

Classroom management skill

Deliberate pause

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Effective classroom management creates safe and supportive learning environments for all students. This practice resource is part of a suite of foundational resources for beginning teachers, teachers working in new environments, or experienced teachers who want to refine or refresh specific elements of their classroom management practice. They can be used to individually reflect on and refine one's own practice, or as shared resources to support mentoring and other collaborative and whole-school approaches to improving classroom management.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)'s guidance is based on a synthesis of the most rigorous and relevant research evidence and guidance on classroom management from a wide range of research experts and expert practitioners across Australia and internationally.

Deliberately pausing is a skill that supports and maintains positive student behaviour. Related practice resources to refine other skills focus on acknowledgement and praise, clear communication, non-verbal correction, scanning and voice control.

A deliberate pause breaks the flow of verbal communication to gain students' attention, emphasise a point, or give students' time to process information, follow a direction or correct disengaged or disruptive behaviours.

It's often used in conjunction with other practices – for example, deliberately pausing after gaining all students' attention, deliberately pausing after clearly communicating expectations, or deliberately pausing when responding to disengaged or disruptive behaviour.



The importance of the deliberate pause

Deliberately pausing is important for both teachers and students. It provides both with time to think. It's an opportunity for teachers to check what's happening, demonstrate to students that they're aware of what's happening and decide on the best response if necessary. It provides students with the opportunity to follow a direction, ask a question or correct their behaviour with minimal intervention from the teacher. Due to its various potential meanings, it's more effective in classrooms with an established classroom culture and students may need to be told what they should do during the pause.

Rehearsing the deliberate pause

It's helpful to rehearse without students present. The elements for success in this section provide a clear picture of how to effectively implement this skill. They also provide a focus for feedback and reflection to improve your use of this skill.

Further guidance on effective rehearsal can be accessed in the [Classroom Management Resources: User Guide](#).

Elements for success

Sustain a deliberate period of silence, long enough to:

- gain all students' attention
- emphasise a point
- allow time for students to:
 - » process information
 - » follow a direction
 - » correct disengaged or disruptive behaviours.

Combine this with scanning for students' responses.

Follow this with another strategy if the deliberate pause did not achieve the desired outcome.

Rehearsing on your own

In an empty classroom, rehearse the following with deliberate pauses:

- gaining all students' attention – for example, a countdown with a deliberate pause between each number and at zero
- using non-verbal correction – for example, look at a student(s) and put a finger to your lips to indicate silence and deliberately pause, waiting for silence before you continue speaking
- setting behaviour expectations for completing learning tasks – for example, clearly communicating expectations for working in groups, deliberately pausing and then checking for understanding
- addressing disengagement or disruption – for example, using a deliberate pause after acknowledging students demonstrating the expected behaviour or providing a group reminder of expectations, to allow time for all students to demonstrate the expected behaviour.

Plan and rehearse follow-up responses for use if your deliberate pause doesn't have the desired effect – for example, acknowledging students demonstrating the expected behaviour, telling students why you're pausing, or using a different non-verbal or positively framed verbal correction for behaviours not meeting expectations.

Record your rehearsal and self-assess using the elements for success. Repeat the rehearsal as necessary until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

Rehearsing with a colleague

Use the points from the [Rehearsing on your own](#) section to rehearse with a colleague, asking them to play the role of a student. Alternatively, review your recording with a colleague. Ask your colleague to provide feedback by referring to the elements for success and identifying strengths and areas for refinement. Ask them to include feedback on the length of your deliberate pause and the predicted outcome from students.

Now ask your colleague to play a student not responding to your deliberate pause and provide feedback on the following:

- How well did you [acknowledge](#) students demonstrating the expected behaviours?
- How well did you implement a different response after an appropriate amount of time? Did you wait too long or escalate your response too quickly?
- Is your plan sufficient to [address students who did not respond](#) to the deliberate pause?

Rehearse again, incorporating feedback until all elements for success have been demonstrated smoothly and with confidence.

Practising the deliberate pause during a lesson

To practise when students are present:

- Leave cues to remind yourself to [deliberately pause](#), such as a sticky note on your desk or around your computer screen.
- Deliberately pause when [gaining all students' attention](#), emphasising a point, or giving students time to process information, follow directions, or [correct disengaged or disruptive behaviours](#).
- After giving an instruction, deliberately pause and [scan](#) to monitor all students as they follow it.

Ask a colleague to observe 10 to 15 minutes of a lesson, using the elements for success to identify the effectiveness of your deliberate pause and any areas for refinement.

Questions for reflection

- How comfortable do you feel when deliberately pausing? If you feel uncomfortable, how might you overcome this?
- Is the length of your pause effective? For example, did students respond as desired?
- How well is deliberately pausing working for:
 - gaining students' attention?
 - emphasising a point?
 - giving students time to:
 - » process information?
 - » follow directions?
 - » correct their behaviour?
- If its effectiveness has differed, why do you think that is?
- How well are you able to implement another planned response when deliberate pausing is not achieving the desired outcome?

For more practical guidance

AERO has developed a suite of resources to support teachers and school leaders to refine or refresh their foundational practices in creating safe and supportive learning environments through effective classroom management. You can read the [Classroom Management Resources: User Guide](#) for an overview of these resources and suggestions for their use.