

## SIX THINKING HATS



### MAIN FEATURES

Reinforced skills (TASC Cluster)	FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS
Suitable for	Teachers, Students
Difficulty level	Middle
Setting	Individual, Group
Minimum number of participants	1
Average time length	20 minutes
Special material	No
Online version	Yes



## 1. DESCRIPTION

Dr. Edward de Bono, the originator of the term Lateral Thinking, dedicated his life to inspiring, encouraging and enabling people to be better and more creative thinkers. He created the Six Thinking Hats® method to enable individuals and teams to be more receptive to new ideas and to develop them constructively. The de Bono methods are a means of breaking old patterns and creating new ones. They don't tell what to think but how to think, both creatively and inclusively.

The Six Thinking Hats strategy exposes learners to six different styles of thinking and helps them look at a problem from six different perspectives. It's a simple mental metaphor. Each of the Six Thinking Hats has a different colour and each colour represents a unique way to look at an issue. Hats are easy to put on and to take off. If not available, other subjects of the same range of colours can be used – balloons, sticks, paper sheets. Each hat is a different colour which signals the mode of thinking. In a group setting each member thinks using the same thinking hat, at the same time, on the same thinking challenge.

The Six Thinking Hats method can be applied to both individual and group situations, making it a versatile tool that can be used in a variety of settings. Whether the goal is to improve problem-solving skills or encourage creativity within a classroom, the six thinking hats method is definitely worth considering.

In group settings, making good decisions requires discussion where different perspectives and options are considered:

- Group Project Brainstorming;
- Big Group Decisions;
- Preparation for Debates;
- Controversial Issues;
- Challenging Perspectives of Current Events;
- Developing Critical Thinking;
- Developing Innovative Thinking;
- Preparation for Discussions;
- Structuring and Facilitating Discussions;
- Problem Solving Situations.

The Six Thinking Hats method can offer a good strategy to come up with innovative ideas and solutions.

## 2. AIM / BENEFITS

The Six Thinking Hats strategy helps improve decision making processes in 8 different ways:

- Express thinking without any risk factors
- Look at the issue through different perspectives

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- Switch thinking styles to broaden decision making
  - Following rules for making the right decisions
  - Boost focus
  - Enhance creative thinking
  - Improve communication among team members
  - Enhance decision-making skills.

### 3. RELATED COMPETENCIES CLUSTER(s)

CLUSTER: Focus on Solution

#### *Why*

By using the six thinking hats method, it is possible to consider a problem from multiple perspectives and come up with more creative and innovative solutions.

### 4. HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE

Start the session by explaining that the Six Hats technique is designed to encourage everyone to approach a problem or issue from a variety of different perspectives.

#### **Step 1 / Introduce the challenge**

The facilitator (e.g., teacher) presents a problem/issue to the group and tells participants that they are going to think about it from a variety of perspectives. There will be 6 types of thinkers who will address the issue only from that particular perspective. The facilitator should initially explain to the participants that they are going to view the problem in six different ways:

- **WHITE HAT.** Discuss the facts and other objective information about the problem. "I think we need some white hat thinking at this point..." means "Let's drop the arguments and proposals, and look at the database".
- **RED HAT.** Share feelings and emotions about the issue. "Putting on my red hat, I feel this is a terrible proposal."
- **BLACK HAT.** Present negative aspects, or worst case scenarios, regarding the situation. The devil's advocate or why something may not work.
- **YELLOW HAT.** Consider positives, or advantages, of the situation. Why something will work and why it will offer benefits.
- **GREEN HAT.** Consider creative ideas that come from looking at the problem in a new way. This is the hat of creativity, alternatives, proposals, what is interesting, provocations and changes.
- **BLUE HAT.** Sum up all that is learned. "Putting on my blue hat, I think we should do some greener hat thinking at this point."

	<b>White Hat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List out the facts</li> <li>What information is missing?</li> <li>How can you get it?</li> </ul>
	<b>Red Hat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Express your gut feelings</li> <li>What are your fears, likes and dislikes?</li> </ul>
	<b>Black Hat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be pessimistic</li> <li>What are the downsides and risks?</li> </ul>
	<b>Yellow Hat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be optimistic</li> <li>What are the benefits to be gained?</li> </ul>
	<b>Green Hat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on alternatives</li> <li>Are there any new options?</li> </ul>
	<b>Blue Hat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on control &amp; progression</li> <li>Which hat do I wear?</li> <li>What else should I consider?</li> </ul>

## Step 2 / Wearing the six thinking hats

The team members deliberately choose which mode of thinking (“hat”) they want to start with. For example, if they choose the blue hat, the discussion may start with everyone assuming the Blue hat to discuss how the meeting will be conducted and to develop the goals and objectives. The discussion may then move to Red hat thinking in order to collect opinions and reactions to the problem. This phase may also be used to develop constraints for the actual solution such as who will be affected by the problem and/or solutions. Next the discussion may move to the Yellow and then the Green hat in order to generate ideas and possible solutions. Next the discussion may move between White hat thinking as part of developing information and Black hat thinking to develop criticisms of the solution.

