

Six Thinking Hats

A way of running a group discussion: everyone adopts the same mode of thinking at once, represented by a colored hat, and they switch it as they go.

In Spanish

Seis sombreros para pensar

Origin

de Bono (1985)

Output

An orderly discussion that looks at a topic through several ways of thinking



What it's for

Keeps a meeting from turning into a fight between those who defend an idea and those who attack it.

Key elements

White

Data and available information.

Red

Emotions and intuitions, without justifying them.

Black

Risks and reasons for caution.

Yellow

Benefits and reasons for optimism.

Green

New ideas and alternatives.

Blue

Organizing the discussion: what comes next and what is concluded.

How it's done

1



Set out the topic and the order of the hats.

2



Think together wearing the same hat, and switch when it's time.

3



Conclude with blue: what is decided.

Applications in design

✓ When to use it

To assess ideas or decisions with a group, after ideation.

✗ Avoid

Using the hats to label people ("you are the black hat").

👁 Don't fall for it

The black hat is useful, but it should not take up the whole session: give it its turn, like the others.

Connections

Builds on

■ Desirability, feasibility, viability

Related to

■ LEGO® Serious Play®

■ Brainstorming

■ MoSCoW method

■ Premortem

■ Dot voting

Authors and works

1985

Edward de Bono

Proposed "parallel thinking": the group explores a topic in the same direction at the same time, instead of clashing.

Sources

Original sources

- de Bono, E. (1985). Six thinking hats. Little, Brown.

Last reviewed: October 25, 2026