

Dye Process for cotton fabric

This is the process that seems to work best for me.

M. Marlene Oaks

You will need the following:

- ♦ 100% cotton fabric, say Kona cotton or good broadcloth. I like to dye in 1 to 2 yard pieces. You can also overdye on say a white on white—experiment.
- ♦ A plastic shoe box or other such plastic container per piece of fabric
- ♦ Dye—kind I like is listed below & is purchased online at Dharma Trading at <http://www.dharmatrading.com/html/eng/3796-AA.shtml?lnav=dyes.html>
- ♦ Soda ash- also purchased at Dharma Trading, and a half gallon or larger jar with lid
- ♦ Non iodized salt
- ♦ Rubber or vinyl gloves
- ♦ Plastic spoons (disposable kind)
- ♦ Old rubber spatula
- ♦ A 4 cup plastic measuring cup per color dye (get at least a clear red, yellow & blue to start as they mix to make most color), jars with lids to save extra



[Dharma Fiber Reactive Procion Dyes](#) Pro's: Best dye for cotton, rayons, linens, hemp and other plant based fibers. Best dye for Tie-Dye and Batik. Vibrant wash fast permanent colors. Easy to use. Does not need hot water. Economical!

Dharma Fiber Reactive Dye must be 'fixed' (made permanent) with Soda Ash. About 1 lb. Soda Ash per 4 oz. of dye is needed when garment dyeing or per 3 lbs of fabric as a pre-soak when tie-dyeing.

So here's what I do to make interesting fabric for quilting or other sewing projects:

- 1) Wash your fabric in hot water to remove any chemicals or sizing. Dry without a dryer sheet.
- 2) Put on your gloves. Mix up 1/2 cup soda ash in a large plastic jar with lid—say 2 quart size. You will keep extra for later, so needs a lid. I like to add the soda ash with just a cup or 2 of water & shake until dissolved & then add the rest of the water & shake again.
- 3) Put the fabric into the shoe box and pour on some of the soda ash water. Poke with spatula until all fabric is saturated and then let it set for an hour or so.
- 4) Mix up your dye. For each color you are going to use: take a heaping spoonful of dye power & put into bottom of plastic cup, add 1/4 cup or so warm water & mix until a smooth paste, then add warm water up to the 4 cup line and mix well, for more intense color use less water. When you are done with the dye, I put the leftovers into mason jars with lids to use another day.
- 5) I like to do all of this on the patio, by the way. It is dye, so be careful.
- 6) Wring the soda ash water out of your fabric with your hands (in their gloves) over the shoebox. Pour excess water back into the large jar of soda ash water to use at a later time.

- 7) Accordion fold up your damp fabric in the shoe box, or put string ties on it at places, or rubber bands, or whatever creative idea comes to mind.
- 8) You will be spooning and/or pouring dye on the fabric and you want to only put on as much as can be absorbed by the part of the fabric you want that color. So, I poke at it with the spatula until there is no puddle to speak of under it. If you get too much on, you will end up with a bunch of brown fabric as all colors mix together and you get various shades of brown.
- 9) For example: I pour a bit of yellow on one end of the accordion, poke at it with the spatula to make sure all is absorbed and may add more if it seems to not be enough. Then I pour next to that the next color I want, say blue and what will happen is where the blue and yellow touch green will form. Then I pour red next to the other side of the blue and purple will form where the red and blue touch, and then I pour some more yellow and where it touches red I will get orange.
- 10) The more I dilute the dye with water, the more pastel the color. Experiment.
- 11) Then I let it set overnight. Don't fool with it so as not to mess up the colors and make them muddy.
- 12) The next day I go out back with my shoe box of fabric, gloves on my hands, and hose it off until the water runs pretty clear. Then I take it to the washing machine, put in hot water and a heaping cup of non iodized salt and wash it. I dry it on hot and then iron with a hot iron.
- 13) There are many happy surprises when you dye like this.
- 14) Of course, if you want a solid, you can do that too. Just pour one color on your fabric in the shoe box. Or just use two colors, or make ombre fabric, or you whatever you want. You are making it up and the possibilities are endless.

