

Tutorial and Story: Dyeing Yarn with Easter Egg Dyes

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Before I give you instructions for dyeing yarn with Easter egg dyes, let me make it clear that I dyed “100% wool” yarn, since Easter egg dyes don’t work on all fibers. Please don’t try dyeing other fibers without researching what dyes work on which fibers or you may be disappointed with the results.

You’ll need these supplies for dyeing your wool yarn:

- Microwave
- Microwave-safe baking dish or bowl
- Easter egg dyeing kit
- Distilled white vinegar
- Measuring cup
- Measuring spoon
- 1-6 cups or short glasses
- Rubber gloves
- Potholders (optional)
- Plastic bags
- Plastic wrap
- Tongs (optional)
- Water
- Niddy Noddy (optional)
- Yarn ball winder (optional)
- Hanging rack or shower curtain rod

These are the steps I took to dye my “wool” yarn:

1-Wind the Yarn

Since many yarns come wound in balls, the first thing I needed to do was to rewind the yarn into hanks. Some of you may be asking “What is the difference between a ball (or skein) and a hank?” All of the yarn you can purchase in “big box” stores and craft stores comes in balls. Many of the yarns you can purchase in yarn stores come in hanks. Here’s a photo of both kinds of yarns:



The hank is on the left and the ball/skein is on the right. The yarn in the middle is how the hank looks when it's opened up. It's one big loop of yarn, typically about 2 yards in circumference. So how was I going to get my ball of yarn wound into a hank? Well, there's such a thing as a Niddy Noddy for that. I didn't own a Niddy Noddy, so I looked it up online and decided to make my own using PVC pipe. Here is a YouTube tutorial on how to make your own Niddy Noddy with PVC pipes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8I5f2h-bll>. There are lots of tutorials for making and using the Niddy Noddy, so have fun learning about this wonderful tool for fiber lovers! I used a 16" piece of 3/4" diameter PVC for the center piece and four 5" pieces for the end pieces on my Niddy Noddy. Since the couplings take up some additional space and I was aiming for a 2 yard Niddy Noddy, I didn't use a full 18" long piece for the center. There is an extra 7" long piece of PVC in the photo that I didn't end up using. If I want to make hanks of yarn that are 1 yard in circumference, I can use it because with the couplings added to the ends, that 7" will become 9" ($9" \times 4 = 36"$ long). I didn't glue the couplings and end caps in place so I can take it apart whenever I need to for storage. Here are some photos of my Niddy Noddy:



Niddy Noddy pieces



Niddy Noddy assembled



Niddy Noddy in use



Niddy Noddy filled

After making my Niddy Noddy, I took my ball/skein of Patons Classic Wool yarn (in Winter White) and wound it on my Niddy Noddy before I dyed the wool yarn. I'm not going to explain here how to wind the yarn on the Niddy Noddy. You can watch various online videos to learn how to wind yarn on the Niddy Noddy. Since I wanted to dye my ball of yarn in 2 halves, I split the ball into 2 even halves (or close to even) by weighing the ball from time to time as I wound it onto the Niddy Noddy. This way, I could tell how much was left, which would then tell me how much I had wound (just subtracted the

weight left from the original weight of the ball). You'll need a good digital scale for this: either a kitchen scale or a postal scale works well.

2-Soak the Yarn

The next step after winding the yarn into a hank is to soak the yarn before dyeing it, which helps the fibers absorb the dye better. The soaking liquid should be 3-4 parts water to 1 part vinegar. I used 8 cups of water and 2 cups of vinegar and I let the yarn soak for 30 minutes in a large pot. After the 30 minutes was over, I removed the yarn and gently squeezed out the excess water, but I didn't wait for the yarn to dry, as some people may do when they dye yarn.



3-Prepare the Dyes

While the yarn was soaking, I prepared the Easter egg dyes. I had all of the dye tablets organized beforehand into bags, according to the colors. These are the colors I used (pink, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple):



Because so many of the tablets look alike, I tested each one with a dampened cotton swab, such as a Q-tip. I also included a dot of the color on a piece of paper in each bag, so I'd know at a glance what color I was using. The 9-packs of dyes actually had 12 dye tablets in them. What a pleasant surprise! Here are the 12 colors that were in last year's 9-pack of Easter egg dyes:



I read both on the Easter egg dye kits and online that pink (and some reds and purples) already have citric acid in the tablet, so I used water (instead of vinegar) to dissolve the pink tablet. I followed the dye kit instructions for dissolving the tablets, which meant using 1 tbsp of vinegar for the other 5 colors I used. After the tablets had dissolved, I added 1/2 cup (4 oz) of water to each dye glass.

Because Easter egg dyes are “food grade”, you don’t have to use separate containers for mixing the dyes and keep them separate from your food dishes and utensils. But because the dyes stain quite well, you should cover your surfaces with plastic wrap or plastic bags before you begin mixing the dyes and dyeing your yarn. You’ll see in the next photo that my glasses with the mixed dyes are on top of the plastic bags on my kitchen counter. I get enough stains on my counters from my husband using certain spices when he cooks! I don’t need to encourage more stains!

