

Gradient Dying with yarns - Pam Ramsey

Gradient, Ombre, dip, Eco, and more are all the buzzwords in the Dye World currently. There are a number of Facebook Forums and Ravelry Forums on different styles of dying, as well as literally hundreds of YouTube Video how to's. There has never been a more exciting time in the world of color as fiber artists around the globe are experimenting with different ways of laying color onto fiber.

Today, we will explore simple gradient dying. Gradient is laying color in a precise manner, going from light to dark in the same colorway, giving you a flowing graduation of color. If you are feeling adventurous, you can also experiment with adding some colors from the opposite end of the color wheel in the same family.

Prep: Always tie your yarns with several figure 8 ties to keep the skein from tangling while you handle it. Have buckets of hot water and vinegar available for soaking.

Step 1 The fiber or yarn needs to soak in a mixture of hot water and a weak acid, using vinegar today. I find Citric acid works better as it is stronger, but we are looking for easy and fun in this class. The vinegar helps neutralize the fiber and also can cut residual oils from the carding and spinning process.

Step 2 Lay out plastic film on tables, be generous as you want to be able to wrap and cover the yarn completely. You can dry steam in a turkey roaster or use a double boiler for a true steaming. Remember, once used for dyes, you should never use the same utensils or cookers for food prep.

Step 3 get your yarn out of its soak and wring partially out, you want it wet, but not dripping. Lay the yarn out on your plastic wrap. Using your ruler decide how long you want your color runs. Anything goes, just remember on a long warp, you may want a long color run so as not to have a muddy appearance on the finished yarn. Using a foam paintbrush, begin dabbing dye onto your yarn, press it in firmly and turn over to check to be sure its going all the way through the skein, dab on the backside if need be. Use the colorways on the table, but don't be afraid to use colors from other tables if you want more of a hand painted appearance or a different color value for some pop. This is where it gets messy and you may want to have gloves

Step 4 Wrap up your yarn in the plastic, being sure no holes where the dye can leak through and being sure you have tied on an identifying tag. Lay it in the cooker or steamer and we'll let them heat for 45 minutes. Once done, we'll turn off and let it cool naturally. Once cool you can rinse in lukewarm water with a dab of synthrapol in it. I like to just let it sit for a day or more and then do them all at once. Handle gently so no felting. Cautiously ring out and hang to dry. If there is a lot of dye in the rinse water, you will need to rinse until clear. It happens sometimes.