



Tie-dye a T-shirt

Fill someone's life with colour by making them a brilliant rainbow T-shirt.

What you need

- Clean bucket
- 1 litre of warm water
- 100g bicarbonate of soda
- Clean, white T-shirt (100% cotton works best)
- Waterproof gloves
- Elastic bands
- Coloured dye

How does it work?

Dyeing is a process in which coloured chemicals called pigments go through a reaction with the fibres in a material. The reaction makes the pigments form a chemical bond that sticks them to the fibres, so that they don't wash off. The dyes used in tie-dyeing – known as fibre-reactive dyes – bond well with cotton fibres, creating a bright and vibrant finish. Soaking the T-shirt in a bicarbonate of soda solution first helps open up the structure of the cotton fibres, giving them a bristly surface that the dye chemicals can bond with more easily.

TIE-BREAKER

In 2013, US artist Inez Harwood created the world's longest tie-dye. She used 59 kilograms of dye to colour a sheet of cotton fabric that was nearly 927 metres long.



1 Pour the warm water and bicarbonate of soda into a bucket and stir. Submerge your T-shirt and let it soak in the solution for about an hour.



2 Put on your gloves. Take the T-shirt out of the bucket, squeeze out the excess liquid and lay it out on a surface that you don't mind getting messy.



3 Scrunch up your T-shirt and tie elastic bands around it to hold it together. The way that you bundle up the shirt affects the tie-dye pattern created.



Let loose your experimental side.



4 Apply different coloured dyes to your shirt. Either squirt them straight from the pot or paint them onto the fabric to create a rainbow effect.



5 Leave your T-shirt to dry for at least eight hours. Once it has dried fully, put your gloves back on and rinse it thoroughly in water to wash out excess dye.



6 Flatten out the T-shirt and leave it to dry somewhere warm. Wear it yourself, or give it as a gift to put some colour into someone's life.

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