I wasn’t sure how much dye to mix up, so I used 1 tablet of each color, which meant 3 tablets total for the 50 grams of yarn in each half of the ball that I was going to dye. I read that 3-4 tablets of dye is enough to dye 100g of sock yarn, so that’s a good starting point to figure out how much dye to mix up for your yarn dyeing project.



4-Dye the Yarn

I decided to use the pink, orange and yellow dyes on one half of the ball of yarn and the green, blue and purple dyes on the other half of the yarn. I also wanted to try 2 different ways to get the dye onto the yarn. So for the half of the ball of yarn that I wanted to dye red, orange and yellow, I poured the dyes onto the hank of yarn in an oblong glass dish. On the half of the ball of yarn that I wanted to dye green, blue and purple, I dipped the yarn into each of the 3 glasses of mixed dyes.

For the red, orange and yellow yarn, I lined the glass dish with plastic wrap first, which helped keep the dyes separated from each other. Then I arranged the hank of yarn around the edges of the dish and added a glass to the center of the dish like this:



Then I started “carefully” pouring the dyes on the yarn (with the rubber gloves on my hands so I didn’t get my hands stained!).



Then I added more dye between the 3 sections of color to fill all the yarn with dye.



I tried not to let the dye water seep into the wrong places in the yarn so each color would be kept mostly pure. I love the areas where two colors meet, making a combined color! I moved the yarn around a bit to make sure there weren’t any undyed areas of yarn at the bottom.

For the green, blue and purple yarn, I dipped the yarn into each of the 3 glasses of dye and let the yarn soak up the dye. Then I rearranged the yarn a little so the white sections between the glasses of dye would soak up the dye, too.



After the green, blue and purple had soaked into the yarn sufficiently, I put that yarn into a microwave-safe glass bowl.



5-Set the Dye with Heat

After I was happy with how much pink, orange and yellow dye had soaked up into the yarn, I covered the whole oblong dish with plastic wrap and started microwaving it. From what I read, you have to be

careful not to heat the yarn too much, especially with wool, because it can felt on you! And I certainly didn't want that to happen! So I microwaved it on high for 2 minutes and let it rest in the microwave for 2 minutes. I repeated that until all the dye had absorbed into the yarn (I think I did that 6 times total).

After microwaving the first batch of yarn, I covered the glass bowl with the green, blue and purple yarn with plastic wrap and microwaved that the same way as the oblong dish, checking after every 2 minutes.

6-Let Yarn Cool

After all of the dye has soaked up in the yarn and any leftover water is clear, the yarn will be quite hot! Using your potholders, carefully remove the glass dish or bowl from the microwave. Still being careful, remove the plastic wrap that is over the yarn and allow the yarn to cool before touching it.

7-Rinse Yarn

After the yarn has dried, it needs to be rinsed to make sure the dye is going to be permanent and not bleed after you crochet or knit your project with it. So I rinsed the yarns one-at-a-time in room-temperature water until the water was clear (actually, there was no dye coming out of the yarn, so I knew it was color-fast).

8-Let Yarn Dry

After the yarn cools, it's time to hang it to dry. You can use a salad spinner or a washing machine to help remove any extra liquid from the yarn so it dries faster. Or you can simply roll it in an old, clean towel and hang it to dry. I used the shower curtain rod in my extra bathroom to hang the yarn to dry. It worked great! I put a towel below the yarn to catch the drips. Because I live in Arizona, the yarn dried within a day (or less).



I also over-dyed some mustard colored yarn with some of the leftover dye before I cleaned up the kitchen. This is the yarn before and after dyeing it with the same 6 colors that I used for the 2 half balls of yarn:



The mustard-colored “wool” yarn that I used is on the left. The colors came out even more vibrant in this yarn than the winter white yarn I dyed in the larger quantities. I dyed these small pieces of yarn to try out over-dyeing, which I had read about on Ravelry. Once I decide what I’d like to knit or crochet with this mustard-colored yarn, I’ll go ahead and dye all of it! Overdyeing is great to change the color of a yarn that you have in your stash that you don’t really like. Once you dye it to a color you like, then you’ll be more apt to use it in a project!

This is how the dried pink, orange and yellow, as well as the green, blue and purple yarn looked in the hanks:



The only problem is you can’t crochet or knit with yarn in hanks because it gets all tangled up. So you have to wind it into balls or cakes before using it. You’ll need a yarn ball winder and a swift to do this.

First, I put the dry yarn from the hank onto my yarn swift, as you can see in this photo:



Then I used my yarn ball winder to wind the yarn into a ball (also known as a cake).



This is what the cakes of yarn looked like after dyeing the yarn and winding it into balls/cakes:



The colors came out so vibrant with the Easter egg dyes! I was really pleased with my first yarn dyeing project and I'll be dyeing more yarn soon! The knit and crochet scarves that I designed with this yarn turned out great, as well (the patterns for the scarves will be coming later this year)!

Why not try dyeing some wool yarn with Easter egg dyes? You won't regret it! And if you purchase the Easter egg dye kits AFTER Easter, you'll get them at a discount, too!