



How to tie-dye

SUPPLIES

- Workspace – Indoor or outdoor space to set up the dyes – be prepared for some mess!
- Dye – Commercial dye colours are best. For smaller quantities, consider purchasing tie dye kits which have several colours in smaller quantities. Most kits come with applicator bottles.
- Fabric – Fabric or a clothing item to dye. Must be 100 per cent cotton or natural fibers such as silk for the best results. You can experiment with fabric blends, but do try them out first as they may not take the dye as well. Most dye packets will make enough colour to do several articles so it is best to find a few articles to dye together. You could use the same colours but create different patterns on each article of clothing.
- Buckets – Buckets or plastic containers to hold enough dye to dip the articles. Plan on having one bucket for each colour you decide to mix.
- Water – Hose or sink to rinse items in cold water. Don't use plastic sinks as they may stain with the dye. Stainless steel sinks are best.
- Stirrers – Wooden spoon or dowel rods to stir fabrics. It will stain from the dye so use something disposable.
- Bands – Rubber bands or twine to tie the fabric. Rubber bands are preferred as the dye does not penetrate it, leaving nice white bands in your final product.
- Gloves – Rubber gloves to stop your hands from getting stained.
- Marbles – Marbles are a great object to wrap into the fabric and tie.
- Tools – Scissors and metal tongs.

How to tie-dye – instructions

Step 1 – Preparation

Workspace – Get the area you have chosen ready for a messy event. Cover tables with plastic and if you feel it is necessary, the floor as well. Working outside gives you more freedom especially if you decide to make this a family affair.

Dye – Prepare the dye mixture according to the instructions on the packet. Use one of your buckets or containers to mix and contain the dye for future use with the fabric.

Fabric – Prepare your fabric. Pre-wash new fabric to remove starch and sizing. All new clothing items should be prewashed in case they have starch or chemicals that may prevent the dye from penetrating. Using fabrics or garments you plan to upcycle will not require a pre-wash process.



Test – Test your dye on a scrap of fabric to check for colour intensity.

Step 2 – Tie the Fabric

When your area is prepared and your tools are ready for use you are ready to start to create a tie dye pattern. There are several methods available and colour combinations. It is best to start simple and be happy with the outcome.

Choose a tying method. Rubber bands work well or tying with twine. The idea with tie-dye is the tied up parts with bands or string will not absorb the dye. This technique creates the patterns and swirls associated with tie dye.

See further down for different tying techniques you can use.

Rubbing some candle wax on the twine will make it extra resistant to the dye.

Step 3 – Immerse in dye

When you have tied the fabric get ready to swirl it in the bucket of dye. Pick it up with the tongs to check the colour.

If you are not happy with the intensity of the colour, continue to leave the fabric in the dye for longer. Check the instructions on the packet of dye for times and amounts of water.

Greater control of where your colour is applied can be obtained by putting dye in plastic applicator bottles and just squeezing dye where you need it. You could also put different colours in bowls and paint the dye on where you want it.

Step 4 – Rinse

When you are satisfied with the colour, remove the item from the bucket of dye and rinse in cold water. Rinse by hose or by swirling in a bucket of cold water.

Step 5 – Repeat for new colours

If you plan on different colours, repeat the dyeing process with other colours. Using different colours requires careful planning because of colours changing when they are dyed together.

If you unwrap and re-tie the dyed fabric before dyeing the next color then the white parts take on the new colour while the first colour changes according to a colour mixing chart.

Step 6 – Dry

Finally, wrap the dyed fabric while wet into a plastic bag to allow the colours to set. Check the instructions on the commercial dye for time allocation for this. When you are satisfied the colours are set, wash the dyed fabric item and dry and iron ready to make up your fabric.



Patterns

Suggestions and ideas for ways to tie the fabric and create interesting patterns.

Scrunched effect

How to tie-dye with marble wraps

Use marbles as an item to be the insert object to create a tie-dye pattern. Push a marble under the fabric and fold the fabric over the marble. Twist the fabric slightly to encase the marble and then tie up the folds with elastic bands or twine. Leave spaces in between to allow different amounts of dye to penetrate the fabric.

Fan-tastic stripes

Fold the fabric like a fan. Make the folds as narrow or wide as you like. Then put rubber bands over the folds at different intervals. Tying twine will also give the tie-dye effect and the tighter the twine is tied the less dye seeps into the folds and the more white or plain spaces are evident.

Mirror images

Fold the fabric or the item of clothing in half and insert a marble to tie into a double layer of the fabric. Tie in exactly the same way, but the two pieces of the fabric will be together. Dye in the normal way and when you open up your fabric there should be two 'mirror' images on the fabric. In tie-dye there will never be exactly two images the same, but there will be a definite similarity.

Rainbow spiral

To create the rainbow spiral you need to use your wooden spoon handle or dowel stick to turn the fabric into a spiral.

Start by laying the fabric flat and placing the stick into the centre of the fabric. Then twist the stick round and round to form a circle of fabric. It will look like a pie shape. When the circle is complete remove it gently from the table and put the elastic bands round to secure the spiral. When the spiral is secure the dye process can begin. Imagine your colours are going to be in thirds or quarters around the pie/circle of the spiral. Use yellow, turquoise and red for your basic colours. Add other rainbow colors if you wish. Paint the dye on to be more controlled with your colours. Use a sponge applicator for easy painting of the dye. Rinse and open out to see your beautiful rainbow tie dye.

How to wash a tie-dye shirt and stop it from fading

Tie-dye articles should be washed on their own. If you throw them in the washing machine with other colours or whites, then you will probably have some dye transfer and ruin some of your clothing.

There are some things you can do however to minimize the amount of dye that comes out of your new tie-dye shirt.

Don't wash your shirt until the dye has been drying for at least 24 hours.



For the first wash, use a bucket of warm water and add half a bottle of white vinegar. This helps stop the dye bleeding.

