

Six thinking hats



What is this?

This is a technique developed by Edward de Bono which will help the group to separate their thinking (and their idea generation) into six clear functions and roles. Six Thinking Hats will help group members look at the challenge from new points of view and will help everyone stay more focused on the discussion.

How it works



The White Hat calls for information known or needed.
“The facts, just the facts.”



The Green Hat focuses on creativity; the possibilities, alternatives, and new ideas. It's an opportunity to express new concepts and new perceptions.



The Yellow Hat symbolises brightness and optimism. Under this hat the group explores the positives and probes for value and benefit.



The Black Hat identifies the risks, difficulties, and problems – but this hat is not about getting caught up in the negatives, it's an action hat designed to point out issues of risk and find ways to overcome them.



The Red Hat signifies feelings, hunches and intuition. When using this hat, the group can express emotions and feelings and share fears, likes, dislikes, loves, and hates.



The Blue Hat is the control mechanism that ensures the Six Thinking Hats guidelines are observed and also to assess the systems and processes that would be needed to execute an idea.

Step 1

Before the group start, make sure you have the six coloured hats to hand, or something to represent those.

This tool starts with one person wearing the blue hat to explain the process and start the discussion. Now everyone in the group wears the same hat colour together and discusses the challenge from the point of view dictated by the hat colour.

The group might start by all wearing white hats to discuss the facts of the challenge. The discussion lead (blue hat wearer) notes down the facts as they are mentioned for all of the group to see.

Why it works

By taking a step away from rational thinking and the limits we place on our thoughts, the group is able to open their minds to a new level of creativity. It enables people to experiment with different modes of thinking.



White Hat Sample Questions

- What is the objective?
- What are the beliefs and opinions in play?
- What information do we require?
- Where can we find this information?



Green Hat Sample Questions

- Can we do this another way?
- What new ideas does this generate?
- What yellow hat opportunities should we expand upon?
- What white hat assumptions might we reverse just to see where they lead?



Yellow Hat Sample Questions

- What makes this so successful?
- What are the benefits?
- Why do you think this will be successful?
- What does success look like?



Black Hat Sample Questions

- What are the risks?
- What are the potential unintended consequences?
- What are the weaknesses?
- What are we forgetting that will bite us?



Red Hat Sample Questions

- What do you think about this?
- What is your initial reaction?
- What kind of emotions does this bring out?
- How might your feelings change over time?



Blue Hat Sample Questions

- What is the problem?
- What is the decision we are after?
- What sequence of thinking hats should we use?
- How do we get each hat to play off the other?

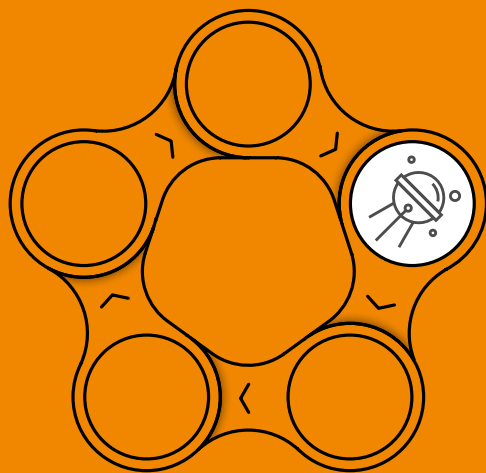
Step 2

When the white hat conversation draws to a close, the discussion lead decides which coloured hat to wear next. Everyone puts on that coloured hat (imaginary or real) and discusses the challenge from the associated point of view, with the discussion leader noting down the findings.

You can use the Six Thinking Hats in any sequence. One sequence would be:

1. **White Hat:** Present the facts of the challenge
2. **Green Hat:** Generate ideas on how the challenge can be solved
3. **Yellow Hat:** Evaluate the ideas by listing their benefits
4. **Black Hat:** Evaluate the ideas by listing their drawbacks
5. **Red Hat:** Get everybody's gut feelings about the alternatives
6. **Blue Hat:** Summarise the discussion and agree on the conclusions

This tool can be used in combination with other exploration tools



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visit: outsidethebox.co.uk call 0113 824 1557 email: hello@outsidethebox.co.uk
Escher House, 116 Cardigan Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 3BJ