

# THE SIX THINKING HATS

The Six Thinking Hats method is a systematic way of thinking about individual roles and group communication. Published by Dr. Edward de Bono in 1985, the Six Thinking Hats method teaches members of a group to think about issues in specific ways. This tool explains each hat and how to use it effectively.

## WHITE HAT FACTS & FIGURES

**What it is:**

- Neutral and objective

**What it is not:**

- Does not offer interpretations or opinions

**Use:**

- In practice there is a three-tier system of information:
  1. First class facts: Checked and proven facts
  2. Second class facts: Facts that are believed to be true but have not yet been fully checked
  3. Assumptions held in common
- Use the appropriate “frame” to indicate the likelihood
- Employ focusing questions to obtain information or information gaps.

## GREEN HAT CREATIVE THINKING

**What it is:**

- Creative thinking
- The search for alternatives
- Going beyond the known, the obvious and the satisfactory

**What it is not:**

- Criticizing another person’s ideas

**Use:**

- All in the discussion should wear the green hat simultaneously, to consider the output as a creative output
- There need be no need to pause to judge the merits of an idea while wearing the green hat

## YELLOW HAT

### WHAT IS POSITIVE ABOUT IT

**What it is:**

- Thinking that is positive and constructive
- Covers a positive spectrum ranging from logical and practical at one end to dreams, visions and hopes at the other end
- Probes and explores for value and benefit
- Constructive and generative
- From yellow hat thinking come concrete proposals and suggestions
- Effective at “making things happen”
- Can be speculative, opportunity seeking; permitting visions and dreams

**What it is not:**

- Not concerned with mere positive euphoria (red hat) nor directly with creating new ideas (green hat)

**Use:**

- When generating a concrete proposal
- Identifying the positive attributes of an idea

## BLACK HAT

### WHAT IS WRONG WITH IT

**What it is:**

- Negative assessment
- Pointing out what is wrong, incorrect and in error
- Pointing out why something will not work
- Pointing out risks and dangers
- Pointing out faults in a design
- Pointing out how something does not fit experience or accepted knowledge
- May point out the errors in the thinking procedure and method itself

**What it is not:**

- Should not be used to cover negative indulgence or negative feelings which should make use of the red hat

**Use:**

- In the case of new ideas the yellow hat should always be used before the black hat

## RED HAT

### THE USE OF EMOTIONS

**What it is:**

- Wearing allows the thinker to say: "This is how I feel about the matter."
- Legitimizes feelings as an important part of thinking
- Makes feelings visible so they can become part of the thinking "map"

**What it is not:**

- When a thinker is using the red hat, there should *never* be any attempt to justify the feelings or to provide a logical basis for them.

**Use:**

- If you want to explore the feelings of others, you can ask for a red hat view.
- The final stage is red hat thinking: do we like the idea enough to proceed further with it? This emotional judgment should be based on the available results of yellow and black hat scrutiny.
- The red hat covers two broad types of feelings:
  1. Ordinary emotions, ranging from the strong emotions such as fear and dislike to the more subtle ones such as suspicion.
  2. Complex judgments that go into such types of feeling as hunch, intuition, sense, taste, aesthetic feeling and other not visibly justified types of feeling. Where an opinion has a large measure of this type of feeling, it can also fit under the red hat.

## BLUE HAT

### ORGANIZING THE THINKING

**What it is:**

- Thinking about the thinking needed to explore the subject
- The conductor of the orchestra
- The blue hat thinker calls for the use of the other hats
- The blue hat thinker defines the subjects toward which the thinking is to be directed
- Sets the focus, defines the problems and shapes the questions
- Determines the thinking tasks that are to be carried through
- Responsible for summaries, overviews and conclusions
- Monitors the thinking and ensures that the rules of the game are observed
- Enforces the discipline

**Use:**

- May be used for occasional interjections which request one or other hat
- May also be used to set up a sequence of thinking operations which are followed just as a dance follows the choreography
- Even when the specific blue hat thinking role is assigned to one person, it is still open to anyone to offer blue hat comments and suggestions