

I am, therefore I think

By symbolically putting on a different coloured hat and expressing it as such — i.e. put on the blue hat — we can systematically direct our own and our group's attention to six different aspects of thinking. The colours are much easier to visualize than remembering to cover the facts, the positive and negative aspects, the feelings, etc. Best of all, we can think and express thoughts, under the guise of a hat, that we might not otherwise think or say.

It also allows us to ask someone to *stop* being negative, or to *be* creative, without ruffling sensitive egos or dampening a meeting — by simply asking others to switch hats! Another benefit of this method is that it establishes the “rules of the game,” one of the most powerful ways of learning.

From red to green: what do they mean?

Each hat colour is related to a different thinking process:

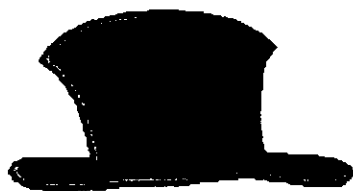
- The **white hat** is neutral and objective, concerned with facts and figures. (Imagine a blank white paper to record the facts.)
- The **red hat** is for the emotional viewpoint — feelings, intuition, hunches that just exist with no explanation required. (Red suggests the heart, symbol of feelings.)
- The **black hat** covers the negative and critical aspects — why something will not work. (Black is dark and gloomy.)
- The **yellow hat** directs attention to the realistic positive and optimistic aspects of an issue — what are the benefits? (Think of the bright yellow sun.)
- The **green hat** calls for creativity, bringing up fresh, new ideas. It provokes a change in perceptions and patterns of thinking. (Green recalls lush vegetation and fertile growth.)
- The **blue hat** is concerned with orchestrating and organizing the thinking process itself, for example introducing the issue and objectives and summarizing the viewpoints. (Blue is cool and, like the blue sky, overlooks everything else.)

Give it a try!

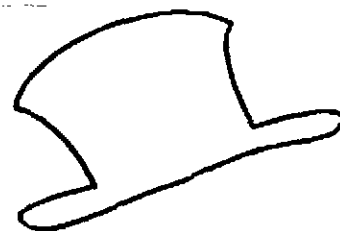
If you read the description of the colours, then you can follow a bit of the process.



Put on a blue hat (thinking process). Take a look at what you would like to gain from this article. Perhaps you are curious about the Six Thinking Hats concept and about how it can help you conduct more effective meetings, or tackle a personal problem.



Switch to the red hat (feelings). This sounds confusing and silly. Why am I wasting my time?



Put on the white hat for a moment (facts/figures). Where does this concept come from? Dr. Edward de Bono is a world-renowned authority in the teaching of thinking as a skill, both to corporations and schools. He has written 45 books on the subject and on formal techniques for creative thinking (which he calls lateral thinking, having invented the term in 1967) and has lectured around the world.