

Dyeing Yarn With Kool-Aid

Kool-Aid is a safe, easy and fun way to dye wool yarn. Only precautions are to protect your kitchen & your clothes from the dye, and DO NOT use any metal bowls, pans, or utensils. These directions worked for us, but are in no way the only way to do this. Search the internet for a wealth of information on Kool-Aid dyeing.

Preparing the Yarn

These instructions are for animal fiber based yarns only as they dye best in an acidic solution.

You should choose enough yarn to complete the project you have in mind, since it will be fairly difficult to duplicate the results exactly.

The yarns in the Dye For Me collection are in hanks - which will allow the dye to easily come in contact with all of the fiber, and they are tied at several points so they will hold their shape during rinsing and you will not end up with a tangled mess. You may add additional ties to the hanks - evenly spaced around the hank - tie loosely.

Pre-wet the yarn by soaking it in tepid water for a few minutes, then squeezing it out. This allows for quicker, more even dye penetration. If you want to try for a mottled look, you can skip this step and start with dry yarn, but it will take longer for the dye to saturate the wool.

Mixing the Dye

You'll need some packets of unsweetened Kool-Aid or other brand drink mix. The colors are fairly predictable - for red, try strawberry or cherry. For purple or blue, try grape or blue raspberry, etc. For other colors, try mixing different flavors together.

How many packets you need is largely a function of how much yarn you want to dye and how dark you want to dye it. For a sock or scarf-size amount of wool and a light to medium color, two to three packets should suffice. It's difficult to give exact formulas for the dyes, since so many variables besides amount of dye can affect the final result. The entire process is subject to a fair amount of trial-and-error.

Remember that in almost all cases, you will be mixing the flavors in a much stronger concentration than you would to drink them. When you mix the dye you want to have enough liquid to cover the yarn. If the yarn isn't completely immersed, the results will be mottled (a nice look, too), and having an excessive amount of liquid will dilute the color and waste the dye.

Finally, for best results, add about ¼ cup of white distilled vinegar per quart of water to make the pH of the solution acidic. This step isn't necessary, but wool accepts dye better under acidic conditions, and you will get darker, richer colors.

To get started, put down a layer of newspaper, plastic, paper towels, or whatever on the counter to protect surfaces from dye and excess liquid. Kool-Aid may also stain fingers and clothing, so wear clothes you don't care about, and use plastic gloves.

Mix the Kool-Aid solution in a large glass or plastic mixing bowl - large enough to submerge the yarn. Add the vinegar.

To dye all of the yarn one color:

Submerge the yarn in the bowl - completely covering the yarn. Swirl around to get all of the yarn touched by the dye solution. Place the bowl in the microwave and heat on high for about 5 minutes. Time will vary with different microwaves. When done - the liquid solution will have lost most or all of its color - as the yarn has picked it up. Use tongs to pick up the yarn, and submerge the yarn in cool water to rinse.

To add other colors:

Once excess dye stops coming out of the yarn - you are ready to dye it with other colors, if desired. Lay the yarn into a glass baking pan (one that will fit in the microwave) and use squirt bottles, syringes, paint sponges, etc to over-dye the yarn with additional colors. Return the yarn to the microwave for 3 minutes on high to set the dyes. Cool and rinse as before. Squeeze out and hang to dry. Remember to put old towels or newspaper under the hanging yarn to protect your floors.

When totally dry - yarn is ready to knit. Wind into a ball and knit away!

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