

old answer without a chance to think. This is especially true when the question is a tough one, possibly damaging or difficult to answer.

To solve this, let's first discover a hidden ability most of us don't use very much.

Trust Your Instincts

Your brain works at lightning speed. We just don't recognize that because we interfere with its natural processes all the time. We *rethink* and *second-guess* and don't dare *trust* our instincts or first impressions. The fact is, you're quite capable of coming up with an immediate answer. The difficulty arises with your expectations. You think that you need to be able to formulate and know your *total answer in advance!* Wrong.

The first way to buy time is to trust your instincts. Learn to *start* answering the question. Don't look for your ending yet. You'll hear yourself as you go and can decide along the way. Your mind doesn't only **work** in advance. It works while you're talking.

Pick the Question Apart

Asking more about what the questioner really means not only gives you time to think of an answer, it actually highlights *what* to answer.

"Did you mean X or Y?" "There are two parts to your question. Which shall I answer first?" Even, "Would you repeat the question" gives you time to think and figure out what they're asking.

Comment on the Question

Commenting before you answer is another way to delay, buy some time, and think:

- You can make a comment about the question itself: "Good," "Tough," "Interesting," "Never thought of that before."

- You can comment on the process: "I guess I hit a nerve. You sure have a barrage of questions!"

- You can comment on how it's asked: "You were surely listening!" or, "You're very concerned about this, aren't you?"

All of these little prologues buy you time, giving you a moment to collect yourself. Further, they give you back your sense of power and balance if the question is a tough one. And they all sound very responsive, not like you're stalling.