

Stoplights, Movement Screening and Exercise

Brett Jones, CK-FMS, CSCS, Master RKC
FMS Advisory Board and International Presenter

The title of this article might have some of you wondering what it could be about. Are you supposed to perform movement screens at stoplights or exercise between stoplights??? What could it mean?

First off I do NOT recommend movement screening while driving or exercising while in the car! Seriously, how would you swing a kettlebell or do a get-up in the car??? And the overhead squat screen would need to be modified... (Besides the fact that it's not safe. But I have seen people shaving or applying makeup in the car....but I digress...)

“Stoplights, movement screening and exercise” is all about how FMS professionals approach the results of your FMS screen and make exercise recommendations based on those results. Stoplights help us to safely navigate our roads with a simple color-coded series of signals. Red means stop. Yellow means slow down and prepare to stop. Green means go.

The results of your FMS screen will direct us toward your weak links and asymmetries and can be “color-coded” for ease of understanding the implications of each screen. Exercise recommendations can be color-coded on this stoplight analogy.

If you are an FMS practitioner, you should be familiar with the Corrective Strategy Algorithm used in evaluating the results of an FMS screen. These are covered in detail in the book *Movement* by Gray Cook and are the subject of the DVD set *Functional Movement Systems - Applying the Model to Real Life Examples*. If you are an FMS professional these resources are highly recommended.

To provide you with a brief explanation of this algorithm, FMS scores are prioritized in this order: Mobility first, meaning ASLR and then SM get attention first if the score is anything other than 2/2 or 3/3. If the ASLR and SM are symmetrical 2's or 3's then the Stability Patterns are next, meaning RS and then TSPU are addressed if the score is anything other than 2/2 or 2 or 3/3 or 3. If the RS and TSPU are symmetrical 2's or 2 or symmetrical 3's or 3, then the screens are addressed by looking at ILL and if it is symmetrical 2's or 3's then HS and if that is symmetrical 2's or 3's then the DS is addressed if it is below a 2.

By reading *Movement* and understanding the corrective algorithm, you will be able to easily explain to your client why you are prioritizing a pattern like the ASLR over the DS. Put simply, it means the priority is on mobility first since adequate mobility is the foundation for stability, and the four more primitive patterns of the screen (ASLR, SM, RS, TSPU) form the building blocks for the three “functional” patterns (ILL, HS, DS).

Now we come to the “interesting” part of the stoplight approach: how the FMS screen is used to provide exercise programming recommendations using the Red/Yellow/ Green format. The basis of exercise recommendations using the FMS screen is rooted in two of the central FMS corrective philosophies. 1) Do not add fitness to dysfunction. 2) Remove the negative.

“Do not add fitness to dysfunction” simply means do not exercise a dysfunctional movement pattern. So scores of 1 or 0 should not be part of your exercise programming (you will see how this is implemented in the actual Red/Yellow/Green list for exercise recommendations based on the weakest link). “Remove the negative” means two things: First, it means addressing asymmetry and dysfunction found in the screen. Second, it means removing those exercises from the routine that will challenge the dysfunctional pattern.

Sometimes what we remove is as or more important than what we add. Once a dysfunctional movement pattern is found, removing the exercises that challenge that pattern can be an essential step in the corrective process.

Suggestions are based on the weakest link—if multiple weak links are found, follow the Red Lights for each one. For example, upper body work might be cleared for an ASLR weak link only if the SM is a pass. Simply put, if a particular movement pattern is a 1 or 0, you can look at the Red/Yellow/Green list to see which exercise patterns are in the warning zone.

Red Light

These exercises will directly challenge a movement pattern already established to be dysfunctional or asymmetrical. These should therefore be avoided until the movement pattern is symmetrical 2's or 3's—these results prove the individual cannot access that movement pattern, and loading or challenging that pattern will only cement the dysfunction.

Yellow Light

Yellow indicates exercise patterns that do not directly challenge the dysfunctional movement pattern, however these patterns should be used with caution, since they may or may not have a positive impact. Re-screening the dysfunctional pattern will tell you if the Yellow Light exercise is having a positive or negative impact.

Green Light

Green Lighted exercise patterns do not challenge the dysfunctional movement pattern. They might even be helpful in correcting the movement pattern and can be used in training.

Again, sometimes what we remove is as or more important than what we add. Once a dysfunctional movement pattern is found, removing the exercises that challenge that pattern can be an essential step in the corrective process.

Suggestions are based on the weakest link—if multiple weak links are found, follow the Red Lights for each one. For example, upper-body work might be cleared for an ASLR weak link only if the SM is a pass.

Exercise Recommendations Based on Results of FMS Screen:

Active Straight-Leg Raise

Red Light - hip hinging (deadlift, KB swing)

Yellow Light - step-up, RFESS, squatting

Green Light - upper body training, core work, half kneeling chop/lift

Shoulder Mobility

Red Light - overhead work, pressing

Yellow Light - rowing, horizontal pressing, partial get-ups

Green Light - deadlift, swings, lower body work, core work

Rotary Stability

Red Light - asymmetrical exercises training one side (dumbbell snatch, kettlebell swing)

Yellow Light - tall kneeling pressing, chop/lift exercises, half kneeling pressing, chop/lift exercises, symmetrical deadlifting and symmetrically loaded squatting

Green Light - partial get-up, floor press, symmetrical rowing and open chain upper body training

Trunk Stability Push-Up

Red Light - pressing, symmetrically loaded closed chain exercises

Yellow Light - deadlift, swing, core work

Green Light - push-up progressions, single leg deadlift, half get-up

Inline Lunge

Red Light - lunges, full get-up, split stance exercises

Yellow Light - deadlift, swing, single leg deadlift, squats

Green Light - half get-up, suitcase deadlift, half kneeling chop/lift and exercises, upper body training

Hurdle Step

Red Light - single leg exercises, full get-up

Yellow Light - symmetrically loaded deadlift, squat and variations

Green Light - half get-up, half kneeling chop/lift and exercises, suitcase deadlift, upper body training

Deep Squat

Red Light - squat and variations

Yellow Light - single leg exercises, split stance and lunge exercises

Green Light - get-up, deadlift, single leg deadlift, half kneeling chop/lift and exercises, tall kneeling chop/lift and exercises, upper body training

This list of exercise recommendations is NOT exhaustive or “complete” but should provide adequate direction in which exercises to Red Light, which exercises to proceed with caution (Yellow Light) and which exercises receive a Green Light for exercises based on the weakest link of the FMS screen.

Remember that movement patterns that received a Green Light for the FMS results (scores of 2/2 or 3/3) are cleared to exercise, and you should see that there are many options for exercise recommendations even within movement patterns that received a Red Light. Also keep in mind that the expectation is that the Red Lighted patterns will efficiently become Green Lights with the application of the corrective strategies so no pattern (outside of certain medical or injury related situations) will be Red Lighted “forever” or for long.

Stoplights, movement screening and exercise: a simple way to use the Red, Yellow and Green Light concepts for understanding exercise recommendations based on those scores. Please visit us on the FMS forum if you have questions or comments.