

deBono's Six Thinking Hats: Six Possible Dispositions

Below is a brief explanation of each hat. Please understand that these hats represent thinking that is much more complex than illustrated below. We encourage you to read one of the books that de Bono has published related to hats and their use in schools. Our purpose here is to simply illustrate how the hats can be woven into the teaching and learning process.



White Hat: This hat represents information (white because of paper). It is applied to direct thinking into the area of attending to the information that is present and the information that is missing. Sharing statistics, or ideas, or asking for information is typical of this hat.



Red Hat: This hat deals with feelings, intuition, and emotions (red because it suggests fire and warmth). When red hat is in use, you share your feelings and intuitions without having to justify why. The red hat gives you permission to share those feelings.



Black Hat: This hat is used for caution (black because of a judge's robe). The black hat stops us from doing something because it may be wrong, harmful, too expensive, etc. It points out the risks, the hazards, the roadblocks—it explains why something will not work—shows weaknesses and makes assessments.



Green Hat: This hat suggests growth, energy, and life (green because it suggests vegetation—growth). When using this hat, you offer suggestions, make proposals, and explore alternatives. You look outside the box for elegant solutions. Here you would talk about how to add to something, or make modifications. With this hat, people are making an effort to be creative.



Blue Hat: This hat is at the centre of the thinking process (blue because it suggests the sky—above all else—thinking about our thinking). It is used to bring a sense of order and sequence to what is occurring. It is often used at the beginning and end of a discussion or when things are getting confused. It can be used to help decide the sequence of hats, or when to exchange hats, or how to summarize information.



Yellow Hat: This hat makes an effort to find the values and benefits in an idea or action—it seeks the good points (yellow suggesting sunshine and optimism). Here you would look for the good points even if you do not like the overall idea.

From the previous page:

RED: 1, 7, 14, 15; WHITE: 2, 5, 12;
BLACK: 9, 16, 19; YELLOW: 6, 17, 18;
GREEN: 4, 11, 13, 20; BLUE: 3, 8, 10
Sometimes they overlap—the hats can represent more than one disposition towards thinking.

Following are two Concept Attainment data sets illustrating how you could employ this strategy to facilitate students understanding of the Six Thinking Hats, two at a time. The first data set involve Red and White hat thinking; the second Green and Black.