



## COLLABORATION

*"No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it." —Halford E. Luccock*

### WHAT IS IT?

Collaboration is the act of working with others to create something. With multiple perspectives involved, there's a higher chance of discovering new ideas; working as a team also increases available resources. The more ambitious your goals, the more likely you are to need a good team.

### WHY TEACH IT?

As musicians, collaboration is at the heart of what we do. We grow up playing together in string quartets, jazz combos, orchestras and bands. But we're not born knowing how to collaborate successfully, and our style can, and should, change frequently depending on whom we work with. In this exercise, participants can "try on" different ways of engaging with peers.

### LESSON PLAN: "SIX HATS" (Duration: 15-30 minutes)

**BACKGROUND:** Developed by Edward de Bono, the Six Hats exercise provides groups with different methods for collaborating. Each hat has a different theme, which influences how members interact.

#### White Hat: Facts

*The white hat calls on factual information needed during a discussion.*

#### Yellow Hat: Optimism

*The yellow hat explores the positives and benefits of the idea at hand.*

#### Black Hat: Judgment

*The black hat enjoys pointing out the difficulties and dangers of the present idea.*

#### Red Hat: Feelings and Intuition

*The red hat focuses on emotions, feelings and hunches about the idea.*

#### Green Hat: Creativity

*The green hat explores possibilities, alternatives and new ideas.*

#### Blue Hat: Process

*The blue hat facilitates group conversation and helps the discussion run smoothly.*

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**MATERIALS:**

- Paper (one sheet per group member)
- Pen

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Choose a facilitator.
- Identify a topic for discussion. It can be a problem you want to solve or a question up for debate.
- Determine which hat each group member will start with. Have each person write down their hat color and associated characteristic. Make sure that every hat is accounted for. Repetition is okay!
- Start discussion.
- At the facilitator's signal, rotate the pieces of paper clockwise so that each group member gets a new hat. Continue until the hats have made a full circle.

**REFLECTION**

How did each hat affect the way that you interacted with the group? Which hats led to the most productive discussion? The least productive?

Which hat felt the most comfortable to you? The least comfortable? Which hat do you tend to wear when you interact with people in your day-to-day life?

In this exercise, team members each wore different hats. What would happen if everyone wore the same hat at the same time? How can wearing different hats lead to different outcomes when working on a team?

**APPLICATION**

In this exercise, you saw how adopting different roles changes the nature of group collaboration. You can apply this to your own projects by drawing on characteristics of each of these six hats as you're working in different groups. You'll likely notice that you'll need to pull out different hats depending on who you are working with.

The "Six Hats" exercise can also help to resolve challenging group dynamics, both in and outside of the music world. One string quartet that I know uses "Six Hats" to make sure rehearsals run smoothly. Two group members have a tendency to talk a lot, while the other two are shy, so they take turns wearing different hats for an hour or two at a time to make sure that everyone's ideas get heard. They've repeatedly found that many of their best ideas come from someone wearing an unfamiliar hat!

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

[Better People Make You Better](#)

[IBM Design: Diverse Empowered Teams](#)

[HBR: Great Teams Are About Personalities, Not Just Skills](#)

[Fast Company: Inside the Pixar Braintrust](#)