

THE TIE-DYE RIFF

Tie-Dye, like Batik, is a resist technique. But instead of using wax to prevent dye from entering certain areas, the cloth is “bound”—tied or knotted or partially covered. Different ties, knots or covers produce different patterns of blockage, which the dye transforms into permanent designs on the cloth. Of course you can combine binding and wax blocking.

Your house teems with ties: rubber bands, cotton rope, pipe-cleaners, light-weight wire, waxed-nylon cord, twist ties, plastic-wrap torn into strips, vinyl tape. The fabric can be knotted or folded or gathered into bunches before tying. You can tie around objects—a brick, say, or a rubber ball. Use a pipette to place concentrated dye down into creases for strong accents, or a syringe to work from the inside out. Use clamps or clothespins or removable lines of stitching for special effects. Roll or fan-fold the entire piece, from the top, from the side, in a spiral.

The chemists at ICI have worked hard to give Procion Dyes penetrative power: you’ll need firm knots and secure ties to block them. It helps to use non-conducting ties and no salt. For really intense bright colors use the humidifying agent Urea. In Tie-Dye you don’t want level colors, fast take-up, or complete exhaust of the dye-bath—in many ways it’s the reverse of normal dyeing practice. For *really intense colors* you can use more of the chemicals, more soda, more urea, more dye, in the same amount of water. Up to as much as double what we call for here.

APPROXIMATE AMOUNTS NEEDED TO TIE-DYE 200 T-SHIRTS:

5 pounds DYE
25 pounds SODA
25 pounds UREA

Amounts can vary considerably—according to T-shirt weight, area dyed, and waste—but this has been a useful rule of thumb. Figure quantities proportionately for different numbers of shirts.

Cost depends some on dye-colors chosen (lemon, fuschia, turquoise and black are the most popular), but will likely come to about \$1.00/shirt.

PAT’S RECIPE

DYE LIQUOR

- Dissolve 1/4 cup UREA in 1 pint of WATER. Use this solution to mix DYE LIQUOR: 1/2 to 2 teaspoons DYE per 1/4 cup of UREA-WATER.
(Gives up to 8 colors—use separate jars.)
- For more intense colors—try increasing soda and urea first; then try more dye.

SODA SOAK

- Pre-wash CLOTH, in warm soapy water, to remove sizing.
- Dissolve 1 cup of SODA in 2-1/2 gallons of WATER. Pre-soak your CLOTH for 15 minutes in this SODA-WATER solution.

Be careful: SODA-WATER is alkaline enough to burn your hands.

TIEING

- Remove CLOTH from SODA-WATER and apply TIES while CLOTH is still wet.
- Non-conductive TIES work best (undyable, impervious stuff: rubber bands, waxed-cord, plastic wrap).

APPLICATION

- Apply DYE directly onto CLOTH. Use a pipet, syringe, brush, squeeze bottle, spray-bottle, spoon. Wear rubber gloves.

REACTION

- Let WORK stand covered, so that it *doesn’t* dry out, for at least six hours (really)—overnight is better. This is the time the dye bonds to the fiber.

HEAT SETTING

- Undo TIES, rinse well, then wash CLOTH in very hot soapy water (boiling is good or steaming or baking).
- Rinse until water runs clear.

Yield will vary hugely, depending on coverage and intensity—say, from 4 to 10 T-shirts.

A FEW TIES

