

Woolly Dreadlocks - pt2 Dyeing



This is part 2 in a 3 part series, showing you how to make your own woolly dreadlocks.

In the previous installment we talked about how to make the dreadlocks from undyed wool pencil roving. If you've used roving that was already dyed, or rather like the look of the natural roving, you may want to skip this step and go straight onto adding your extensions.

Additionally, there are two other tutorials on the WW website for dyeing wool, both of which are ideal for the first time dyer:
<http://www.woollywormhead.com/dyeing-spinning/>

Materials:

Acid dyes, or dye for protein fibres (I.e Kool aid)
White vinegar or acetic acid
Large metal saucepan
Old wooden spoon



1. Now that you've made your dreadlocks (from the first tutorial) you'll most likely be wanting to dye them. If they've dried out since the felting stage, they'll need to be thoroughly soaked again. Even if they've only dried a little, re-wetting is recommended.

2. These are the dyes and colours I used for my dreadlocks. I wanted a deep, dark red, a warm almost black, so I mixed plum, brown and black. The white vinegar in the background is used to fix the colours to the wool.



3. Only a small amount of dye is needed. If you were wanting to be accurate about the colour, and perhaps were wanting to repeat the colour, you may want to measure out the dye and make a note of how much is used for the weight of wool being dyed. I didn't weigh anything, but I've done this before. Too little dye and the colour will be weak & will need over dyeing. Too much and the unused dye can pollute, as well as be a waste of money.



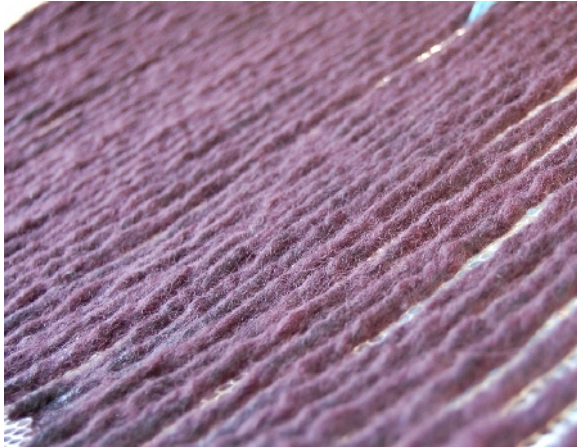
4. The dye is mixed with a small amount of warm water to help it dissolve and avoid lumps. Then it's added to the dye bath over heat. After the dye is added, add the dreads and ensure there's enough water to cover them. Stirring isn't normally recommended for dyeing wool, as it can cause the wool to felt – in this instance it could be useful, especially if the dreads could help with a little tightening! Slowly let the dyebath get hotter but avoid letting it boil, as this can damage the wool.



5. If you can exhaust the dye bath, all the better, as it means no dye has been wasted. If you do have some dye left over, i.e. the water isn't clear, don't pour it away just yet – you may want to keep it in case you need to over dye your dreadlocks. The remaining dye bath can also be used for other wool items too.



6. Once you're happy with the colour, you'll want to rinse them and make sure there's no dye left in the wool. Ideally, let the dye bath cool before removing the dreads, as it can get incredibly hot. Rinse them under water that's roughly the same temperature as they dye bath they came out of, and allow the water to cool with each rinse. Once the water runs clear, your dreads are free from dye.



7. Once rinsed, lay the dreadlocks out to dry, and just as you did after felting, let each one have plenty of room for drying. Try to keep them out of direct sunlight, as the colour could fade. Acid dyes give the best colour on wool, and offers the best colour duration, but it's still a good idea to dry them out of sunlight.

8. Once the dreadlocks are completely dry, you can remove the nylon string. And there you will see the little loop that will be very useful in the next stage! If the fibres are a little felted here or the loop a little fuzzy, careful trimming can tidy things up. The loop needs to be large enough to pass through a section of hair.

The next installment in this guide will show you how to attach the extensions to your hair. For this, you'll need some sewing thread (ideally polyester) that matches as closely as possible to the colour you've dyed, a hair comb (for sectioning), a mirror and an extra person to help!

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<http://www.woollywormhead.com/dreadlocks/>

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Thanks!

If you've followed this tutorial and made your own wool dreads, can you add a link to a photo in the comments on the link below?

<http://www.woollywormhead.com/blog/2010/8/22/make-your-own-wool-dreadlocks-pt1.html>

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