

SIX THINKING HATS (De Bono Institute - Melbourne)



**Creativity. Different ideas. New ideas.
Suggestions and proposals.**

**What are some possible ways to work this out?
What are some other ways to solve this problem?**

This is the colour of new growth in plants, heralding new beginnings and creative ideas. It is therefore the ideal hat for Tournament of Minds participants and all would-be Monty Python, Fawcett Towers and Mr Bean scriptwriters. It is the hat which invites zaniness, lateral solutions, proposals and suggestions. It is the typical **Comma Thinking Rule** hat. This is the hat which challenges orthodoxy and looks for alternatives. However, asking learners to put on their **Green Hat** is merely an invitation to act in a creative way.



**Emotions. Intuition, feelings and hunches.
No need to justify the feelings.
How do I feel about this right now?**

This is a hot colour and encourages thinkers to allow their emotions, intuition, hunches and general feelings to hold court without any need for justification or substantiation. The thinker uses the senses to lead the thinking. Unfortunately, it is the sole mode of thinking for many people and can lead to disastrous decisions or unfair points of view. Consciously using the **Red Hat** allows the thinker to be aware of his/her feelings on a subject and to be aware that the feelings might need the services of the other hats as well. To think well at this level is part of one's intrapersonal intelligence.



Good points. Why is this worth doing? How will it help us? Why can it be done? Why will it work?

This is the bright and positive colour which tends towards optimism. It requires the thinker to look at the good points in a situation or proposal, the benefits and reasons why an idea is likely to work. The **Yellow Hat** is supportive of an idea and gives reasons for that support. The thinker remains constructive and looks for success, being determined to make things work.



**Information. Questions.
What information do we have?
What information do we need to get?**

This is a clinical or neutral colour and requires the thinker to discover the facts of the situation in an objective manner. It is the hat for data, detail, figures, information and the asking of useful questions, even being prepared to ask uncomfortable questions. Good thinkers are able to generate a large range of questions with no thought of having to answer them immediately. These answers can be found later. Too often tension exists because we have not bothered to get the facts. Encourage students to be totally dispassionate and objective when using the **White Hat**. To heighten this attitude, encourage them to speak in a computer voice.



**Organisation of thinking. Thinking about thinking.
What have we done so far?
What do we do next?**

This is the colour of the sky and suggests an overview of one's thinking. It is the metacognitive hat, the one which encourages us to think about our thinking, to plan our thinking at the start of the exercise and to monitor thinking throughout the exercise and to judge the finished product. It challenges the thinker to be self-analytical and evaluative and to consider whether the full range of thinking strategies has been used.

Students ought to be encouraged to apply this self-analysis and product analysis hat at the various stages of an assignment. Questions such as: *What is the question really expecting of me? Have I used all possible resources? Am I addressing all criteria? Am I on time and on track? If I were the teacher, how would I view this piece of work?* - are the sort of questions which students could employ in **Blue Hat** thinking.



Bad points. Caution. Judgement. Assessment. Is this true? Will it work? What are the weaknesses? What is wrong with it?

This is a sombre and serious colour which encourages the thinker to be cautious about an idea or the subject under review. It is possibly the most important hat in critical thinking and prevents one's emotions from dominating a situation. The thinker plays devil's advocate and asks the questions which are likely to expose weaknesses in a proposal. Used in conjunction with the other hats, it is likely to result in clearer and fairer thinking. The **Black Hat** is the hat of high responsibility since it looks to making sensible decisions. Some people claim that this is the hat of negative thinking. However, being critical is not necessarily synonymous with being negative. Being negative is more of an emotional response and as such is part of the domain of Red Hat thinking. Very positive leaders (teachers, parents, company leaders and national leaders) can look for flaws in order to maintain a positive status for people over which they have responsibility. Therefore critical thinking is used in the sense that it is to do with sensible, responsible and rational decision making, which can either support or reject an idea. The important think is that considered thinking has taken place.