

How to Tie-Dye

Complete Instructions

S-135

What is Tie Dye?

A method of creating patterns in fabric by tying it to prevent the dye from reaching the fabric evenly. Any place that the dye can't reach will stay white, or a lighter color. The gradations of color from intense to light can be beautiful. You accomplish this by folding the fabric, tying it with string, rubber bands, or even zip ties.

The best fabrics to dye are cotton, linen, silk, hemp, or rayon. 100% is best but the higher % of the natural fiber, the better the fabric will hold the dye. Washing or rinsing the fabric in advance helps the dye stay on the fibers of the article. Do not use dryer sheets to dry your fabric prior to dyeing.

Ways to Tie

No matter which way you choose to tie the fabric, secure folds with rubber bands.

- Fold a piece of fabric in vertical pleats, and you'll end up with horizontal stripes.
- Horizontal pleats result in vertical stripes.
- Diagonal pleats make a nice effect.
- For concentric circles, grab the cloth where you want the center to be, and pull, until you've more or less made a long tube of garment, then apply rubber bands at intervals along the fabric.
- For the traditional spiral, you lay the garment on a flat surface, smooth out all the wrinkles, then make a small pleat right across where you want the center to be. Grab the very center of that pleat with a clothespin, and begin to twist. As you twist, pleats appear farther away from the center; as these pleats get too large, split the pleats with your hands, keeping each fold the same height above the table, no more than one to two inches in height.
- Another technique is to use small rubber bands in several places all over the garment. This will make circles of color.

Color Choice

The two most obvious differences between a wonderful tie-dye and so-so one are color choice and color saturation. You'll find that you really have to work to squirt enough dye into the folds to avoid a large amount of white on the finished garment. In choosing colors to place adjacent to each other, remember the color wheel. Do not place "opposite" colors next to each other, such as red near green, or blue near orange, or yellow near purple: the results would be a muddy mess. If you really like bright colors avoid placing a color with red mixed in it, such as purple, near green.

Color Combinations

- a lot of fuschia and a little yellow make red
- red and yellow make orange
- yellow and turquoise* make green
- a lot of turquoise* plus a little fuschia makes blue
- turquoise* plus fuschia makes purple

* (remember to double the amounts of turquoise as compared to other colors)

Mixing the Dyes - When mixing dye powder, be careful not to breathe it in. Use a face mask.

- 1.) For dark colored fabric dissolve urea (1 tablespoon) in water (1 or 2 gallons)
- 2.) Next, dissolve dye in urea solution. The best dye to use on cotton is a good fiber reactive dye such as Procion MX (use about 4 teaspoons of dye per cup). Put the dye solution into squirt or spray bottles for applying the dye.

Be careful when you measure out the dye. Leave the jars open as short a time as possible and use a face mask. Don't breathe in the dye powder!

Pre-soaking the Fabric

Be sure to pre-wash all clothing to remove anything that can prevent the dye from getting to the fabric. It is okay to moisten the fabric with plain water to tie, but just before dyeing, pre-soak the fabric for fifteen minutes to one hour in a solution of sodium carbonate (Soda Ash), mixed one cup per 2 gallons of water.

Applying the Dye

Lay the fabric nearly flat, or pleated loosely, and drip with squeeze bottles directly onto the fabric, or spray it on with a spray bottle. Lay the garment on a plastic protected surface.

Reaction Time

Make sure that the fabric stays wet for the reaction or take place, no less than two hours, but preferably eight to twenty-four hours. The amount of time required depends on the temperature, which should be at least 70° F (21° C). You can drop each fabric item into its own resealable plastic bag and label it with person's name and time to wash out.

Washing the Clothing

Rinse by hand in cold water before machine-washing. Wash first in cold, once, to release excess dye from the fabric, then again in the hottest water available.

Heat setting is **NOT** necessary with Procion MX dyes. The only reason to use a hot water wash is to rid the cloth of the last bits of un-reacted dye. It is important to use cold water before using hot water, as hot water may, in the presence of the sodium carbonate, encourage some excess dye to become a little too closely associated with the fabric, resulting in dye that gradually rinses out over the course of many washings.