

## 16 | Reaction Times

“Ha! Too slow, chicken Marengo!” shouted Tom. He and Marek were playing Slaps, and he had slapped Marek’s hand as he tried to pull it away for the fifth time in a row.

“I’ve had enough of this,” Marek complained. “Let’s play something else.”

“You just want to stop because you can’t react as fast as I can,” gloated Tom. “Slow coach!”

“I’ll have a go,” Wai Ling offered, but Tom wasn’t keen.

“You’re just a girl, and everyone knows that girls aren’t as fast as boys,” he said.

“That’s not true!” chorused Wai Ling and her friend Greta. Wai Ling continued, “I bet that I can react just as fast as you!”

“Well, let’s test it out. I’ll try to hit you first,” Tom said.

“You’re so sure that you’re faster than me, why don’t you let me try to hit you first?” countered Wai Ling. “After all, I won’t be able to hit you, and then you can have a go at me.”

“Well ... OK,” conceded Tom, but he didn’t look quite so sure of himself. After all, Wai Ling was the school’s best squash player – boy or girl. As she proceeded to hit him time after time, Marek and Greta wandered off, chatting.

“Well, I guess that proves Tom wrong,” Greta was saying. “Girls do react faster than boys!”

“Hang on – what it proves is that Wai Ling is faster than Tom,” objected Marek. “And it doesn’t even prove that. I was hitting Tom quite a few times before. I reckon that you’ve got the advantage when you’re the one hitting in Slaps – you get to decide when to move and the other guy just has to react.”

“Well ... you might be right about that, but it’s true, anyway. Girls are faster at reacting than boys.”

“Are they? I wonder. How would you prove that?” Marek mused.