

regular *Pepper*: fast pace, short and simple questions on fundamentals, and limited engagement with wrong answers. Competition makes it easy to get too involved in discussing and even arbitrating right from wrong (“But I said that!”). The best teachers just keep moving and don’t engage such distractions. Otherwise there’s too much talking about that game and not enough playing it.

- *Sit down*. This variation, usually done at the beginning of class, starts with all students standing and the teacher peppering them with the trademark quick questions. Students “earn their seats” (get to sit down) by answering correctly. Again the teacher does not engage answers except to signal with a gesture that a student may be seated. This game can be played in reverse (stand up) to determine the lining-up order for lunch, say.

Since *Pepper* is about speed, you’ll rarely see teachers stopping to discuss and analyze wrong answers. They may ask other students to correct them, but the goal is almost always to keep the pace moving.

TECHNIQUE 25

WAIT TIME

Another technique to tap into the power of ideas and students that aren’t the first to emerge when you ask a question is **Wait Time**—delaying a few strategic seconds after you finish asking a question and before you ask a student to begin answering it. Mary Budd Rowe, a professor of education at the University of Florida until her death in 1996, pioneered research into wait time and showed that the typical teacher allows about a second of it after a question and allows for more than one and half seconds before taking an answer.

The challenges and limitations posed by such a habit are significant. The answers you can expect to get after less than a second’s reflection are unlikely to be the richest, the most reflective, or the most developed your students can generate. And taking answers after just a second systematically encourages students to raise their hand with the first answer—rather than the best one—they can think of if they want to reasonably hope to participate. Finally, this lack of wait time makes it more likely that you will waste time processing a poor answer before you get to discuss a good one. Ironically, waiting and ensuring that you spend your time on higher-quality initial answers may actually save you time.

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Minds work fast, and the amount of additional time necessary to improve the quality of answers may be small. Some research has shown that when students are given just three to five seconds of wait time after a question, several key things are likely to happen:

- The length and correctness of student responses are likely to increase.
- The number of failures to respond (those who say, “I don’t know”) is likely to decrease.
- The number of students who volunteer to answer is likely to increase.
- The use of evidence in answers is likely to increase.

But waiting is not quite as simple as merely pausing or counting to three in your mind. First, it is hard to discipline yourself to allow time to pass after a question, and doing nothing does not necessarily help you to do that well. Second, and more important, it is not necessarily apparent to students how they should respond to your waiting, especially when they have not spent significant time in schools that expect or train for rigorous reflection or that can even sustain a behavioral environment where reflection, rather than goofing off, is likely to fill the space between question and answer.

While you are training and acculturating your students to become scholars and habituate the behaviors that yield success, you should consider enhancing your use of *Wait Time* by narrating it. Teachers who use this *Narrated Wait Time* make the technique more intentional and productive—that is, more likely to result in the possible positive outcomes that can occur when *Wait Time* is used. They provide guidance to their students about what they should be doing with their three seconds to be most productive. They tacitly explain why they’re waiting and tell them—for example:

1. “I’m waiting for more hands.”
2. “I’d like to see at least fifteen hands before we hear an answer.”
3. “I’m waiting for someone who can connect this scene to another play, ideally *Macbeth*.”

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4. "I'm going to give everyone lots of time because this question is tricky. Your first answer may not be the best."
5. "I'm seeing people thinking deeply and jotting down thoughts. I'll give everyone a few more seconds to do that."
6. "I'm seeing people going back to the chapter to see if they can find the scene. That seems like a great idea."
7. "I'm looking for someone who's pointing to the place in the passage where you can find the answer."
8. "I'll start taking answers in ten seconds."
9. "I'm starting to see more hands now. Four, five, seven. Great. People are really starting to get comfortable taking a risk here."

Notice the different emphasis of this narrated sequence. The first merely suggests that the teacher would like to see more students participate. The second sets a group goal for participation and, through use of *we*, makes answering the question a collective project. The third gives the students something specific and useful to reflect on: how this scene is connected to something else they have read. In other words, what would an especially useful answer look like? The fourth pushes students to double-check themselves and develop at least one second possibility. The fifth narrates practical forms of productive activity by students in the class (jotting down thoughts) and suggests to other students that they try this as well. Again, it stresses how to be productive during the wait time. The sixth chooses a similarly productive activity to engage in during wait time to generate and research ideas. This one increases the likelihood that the teacher will receive an evidence-based answer from her students. The seventh has a similar emphasis but asks students to affirm that they have done the productive work in the interim by pointing to the answer. It also increases the reliability with which the teacher can intentionally choose a correct or an incorrect answer. The eighth allows the teachers to give students an extended answer period (it could be longer if she wished) by establishing a clear end point. The ninth narrates positive behavior to normalize it (to make it seem typical) and encourages the risk of trying when you aren't sure of the answer.

The point is that top teachers use their narration of the interim period during their wait time to incent and reinforce the specific behaviors that will be most productive to their students during that time. They are teaching even while they are waiting.

SEE IT IN ACTION: CLIP 11

WAIT TIME

In clip 11 on the DVD, Colleen Driggs of Rochester Prep models *Wait Time*. She asks what genre a story her students have just read is most similar to. Her goal is to cause the students to think actively about the story and review and assess a variety of options before choosing the best answer. Work like that takes time, and students have to use their time wisely. So in addition to waiting almost twenty seconds between her question and the student she calls on, she provides guidance about how to use that precious time to be strong students:

- "You can go back and use your notes if you need to." *Message:* Make a habit of using your notes to help answer questions.
- "I'll give you some think time." *Message:* This answer should take some time and requires you to think about it.
- To one student: "Good job going back and using your notes." *Message:* Emphasizes how to use *Wait Time* productively. This is also a strong example of a key element of *Precise Praise* (technique 44 in Chapter Seven): praising replicable student behaviors.

TECHNIQUE 26

EVERYBODY WRITES

I recently watched a rigorous tenth-grade reading lesson at the highly successful Boston Collegiate High School. The teacher led her students through a discussion of Tim O'Brien's narratively complex short story, "The Man I Killed," from his book *The Things They Carried*. In the story, the narrator (perhaps O'Brien, perhaps not) describes in the first person his own inability to talk to others about killing an enemy combatant during the Vietnam War. In one of the culminating moments of the lesson, the teacher asked students an astute and demanding question: "Why would someone write a story about not being able to talk about