



TECHNIQUE: Dye Cloth

Designing and dyeing cloth with indigo is equal parts science, art, and luck; but, it is always 100 percent fun. The dye vat can be SMELLY, depending on your choice of ingredients, so **remember to provide excellent ventilation.**

Time Required: 1-2 hours

Materials:

- Plastic painter's cloth or newspapers (to protect work area)
- Aprons (or wear old clothes)
- Rubber gloves
- Indigo dye vat
- Vinegar
- Plastic tubs
- Wooden spoons
- Swatches of cotton for samples or practice
- Cotton t-shirt or other garment
- Plastic clothesline or wooden rack for drying cloth
- Marbles, coins, beans, washers or other round objects
- Rubber bands, string, paperclips, paper clamps, or clothespins
- Needle and thread
- Stencils
- Resist paste
- Brush or sponge

Tips:

- The fabric used for this activity is cotton. If you want to dye wool, you will need a slightly different recipe. Check the dye manufacturer's instructions.
- Because repeated dippings produce deeper colors, you can have fun making a light-to-dark item.

EASY DOES IT. . .Using Resist Paste

Because the paste is water soluble, take extra care so that it is not dissolved or scrapped off in the dye vat:

1. Apply the resist paste (while still hot) with brush or sponge over stencils or freehand.
2. Allow to dry thoroughly before dyeing — overnight is best.
3. Handle very gently. . .do not massage in the dye vat.
4. Allow to dry between dips.
5. After the last dip, scrape off the paste so that it is not washed down the drain when you rinse the cloth.

Instructions:

Prepare Cloth for Dyeing

1. Wash cloth or garment thoroughly to remove soil/sizing.
2. Decide on the design and apply resist as in box at bottom of page or try some of the tie-dye techniques in steps 3-6.
3. Fold, pleat, twist, wrinkle, crumple, swirl, and pinch the fabric into interesting shapes.
4. Bind those shapes with thread, string, rubber bands, paperclips, clamps, or clothespins.
5. Add circle designs by pinching a bit of cloth, inserting a round object, and securing it with thread or yarn.

Dyeing Cloth

1. Make certain that the dye vat is ready.
2. Thoroughly wet cloth
3. Carefully push aside the scum that is on top of the dye vat.
4. Gently slip cloth into the dye vat. NO splashing!
5. Working with gloved hand below the surface, massage the cloth for 2-3 minutes. NO swishing or stirring!
6. Squeeze out excess dye below the surface and carefully lift cloth and hang for 15 minutes to allow color to develop through oxidation.
- >> ***This is the fun! The cloth will be yellow-green when pulled from the dye vat. It turns blue as the dye oxidizes.***
7. Repeat dipping and oxidizing until color is a couple of shades darker than desired.
- >> ***The color will lighten after the excess dye is removed and the cloth is dried.***
8. After the final dip, soak dyed cloth for 10 min. in room temperature water to which 2T white distilled vinegar per gallon has been added.
9. Rinse thoroughly until no more blue runs from cloth.
10. Dry
11. Remove bindings to reveal designs. (The paste will be dissolved during the rinse.)

