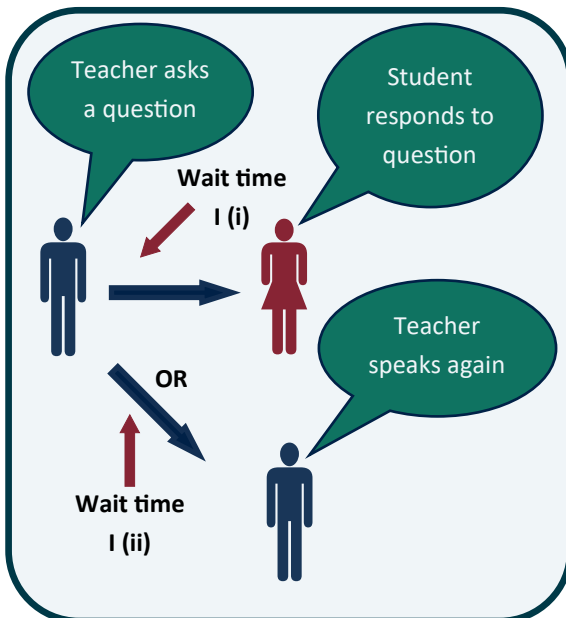
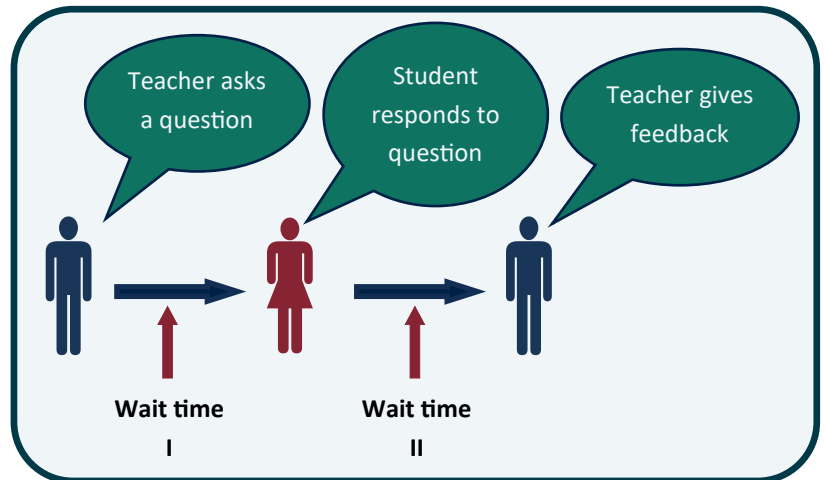


# Wait Time



Wait time is the silence that occurs between speakers when teachers and students interact. There are two types of wait time: **wait time I** occurs after a teacher asks a question and before a student answers; **wait time II** occurs after a student answers but before the teacher speaks again.



However, students do not always answer the teacher's question.

Sometimes a teacher may repeat the question, simplify the question, give a hint or answer the question themselves.

Rowe found that on average Wait time I (II) is less than 1 second. That is teachers wait on average only 1 second before they speak again.

How does the time you wait for a student to answer vary depending upon the question you have asked

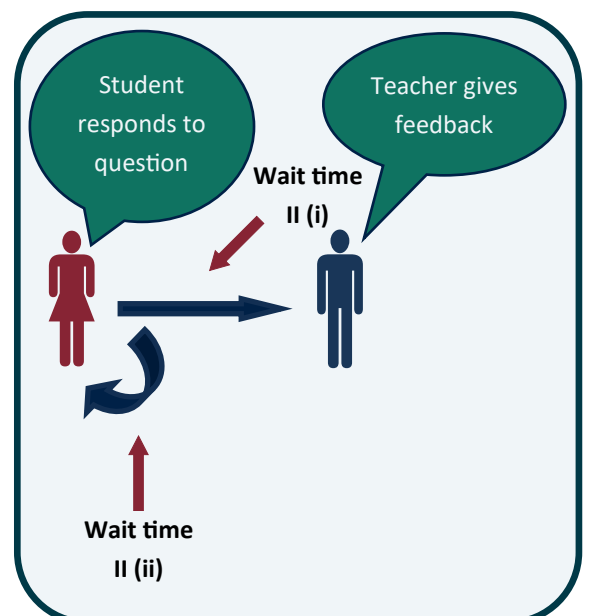


How often do students in your lessons build on, add to or change their answers before you move on to the next question?



Similarly once a student has responded to the teacher's question, the teacher does not always immediately speak again, allowing the student to say more and add to or change their answer.

Rowe also found that teachers on average leave only 0.9 seconds before they speak after a student response.



# Wait Time



As a teacher you can change your wait time to achieve different effects:

- Extending wait time I will increase the chances that a student will respond to your question, as it allows them to think about your question more, and gives them more time to construct their answer.
- Extending wait time II will allow your students to add to their answers, resulting in more explanations, more reasoning and longer student answers.
- Extending wait time II also allows other students to join in the discussion and build on what the previous student has said without you necessarily needing to ask them to.

Many authors recommend that you leave a pause of **at least 3 seconds** to have an effect on students' responses. This is because when you leave students to talk naturally they often leave gaps of around 3 seconds in their own explanations.

## However:

Silences can feel uncomfortable for both you and your students.

It is not always appropriate to leave extended wait time, for example when your question does not require students to reason or after students have given you a detailed explanation.

Some students need more time than others—some will be bored with extended wait times whilst for others you will not have waited long enough for them to think things through.

## Summary

- There are two opportunities to pause when questioning your students
- Varying the time you pause has different effects on students' answers
- Leaving your students time to think leads them to give more detailed answers
- Leaving your students time to listen to other students enables them to build on what they said
- But pauses are unusual in many classrooms and can be uncomfortable until you are used to them

## Further reading

- Ingram, J, & Elliott, V. (2016). A critical analysis of the role of wait time in classroom interactions and the effects on student and teacher interactional behaviours. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 46(1), 37-53.
- Rowe, M. B. (1986). Wait time: Slowing down may be a way of speeding up! *Journal of Teacher Education*, 37, 43–50