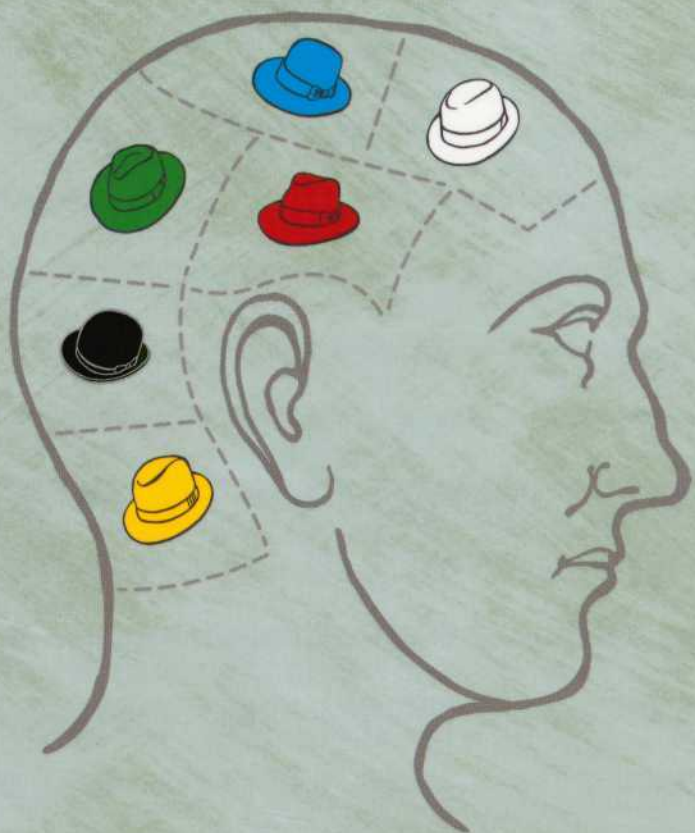


# Edward de Bono Six Thinking Hats®



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'We owe de Bono a debt for constantly reminding us that thinking is a skill and can be improved' *Psychology Today*

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER  
REVISED AND UPDATED



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## Chapter 9

# Summary of White Hat Thinking

### What is White Hat Thinking?

White Hat Thinking is a discipline and a direction.

Imagine a computer that gives the facts and figures for which it is asked. The computer is neutral and objective. It does not offer interpretations or opinions. When wearing the white thinking hat, the thinker should imitate the computer.

The person requesting the information should use focusing questions in order to obtain information or to fill in information gaps.

In practice there is a two-tier system of information. The first tier contains checked and proven facts – first-class facts. The second tier contains facts that are believed to be true but have not yet been fully checked – second-class facts.

There is a spectrum of likelihood ranging from 'always true' to 'never true'. In between there are usable levels such as 'by and large', 'sometimes', and 'occasionally'. Information of this sort can be put out under the white hat, provided the appropriate 'frame' is used to indicate the likelihood.

White hat thinking is a discipline and a direction. The thinker strives to be more neutral and more objective in the presentation of information. You can be asked to put on the white thinking hat or you can ask someone to put it on. You can also choose to put it on or to take it off.

The white (absence of colour) indicates neutrality.

## Chapter 16

# Summary of Red Hat Thinking

Wearing the red hat allows the thinker to say: 'This is how I feel about the matter.'

The red hat legitimizes emotions and feelings as an important part of thinking.

The red hat makes feelings visible so that they can become part of the thinking map and also part of the value system that chooses the route on the map.

The red hat provides a convenient method for a thinker to switch in and out of the feeling mode in a way that is not possible without such a device.

The red hat allows a thinker to explore the feelings of others by asking for a red hat view.

When a thinker is using the red hat, there should *never* be any attempt to justify the feelings or to provide a logical basis for them.

The red hat covers two broad types of feeling. First, there are the ordinary emotions such as fear and dislike to the more subtle ones such as suspicion. Second, there are the complex judgements that go into such types of feeling as hunch, intuition, sense, taste, aesthetic feeling and other not visibly justified types of feeling. Where an opinion has a large measure of this type of feeling, it can also fit under the red hat.

## Chapter 21

# Summary of Black Hat Thinking

Black hat thinking is concerned with caution. At some stage we need to consider risks, dangers, obstacles, potential problems and the downside of a suggestion. It would be extremely foolish to proceed with any suggestion unless full consideration has been given to the caution aspect. The black hat is about being careful. The black hat seeks to avoid dangers and difficulties. The black hat points out matters that need attention because they may be weak or harmful. The black hat draws us to matters that need our attention.

