



Kansas Effective Practices Instructional Toolkit

Implementing Research and Resources Into Action
Research Lesson 1: Daily Challenges

Six Thinking Hats

Based on principles of parallel thinking, this program seeks to categorize thinking, and to consciously focus one's thinking on any one category at a time. It is a dynamic and interactive training program that prepares participants for running effective meetings, solving group problems and fostering a spirit of creativity within an organization.

The Six Thinking Hats program puts forward a very simple concept which allows someone to think one thing at a time. He or she becomes able to separate emotion from logic, creativity from information, and so on. Putting on any one of the six thinking hats defines a certain type of thinking.

Dr. de Bono maintains, "The six thinking hats allow us to conduct our thinking as a conductor might lead an orchestra. Similarly, in any meeting it is very useful to switch people out of their usual track in order to get them to think differently about the matter at hand."

How to Use the Tool:

To use Six Thinking Hats to improve the quality of your decision-making, look at the decision "wearing" each of the thinking hats in turn.

Each "Thinking Hat" is a different style of thinking. These are explained below:

- **White Hat:**
With this thinking hat, you focus on the data available. Look at the information you have, and see what you can learn from it. Look for gaps in your knowledge, and either try to fill them or take account of them.

This is where you analyze past trends, and try to extrapolate from historical data.

- **Red Hat:**
Wearing the red hat, you look at the decision using intuition, gut reaction, and emotion. Also try to think how other people will react emotionally, and try to understand the intuitive responses of people who do not fully know your reasoning.
- **Black Hat:**
When using black hat thinking, look at things pessimistically, cautiously and defensively. Try to see why ideas and approaches might not work. This is important because it highlights the weak points in a plan or course of action. It allows you to eliminate them, alter your approach, or prepare contingency plans to counter problems that arise.

Black Hat thinking helps to make your plans tougher and more resilient. It can also help you to spot fatal flaws and risks before you embark on a course of action. Black Hat thinking is one of the real benefits of this technique, as many successful people get so used to thinking positively that often they cannot see problems in advance, leaving them under-prepared for difficulties.

- **Yellow Hat:**
The yellow hat helps you to think positively. It is the optimistic viewpoint that helps you to see all the benefits of the decision and the value in it, and spot the opportunities that arise from it. Yellow Hat thinking helps you to keep going when everything looks gloomy and difficult.

- **Green Hat:**
The Green Hat stands for creativity. This is where you can develop creative solutions to a problem. It is a freewheeling way of thinking, in which there is little criticism of ideas.
- **Blue Hat:**
The Blue Hat stands for process control. This is the hat worn by people chairing meetings. When running into difficulties because ideas are running dry, they may direct activity into Green Hat thinking. When contingency plans are needed, they will ask for Black Hat thinking, and so on.

You can use Six Thinking Hats in meetings or on your own. In meetings it has the benefit of defusing the disagreements that can happen when people with different thinking styles discuss the same problem.

A similar approach is to look at problems from the point of view of different professionals (e.g. doctors, architects, sales directors) or different customers.

Adapted from [Mind tools](#)