

Parallel Thinking & Creative Collaboration

Six Thinking Hats for songs, productions, teams, and creative decisions.

Move the team from defended positions to shared examination. One mode at a time. Everyone looks in the same direction together.

- WHITE - evidence
- RED - feeling
- BLACK - caution
- YELLOW - value
- GREEN - possibility
- BLUE - process

NAME

DATE

Start Here

Think together without defending positions.

Traditional argument encourages people to choose positions and defend them. Parallel thinking asks the group to temporarily use the same thinking mode together, then switch modes together. The goal is not forced agreement. It is fuller examination before a decision.

Working rule	Meaning
Same hat together	The group examines one mode at a time. No one is assigned a permanent hat.
Separate the modes	Facts, feelings, caution, value, creativity, and process each get their own space.
Blue runs the process	Frame the question, choose the sequence, synthesize what was learned, and close with a next move.

IMPORTANT

The hats are not personality types. A strong collaborator practices all six modes.

The real problem or decision I want to examine

Choose a song, production, arrangement, project, collaboration, or team decision that actually matters.

The Six Modes

Use one mode at a time.

Mode	Question	Creative example
WHITE - Evidence	What do we know? What is verified? What is missing?	What tempo, range, deadline, technical requirement, or director note is actually known?
RED - Feeling	What is the immediate reaction?	Does this chorus feel exciting, confusing, flat, vulnerable, wrong, or unresolved?
BLACK - Caution	What could fail?	Will the arrangement fight choreography? Is the session too fragile? Are rights/permissions unclear?
YELLOW - Value	What could work?	What is strong, useful, compelling, memorable, or worth protecting?
GREEN - Possibility	What else could we try?	New structure, harmony, sound palette, co-writer, performance choice, or smaller experiment.
BLUE - Process	What are we deciding and what happens next?	Choose the next test, owner, deadline, and what remains open.

DO NOT USE A HAT TO WIN

Black is not the skeptic's job. Green is not the "creative person's" job. Everyone practices every mode.

Run a Session

Frame, examine, create, decide.

Step	Purpose
BLUE OPEN	Define the question, scope, time, and desired outcome.
WHITE GROUND	Establish facts, evidence, assumptions, and missing information.
RED SURFACE	Capture reactions, instincts, tension, excitement, and hesitation.
YELLOW VALUE	Identify benefits, strengths, opportunities, and what should be protected.
BLACK TEST	Expose risks, constraints, ethics, weaknesses, and failure points.
GREEN CREATE	Generate alternatives, combinations, reframes, and experiments.
BLUE CLOSE	Synthesize, decide, assign ownership, define the next test, and record open questions.

Facilitator

Who will keep the group in the current mode and move the sequence forward?

Recorder

Who will capture decisions, questions, and next actions?

Sequence I will use and why

A tense group may need Red early. A vague problem may need more White. A stuck group may need Green before judgment.

Song / Production Lab

Use all six modes on one real creative issue.

The question we are actually trying to answer

Write it as a decision or problem, not a position to defend. Example: What production direction best serves the song and performance?

WHITE | What is true?

RED | What is the reaction?

BLACK | What could go wrong?

YELLOW | What value is here?

GREEN | What else is possible?

BLUE | What do we do next?

Team Lab

Move from positions to shared examination.

TEAM RULE

Disagreement is useful. Defending identity is not. Let every mode have its turn before judging the decision.

Decision / creative question

Examples: Which chorus? Which arrangement? Which production approach? What should change for the performer? How should we deliver for the project?

Mode	What it revealed	What changed in our thinking
White		
Red		
Black		
Yellow		
Green		
Blue		

The decision we can support

State the decision, the evidence behind it, the risk that remains, and the next test.

Project Discovery & Client/Collaborator Work

Use the hats after you understand the need.

Parallel thinking does not replace discovery. First understand what the director, performer, department, collaborator, or project actually needs. Then examine possible responses.

SEQUENCE

DISCOVERY -> DEFINE -> THINK -> STRATEGY -> TEST -> FEEDBACK

Discovery check	Question
Current state	What is happening now?
Desired future	What does the project partner want to be true?
Success measure	How will they know it worked?
Underlying need	What is actually preventing the desired result?

Mode	Use it to test the response
WHITE	What evidence supports this approach? What remains unknown?
RED	How may performers, audience, director, team, or stakeholders react?
BLACK	What risk, technical issue, ethical concern, deadline, or rights issue must be addressed?
YELLOW	What value could this create?
GREEN	What alternative or smaller experiment could create the same value?
BLUE	What strategy is responsible to test next, and how will we measure it?

SERVE THE PROJECT, NOT THE IDEA

Do not use the response to force the discovery. Use discovery to determine whether the idea serves the objective.

Reflection & Thinking Contract

Practice the modes you avoid.

The mode I overuse What kind of thinking do I default to under pressure? 	The mode I avoid Which mode feels slow, uncomfortable, unnecessary, or unfamiliar?
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What does my team need more of?

Facts? Honest reactions? Caution? Optimism? Creativity? Process? Name the evidence.

I will frame	I will listen	I will switch modes	I will close

The next live decision where I will use this

Name the song, session, project, meeting, or production decision. Who needs to be in the room? What would a useful outcome be?

CLOSING PRINCIPLE

Parallel thinking is not agreement. It is disciplined examination before decision.

Framework note: Based on Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats method.