The black hat can be used as part of assessment: should we proceed with this suggestion?

The black hat is used in the design process: what are the weaknesses that we need to overcome?

The black hat seeks to lay out the risks and potential problems in the future: what may go wrong if we implement this suggestion?

The black hat is very much about 'fit'. Does this suggestion fit our past experiences? Does this suggestion fit our policy and strategy? Does this suggestion fit our ethics and values? Does this suggestion fit our resources? Does this suggestion fit the known facts and the experience of others?

Under the black hat we focus directly on the 'caution' aspects. This is the basis of survival, of success and of civilization.

Black hat thinking may point out procedural errors in the thinking itself. But black hat thinking is not argument and

must not be allowed to degenerate into argument. The purpose of black hat thinking is to put the caution points on the map.

Black hat thinking can be abused and overused if it is the only mode of thinking. This abuse in no way diminishes the value of the black hat, just as the dangerous and reckless driving of a car does not mean that cars are dangerous.

The yellow hat is a thinking hat to wear when the black hat can't be used. It is a thinking hat to wear when the black hat is not used. It is a thinking hat to wear when the black hat is not used.

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## Chapter 28

# Summary of Yellow Hat Thinking

Yellow hat thinking is positive and constructive. The yellow colour symbolizes sunshine, brightness and optimism.

Yellow hat thinking is concerned with positive assessment, just as black hat thinking is concerned with negative assessment.

Yellow hat thinking covers a positive spectrum ranging from the logical and practical at one end to dreams, visions and hopes at the other end.

Yellow hat thinking probes and explores for value and benefit. Yellow hat thinking then strives to find logical support for this value and benefit. Yellow hat thinking seeks to put forward soundly based optimism but is not restricted to this – provided other types of optimism are appropriately labelled.

Yellow hat thinking is constructive and generative. From yellow hat thinking come concrete proposals and suggestions. Yellow hat thinking is concerned with operacy and with making things happen. Effectiveness is the aim of yellow hat constructive thinking.

Yellow hat thinking can be speculative and opportunity seeking. Yellow hat thinking also permits visions and dreams.

Yellow hat thinking is not concerned with mere positive euphoria (red hat) nor directly with creating new ideas (green hat).

## Chapter 36

### Summary of Green Hat Thinking

The green hat is for creative thinking. The person who puts on the green hat is going to use the idioms of creative thinking. Those around are required to treat the output as a creative output. Ideally both thinker and listener should be wearing green hats.

The green colour symbolizes fertility, growth and the value of seeds.

The search for alternatives is a fundamental aspect of green hat thinking. There is a need to go beyond the known and the obvious and the satisfactory.

The green hat thinker uses the creative pause to consider, at any point, whether there might be alternative ideas. There need be no reason for this pause.

In green hat thinking the idiom of movement replaces that of judgement. The thinker seeks to move forward from an idea in order to reach a new idea.

Provocation is an important part of green hat thinking, and is symbolized by the word *po*. A provocation is used to take us out of our usual patterns of thinking. There are many ways of setting up provocations, including the random word method.

Lateral thinking is a set of attitudes, idioms and techniques (including movement, provocation and *po*) for cutting across patterns in a self-organizing asymmetric patterning system. It is used to generate new concepts and perceptions.

## Chapter 42

### Summary of Blue Hat Thinking

The blue hat is the control hat. The blue hat thinker organizes the thinking itself. Blue hat thinking is thinking about the thinking needed to explore the subject.

The blue hat thinker is like the conductor of the orchestra. The blue hat thinker calls for the use of the other hats.

The blue hat thinker defines the subjects towards which the thinking is to be directed. Blue hat thinking sets the focus. Blue hat thinking defines the problems and shapes the questions. Blue hat thinking determines the thinking tasks that are to be carried through.

Blue hat thinking is responsible for summaries, overviews and conclusions. These can take place from time to time in the course of the thinking, and also at the end.

Blue hat thinking monitors the thinking and ensures that the rules of the game are observed. Blue hat thinking stops argument and insists on the map type of thinking. Blue hat thinking enforces the discipline.

Blue hat thinking may be used for occasional interjections which request a hat. Blue hat thinking may also be used to set up a step-by-step sequence of thinking operations which are to be followed just as a dance follows the choreography.

Even when the specific blue hat thinking role is assigned to one person, it is still open to anyone to offer blue hat comments and suggestions.