

## Six Thinking Hats

Dr. Edward De Bono's Six Thinking Hats approach is a popular discussion tool in groups ranging from elementary schools to some of the world's largest corporations (e.g. Prudential Insurance, IBM, Federal Express, British Airways, Polaroid, Pepsico, DuPont, and the huge Nippon Telephone and Telegraph).

The six "hats" represent six approaches to solving a problem. The hats should be used proactively rather than reactively. A key point is that **a hat is an approach to thinking rather than a label for thinking**.

The thinker can put on or take off one of the six hats to indicate what approach they will take. **Changing hats is important to the process**. When used in a group, more than one person may wear the same hat at the same time. **It is essential for a speaker to identify which hat they are wearing prior to speaking**.

- **White hat (neutral, objective)**: Hard data. Facts and figures. Questions/suggestions about what data to collect.
- **Red hat (emotional, intuitive)**: Hunches. Feelings. Unsubstantiated "soft" data. Emotional stuff (e.g. discussing something that makes the discussion participant angry, etc.)
- **Black hat (logical negative)**: Criticism. Caution. Rationale for not doing something, why it may go wrong, legal limits, etc.
- **Yellow hat (logical positive)**: Benefits. Advantages. Savings. Optimism.
- **Green hat (creative)**: Proposals, suggestions, ideas, alternatives, provocations, what is interesting in an idea.
- **Blue hat (meta-hat)**: Control, organization of the discussion process and use of the other hats. Blue hat use can suggest a particular structure to a discussion ("2 minutes of white hat, then 5 minutes of yellow, then..."). Or on-the-fly stuff - "we seem to be spending much more time on red hat than I expected - anyone else agree?" Blue hat can also be used for conclusions.

### References

De Bono, E. 1998. Six Thinking Hats. Little Brown & Co. ISBN: 0316178314.

De Bono, E. 1990. Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step-By-Step. HarperCollins. ISBN: 0060903252.