

Dyeing Wool

My favorite dyes are by W. Cushing & Co, of Kennebunkport, Maine. The web site is www.wcushing.com but you have to order on the toll free # **1-800-626-7847**. With each color there are several ranges so you can go from a light to dark color, depending on what you want. I have also used the color dyes from KnitPicks. They work well too.

I take my bare yarn and wrap it from my hand and around my elbow, doing so rather loosely. I like to dye between 150 to 200 yards at a time. Of course, this depends on the project I have in mind. There is nothing worse than running out of yarn. Now I have a big loop of yarn. To keep it from getting tangled up and felted, I loosely tie two pieces of yarn around the loop, one opposite of the other. Do not do it too tight or it will not dye evenly.

For this amount of yarn I use about 1/4 teaspoon of dye (medium intensity) and add it to about 3/4 cup of near boiling water. I let it dissolve for about 5 minutes. In the meantime I take my yarn and gently soak it in lukewarm water, making sure it is thoroughly wet. I gently squeeze out the water and set it on paper towels (white only) or a white terry towel. I let this set for about 5 minutes. You do not want it dripping wet.

I take a large metal bowl and add 1/4 to 1/3 of my color mixture. I add about 1 tablespoon of white distilled vinegar and enough hot water to make sure it will more than cover the yarn (about 4 cups). I put it on a simmer setting on my stovetop. I add my yarn now and make sure it gets in the color bath evenly. For very light colors, I remove it after about 30 seconds and check the color. Remember, when you rinse out the yarn, the color will fade considerably. If I want a darker color, I will add more of my basic color mixture, stir well and add back my yarn. I continue to check to make sure the color is getting the intensity I want.

For dark colors (reds, black, navy, etc.) you will have to use a strong color mixture, 1/2 teaspoon or more. Do not add it all at once to the water. Do it gradually. This method is very important if you want a dark color. At first I would make a very dark color mixture, add the vinegar and water and drop in the yarn. I found the dye took unevenly and I had to toss the whole works. Adding more color a little at a time seems to work better.

If I am getting close to the color I want, I rinse the yarn thoroughly under cool water. Rinse until no more color comes off. I set the yarn on paper towels or a terry towel for a few minutes. Then when it is no longer dripping wet, I hang it on a rack to dry. I do put an old towel underneath to make sure it does not drip on my floor tile!

It can take from 12-24 hours for the yarn to dry, depending on the amount you use. I always wear rubber gloves too. Then I wrap the yarn around the core of toilet paper rolls! I save them up just for this use.

Hints: Remember to wear gloves. Also, if the dyes get on your counter tops, floor, etc., I found household bleach gets out the color. I dye in my laundry room, which has white tile. If you have colored tile and grout, I would make sure everything is well covered. And wear an apron!

Enjoy!

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