They receive a **ticket** (use a tally, token, or raffle ticket).
- Then they reset their tokens by returning to Green.

This system repeats throughout the session. You can choose whether to track only discards resulting in mah jongg or expand to include other errors in judgment or mistakes (see below).

Define What Counts as Risk:

Agree on the rules before play begins, and customize the risk triggers to align with your focus. Some examples:

- Discarding a risky tile resulting in mah jongg
- Discarding a risky tile in the end game when unwarranted



- Making an obvious error
 - Peeking at a blind pass
 - Racking a claimed discard
 - Picking from the wrong end of the wall
 - Pushing out the wrong wall

End of Session:

- The player with the **fewest tickets** is the winner.
- The player with the **most tickets** receives a lighthearted boobie prize (or simply the honor of having the most “learning moments”).

Debrief & Reflection:

After the game, discuss:

- Which decisions felt tempting in the moment?
- When did risk pay off—and when did it backfire?
- What signs or cues might’ve helped you avoid a ticket?
- How can you use what you noticed today to improve your defensive play?

Remind players that each ticket is not a failure—it’s a **decision point** they can learn from.

Instructor Insight:

Keep the tone light, curious, and reflective. This metaphor works best when framed as a tool for awareness, not shame. It’s especially effective as a warm-up or “Apply” activity for lesson themes such as *Playing on the Edge* or *Discarding Safely*. Use it when players need to see risk in action—not just hear about it.