## Step 3 / Select a solution

After developing a set of solutions, the participants examine the set critically and choose one solution.

For example, taking the issue “*Students are talking while their teacher is talking*” into consideration, this is how each thinking hat addresses it using different views:

WHITE HAT – factual (state the facts)

- Students are talking while the teacher is talking;
- There is noise and therefore other students are distracted and can’t hear the teacher;
- Students don’t know what to do once instructions are given;

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- Many students become distracted from the task resulting in the failure to complete work.
- RED HAT – emotional (state the emotions)
- The teacher feels offended;
  - Students become frustrated because they can't hear directions;
  - Those talking enjoy joking around and being heard;
  - It represents emotional thinking.
- BLACK HAT – critical (negative aspects)
- Time is wasted;
  - Learning is compromised;
  - Those speaking feel that listeners do not respect them and do not wish to hear what they are saying.
- YELLOW HAT – positive (positive aspects)
- Everyone is able to say what is on their minds;
  - It can be fun;
  - Not only the 'smart kids' get to speak;
  - One doesn't have to wait to share their ideas and therefore risk forgetting some potentially important information.
- GREEN HAT – creative (creative ideas that originate as a result of seeing information in a new light)
- The teacher will be more aware about the amount of time they spend talking;
  - The teacher will try to incorporate interaction from a variety of different students rather than just the 'smart kids';
  - Students will resist the urge to say whatever is on their mind. They will think about what they have to say and whether it is relevant to the topic;
  - Students will take into account whether their comment will interfere with other people's learning.
- BLUE HAT – process control (ensure each hat effectively gets the big picture)
- The teacher learns that they need to monitor the amount of time that they spend talking within the classroom;
  - The teacher needs to involve all students into discussions;
  - The teacher needs to recognize that some students need thinking time before responding. Allowing these students time to compute solutions promotes wider participation and increased learning;
  - Students realise that their talking makes the speaker feel unappreciated and disrespected;
  - Students realise that their comments are jeopardising the learning of other individuals;
  - Students realise that talking out of turn demonstrates a lack of self-discipline and that not all comments require sharing.

## 5. DEBRIEF

The facilitator takes approximately 15 minutes to ask participants to share their experience in plenary.

## 6. SPECIFIC MATERIALS

No specific materials are needed. The different colours could be assigned by words or for example, just giving a different colour pencil.

## 7. TIPS AND TRICKS

- Use different types of grouping learners applying this technique. Participants will first work with members of their own group, wearing the **same colour** hat, developing their role further by brainstorming words and expressions. Then they will regroup into multi-coloured hat groups with learners wearing hats of each of the six colours. They will discuss a list of questions for a limited time. During the discussions they will take on the role they have been given. Explain that in this lesson the discussions are going to be a bit different because it won't be 'them' who is speaking. They will each have a role. Give Participants some discussion questions and a limited time to discuss them. They should discuss each question in turn, in their hat-wearing roles. Monitor and observe the groups as they speak and help where necessary. This will make your task a lot easier. The main idea is to have the group "wear only one hat at a time".
- Discussion questions will very much depend on the class, their interests, levels and ages. Use discussion questions from your course books, look for discussion topics online at a website like *esl discussions* or write your own. By assigning hats to members in a discussion group, the Participants must take on that hat's role and provide input based on that perspective.
- It is often useful to start out a discussion with everyone wearing a white hat so the issue can be sorted out logically (use the available facts, knowledge; using logical reasoning skills), and then assign different colour hats among the group. Midway through the discussion, the hats can be shuffled. A Thinking Hat discussion can be used in face-to-face, online, synchronous, or asynchronous learning environments.

## 8. ONLINE VERSION

The website [www.spatial.chat](http://www.spatial.chat) can be an alternative online platform to be used in running this exercise.

## 9. REFERENCES

- [Six Thinking Hats @wikipedia](#)
- [Six Thinking Hats®](#)
- [Six Thinking Hats @debonogroup.com](#)
- [de Bono organization website](#)
- [Six Thinking Hats - A summary by Sylvie Labelle](#)
- [Six Thinking Hats @teachnet.com](#)
- [How You Can Use Edward de Bono's Six Hats Method For Exceptional Problem-Solving](#)