

# The thinking hats

*Reference: Edward De Bono*

## Overview:

The activity involves 5 imaginary hats, each of a different color. These colors signify roles that must be adopted when an individual wears them.

For example, while wearing the yellow hat, the individual must look only at the positive aspects of the situation under discussion. Conversely, the black hat signifies critical thinking and looking at negative points alone.

**Goal:** To communicate the differences and to seek collaborative solutions.

## Yellow hat

The Yellow Hat symbolizes brightness and optimism. Under this hat you explore the positives and probe for value and benefit.

**Key Words:** best-scenario; benefits; positive thinking; optimism; value and benefits.

## Black hat

The Black Hat is judgment - the devil's advocate or why something may not work. Spot the difficulties and dangers; where things might go wrong.

Probably the most powerful and useful of the Hats but a problem if overused.

**Key Words:** risks; potential problems; obstacles; downsides; weaknesses.

## Red hat

The Red Hat signifies feelings, hunches and intuition. When using this hat you can express emotions and feelings and share fears, likes, dislikes, loves, and hates.

**Key Words:** feelings; intuition; fears; impact on others; like; hate; share fears; share excitement.

## Green hat

The Green Hat focuses on creativity; the possibilities, alternatives, and new ideas. It's an opportunity to express new concepts and new perceptions.

**Key Words:** creative thinking; alternative solutions; refine and develop ideas; new perceptions; innovation

## Blue hat

The Blue Hat is used to manage the thinking process, to summarize the information, to state the common goals. It's the control mechanism that ensures the Six Thinking Hats guidelines are observed.

**Key Words:** process; focus; big picture; agenda; mapping the next steps.

## TASK:

During the discussion of the conflict you should adopt the attitude and characteristics of the following role:

### Blue hat

You are wearing the **Blue hat**.

## TO DO:

Define the problem that you are facing and describe it at the beginning of the discussion. Moderate and facilitate the discussion of the situation. Wrap up at the end and try to gather the ideas in decision how to face the conflict.

Having the Blue Hat you have the following role: manage the thinking process, summarize the information and focus on the common goals. You will be the control mechanism that ensures that you are trying to resolve the conflict.

**Key Words:** process; focus; big picture; agenda; mapping the next steps

### ***Help questions:***

- What problem are we facing as a group?
- How can I best define this problem? What is my goal and outcome?
- What do I seek to achieve by solving this problem?
- What is the most effective method of proceeding from this position?
- How can I best organize and arrange my thinking to help move me beyond my present circumstances?

***Example:***

“We have a deadline for an important project that we can’t ignore. However, as teachers, our main goal is to help the students as much as possible. Do you have any ideas how we can find a balance....”

“So, by what has been said so far, we can conclude that it is the best decision to... ”

**Remember: base your comments on the role (hat) you are having!**

**Notes:**

## TASK:

During the discussion of the conflict you should adopt the attitude and characteristics of the following role:

### Red hat

You are wearing the **Red hat**.

## TO DO:

Having the Red Hat means that you will have the following role: you will rely on your feelings, hunches and intuition. You should express emotions and feelings and share fears, likes, dislikes, loves, and hates, you should cry, yell.

**Key Words:** feelings; intuition; fears; impact on others; like; hate; share fears; share excitement.

### Help questions:

- What is my gut telling me about this solution?
- What do I feel about the conflict? Am I scared, happy, sad?
- What are my feelings telling me about the choice I am about to make?
- Based on my feelings, is there a better way to go about this?
- Intuitively, is this the right solution to this problem?

### Example:

“I want to help Tom! I feel so sorry for him!” “That was an amazing idea, I am excited!”

**Remember: base your comments on the role (hat) you are having!**

**Notes:**

## TASK:

During the discussion of the conflict you should adopt the attitude and characteristics of the following role:

### Black hat

You are wearing the **Black hat**.

## TO DO:

Having the Black Hat means that your role is to judge the situation—be the devil's advocate, tell why something may not work. You should spot the difficulties and dangers; where things might go wrong.

**Key Words:** risks; potential problems; obstacles; downsides; weaknesses

### Help questions:

- What is the fatal flaw in this idea?
- What is the drawback to this way of thinking?
- How many ways is this likely to fail?
- What are the potential risks and consequences associated with this?
- Do I have the necessary resources, skills, and support to pull this off... probably not.

### Example:

“Tom came in the worst moment possible! We have a deadline, if we try to multitask we will fail”

“Even if we succeed applying with the project within the deadline, we might not be approved and it will be a waste!”

**Remember: base your comments on the role (hat) you are having!**

**Notes:**



## TASK:

During the discussion of the conflict you should adopt the attitude and characteristics of the following role:

### Yellow hat

You are wearing the Yellow hat.

## TO DO:

Having the Yellow Hat symbolizes brightness and optimism. Under this hat you explore the positive sides of the situation and probe for value and benefit. Face the conflict with optimism and try to encourage the others.

**Key Words:** best-scenario; benefits; positive thinking; optimism; value and benefits.

### Help questions:

- How can I best approach this problem? How can I make this work?
- What positive outcomes could result from this action?
- What are the long-term benefits of this action?

### Example:

“Everything will be fine, don’t worry. Let’s think positively. I think the best thing to do is....”

**Remember: base your comments on the role (hat) you are having!**

**Notes:**

## TASK:

During the discussion of the conflict you should adopt the attitude and characteristics of the following role:

### Green hat

You are wearing the **Green hat**.

## TO DO:

Having the Green Hat allows you to focus on creativity; the possibilities, alternatives, and new ideas. It's an opportunity to express new concepts and new perceptions while facing the conflict. Try to offer innovative and creative methods to solve the problem.

**Key Words:** creative thinking; alternative solutions; refine and develop ideas; new perceptions; innovations.

### Help questions:

- What alternative possibilities could exist here?
- Could this be done in a different way?
- How can I look at this problem from a unique perspective?
- How can I think outside the box about this? What if...?

### Example:

“Let’s try another point of view. What if we try to optimize our resources and do this... and this....”

**Remember: base your comments on the role (hat) you are having!**

**Notes:**

## TASK:

During the discussion of the conflict you should adopt the attitude and characteristics of the following role:

White hat

You are wearing the **White hat**

## TO DO:

Wearing the white hat you have to collect facts, stats, and data that helps you piece together the information it needs to reach logical fact-based solutions. You collect this evidence to help the other thinking hats work through the problem more effectively. You must, however, avoid making conclusions or judgments about the information it has collected.

Having the White Hat you have the following role: Bringing forward stats, facts, and data that can be used to solve the problem.

Prioritizing facts over opinions and beliefs. Highlighting gaps in knowledge, perspective, and awareness. Bringing forth logical solutions to the problem at hand.

**Key Words:** process; focus; big picture; agenda; mapping the next steps.

### Help questions:

- What do I know about this problem? What don't I know about this problem? What can I learn from this problem?
- What more would I like to learn about this problem?
- How will I go about acquiring the facts, stats and data that will help me resolve this problem?
-

- What potential solutions exist based on the facts, stats, and data I have collected?

**Example:**

“So, we just decided that it is better to do...”

**Remember: base your comments on the role (hat) you are having!**

**Notes:**