

Book Notes

Hitting Pause: 65 Lecture Breaks to Refresh and Reinforce Learning

By Gail Taylor Rice

252 pages

[West Library: LB 2393.R53 2018](#)

Summary: *Hitting Pause* contains 65 short activities faculty can integrate into their lectures to encourage students to actively process the information presented to them. Most activities require fewer than five minutes of class time.

Engaging students with active learning does not require that you rework the entire course syllabus and convert all assignments to in-class debates. In its simplest form, active learning entails pausing during a lecture and asking students to reflect on or process the information you're presenting. In Part One of *Hitting Pause*, Rice speaks directly to the concerns of faculty members who are hesitant to change their style of teaching:

“Shorter segments on instruction are better than longer ones, and students who pause periodically to actively participate in instruction will learn better than those who don't (Wilson & Korn, 2007). This book is for faculty members in higher education, those of us who are responsible for learning. We now know it is not what we teach that counts, it's what our learners learn. It's not enough to merely spout information. If our students don't learn, we haven't taught, no matter how much information we provide” (2).

In Part Two, Rice reviews the research that supports the use of pauses before, during, and/or after lectures. For example, numerous studies have shown that when students have opportunities to discuss the content, retention of the material improves because actively processing content facilitates deeper thinking, which in turn helps students expand their mental maps (25). Rice characterizes effective pauses as “positive, metacognitive, memorable, personalized, and unpredictable” (39).

Part Three of the book is devoted to short descriptions of starting pauses, midpauses, and closing pauses. Each activity is succinctly described with notes about its suitability for a variety of settings (small class session, one-on-one meetings, online courses, etc.) and ideas for modifying the activity. Rice also provides references to the literature from which the activity is derived.

Below are examples of starting, midpoint, and closing pauses from the book. The book is available in West Library if you would like additional information about these and other activities.

Try incorporating one into your next lecture as a way to help your learners learn!

Starting Pauses

1. Starting Pause 2: Entry Ticket (pp. 96-97)

Activate prior knowledge. Conduct a reading check. Identify common questions or misconceptions.

- a. Introduce the entry ticket questions as homework to be completed prior to the start of class OR share the questions at the start of class.
- b. Ask no more than three questions. Sample questions include:
 - i. What do you already know about this topic?
 - ii. What would you like to know about this topic?
 - iii. What experiences have you had that relate to this topic?

- iv. List one question you have about the reading assignment.
 - v. Reading-specific questions
 - c. Collect the tickets.
 - d. Scan the tickets to frame your presentation of the material. OR Collect the tickets and grade answers to the reading check.
2. Starting Pause 20: YouTube Story Start (p. 133)
- Capture student attention with video that bridges lesson content and students' lives.
- a. Open class with a short video clip on YouTube or one of the [100 best video sites for educators](#).
 - b. Decide beforehand whether or not you want to introduce the clip with a guiding question.
 - c. Engage students in a discussion about the connections between the video clip and course content/objectives.

Midpauses

1. Midpause 28: Note Share (p.152)
- Allow students to revisit and review content. Provide opportunities for students to correct one another. Increase retention of material.
- a. At the start of class, inform students that you will pause for a two-minute break during the lecture.
 - b. Before starting the pause, explain to students that they have 2-3 minutes to review their notes, add in missing information, or provide additional detail. Allow students to work independently or to share information with people sitting nearby.
 - c. At the end of the pause, ask students if there are any unresolved questions.
2. Midpause 30: Recall Share (p. 157)
- Train students to attend to the lecture and develop organizing skills.
- a. At the start of the lecture, tell students not to take notes.
 - b. Lecture for 15-20 minutes. Pause for 2-3 minutes and allow students to write down a summary of what was presented. [I recommend pausing after 10-12 minutes, especially with novice learners. NP]
 - c. Ask students to compare summaries in groups of 2 or 3 so they can correct mistakes and flesh out their summaries.
 - d. Either provide a summary of what you covered and ask students to make corrections to their own, or provide an outline of the content you covered so students can compare their notes with yours.

Closing Pauses

1. Closing Pause 49: One Word at the Door (pp. 200-201)
- Get a broad picture of what students understood the most important message or objective of the lesson to be.
- a. Stand by the door at the end of the session.
 - b. Ask students to provide you with one word or concept [or a one sentence summary] learned from class.
 - c. Thank each student.
2. Closing Pause 58: Exam Question Challenge (pp. 219-220)
- Students review content by creating, revising, and answering exam questions. Opportunity to award bonus points.

- a. Allow 10-12 minutes for this activity.
- b. Provide students with an index card.
- c. Ask each student to look over the session objectives and their notes to identify an important topic.
- d. Each student will write one exam question (specify a particular type of question if you like).
- e. Ask students to stand and pair up with someone from another part of the room.
- f. Pairs ask one another their questions. In addition to answering one another's question, partners provide suggestions for improvement to the question.
- g. Pairs add their names to the backs of both index cards.
- h. Before collecting the cards, inform students that if you use one of the student-created questions on an exam, the question creator and her partner will receive X bonus points.