


Six Thinking Hats

Six Thinking Hats is a technique developed by Edward De Bono. This parallel thinking technique provides a structure for students to explore six distinct perspectives of a complex issue or scenario. The group exercise can easily be adapted to many disciplines.


Yellow Hat
values, benefits



Green Hat
creativity,
possibilities




Blue Hat
process, control,
timing, plan



White Hat
data, facts,
information



Black Hat
difficulties,
potential problems



Red Hat
feelings, instinct,
intuition



for an example and more resources on this technique, visit oakland.edu/teachingtips

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Creative thinking and critical thinking are both important aspects of problem solving. The “Six Hats” exercise described below provides a framework for students to practice both.

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Using “high school drop-out rates” as a sample topic, the “Six Hats” and perspectives are represented as:

- **White Hat:** focuses on data, facts, information known or needed. (*e.g., What is the current high school drop-out rate in our state? How does the rate in our community compare to the national data? What specific programs are currently in place?*)
- **Black Hat:** focuses on difficulties, potential problems, why something may not work. (*e.g., What issues contribute to the drop-out rate? What are obstacles to improvement? What mistakes do we need to avoid?*)
- **Red Hat:** focuses on feelings, hunches, gut instinct, and intuition. (*e.g., Do you have any emotions around this issue? Put yourself in the shoes of a high school student considering dropping out and imagine your fears and concerns.*)
- **Yellow Hat:** focuses on values and benefits: why something may work. (*e.g., What are we doing right?*)
- **Green Hat:** focuses on creativity: possibilities, alternatives, solutions, new ideas. (*e.g., What’s a new approach? If we reduced the drop-out rate by 25%, how could that impact our community?*)
- **Blue Hat:** focuses on process control, timing, next steps, action plans. (*e.g., What’s the next logical step? Who needs to be included?*)

A quick Google and YouTube search for “Six Thinking Hats” will supply dozens of charts, images, videos, and exercises using this technique. You can also find [an excellent slide show by Edward de Bono on the Six Thinking Hats technique](#).

Resources:

DeBono, Edward (1999) Six Thinking Hats: An Essential Approach to Business Management, Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

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