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How to Tie Dye

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By Brianna Brown

Making a tie dye anything is a fun family friendly activity. A t-shirt would be my opinion of the best way to start for beginners. The necessary products will be an old or new white t-shirt that is 100% cotton. If the material is anything else such as polyester the color will not attach itself properly. Secondly, you will need a tie dye kit from Wal-Mart, Hobby Lobby, or any other craft store. This kit will include rubber gloves, rubber bands, squeeze bottles and dye. Also grab some trash bags or some kind of plastic to cover your home if you are doing this activity inside. The next step that will be left out of the kit is adding warm water to your squeeze bottles that are already mixed with urea, soda ash, and dye (urea is a chemical that either helps dissolve dye in smaller volumes or works as a water attractor to help absorb water and keep your shirt damp enough to hold color.) Make sure not to use hot or cold water with your dye because it will not mix properly and then your whole project is over. A few more things to be sure to have around would be old towels and paper towels because spills are very possible and also be sure to wear old clothes and sneakers so you don't ruin any of your favorite clothes.

Beginning the activity soak the t-shirt in warm water, about the temperature of a baby's bath. If you bought a new t-shirt you must wash it first because the "newness," will restrict the dye from holding properly in the fabric. Ok, so once your t-shirt is soaked, squeeze out as much water possible (run it through your spin cycle on your dryer or have a friend help.) The shirt only needs to be damp not wet because the color will soak better and last longer.

There are many ways to shape your shirt for different patterns of tie dye but I am going to use the pie process. Grab a pen, wooden spoon, or even a friend's finger so that a place is held in the middle of the shirt as you twist your shirt into a pie shape. Clockwise and counterclockwise does not matter in this process because it will be twisted all the same. However, this step is very important keeps your shirt in a tight "pie" because a messy pie will mean a messy shirt.

Once you have your shirt twisted you can now apply your rubber bands. Place the rubber bands as if you are slicing a pie. Start with an "X" and go from there placing one horizontally across the middle of your "X" and etc. It does not matter how many rubber bands you use between 4-7 is fine but if you desire more that is also ok because this is your creation after all.

Now your shirt is ready for dye. If you are not doing this activity outside again make sure everything is covered with trash bags, plastic, or tarp so your home doesn't get stained. Also make sure to have your old clothes on and do not be afraid of the dye. If it happens to get on your skin that is okay it will wash off between 3-4 days but skin only.

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When tie dying usually only three colors are used fuchsia, turquoise and yellow. When you start your begin with the lightest color first because once it's on there and you mix another color with it there is no getting that white space back. Yellow mixes better with everything and gives you other colors such as blue and green so using yellow for a base is also good.

Now you have your shirt in a twisted pie shape with your rubber bands holding it tight in place. Your dye is mixed your old clothes are on and you're ready to go.

Grab your dye and begin from the middle of your pie once slice at a time with any different colors you choose. While applying keep your squirt bottle close to the shirt and covering all the white. When you are finished with this side, lift your shirt, wipe down the area below and place the colored side down (now showing the other white side of your shirt.) All the colors that you applied on the other side of the shirt you want to apply them in the same place on this side meaning: blue behind blue, yellow behind yellow, and etc.

Your shirt is almost finished. If all the white is now covered place your shirt in a trash bag by itself, and seal the bag tight. This is the hard part leave your shirt for 24-36 hours but no longer because your colors will not come out correctly.

Finally, the moment you have been waiting for is here. Put your gloves and old clothes back on and un-wrap your shirt. The astonishing colors and the excitement I feel every time I tie dye is never tiring. Take your shirt and place it in the sink or water hose and let your shirt rinse clean. At first it will look like black is running off your shirt and all the colors are washing away, however this is normal. Once your water is clear you may hang your shirt and let it dry. It is ok to wash your shirt with other laundry after the first few times but rather safe than sorry. Now your creation is final and you have a lovely new t-shirt just for you and you can even make them for friends and family. Enjoy!

