

# Tie-Dye Shirts

## Crafts



Connect**ABILITY**.ca

### WHAT MAKES IT MEANINGFUL

Tie-dye shirts give participants the chance to explore colour, creativity, and self-expression in a fun and hands-on way. The process of folding, twisting, and applying dye supports fine motor skills and sequencing, while also encouraging decision-making and independence. Each shirt is unique, which helps participants feel proud of their individuality. Working on tie-dye in groups promotes social interaction and teamwork, and the finished product can be worn, making the activity both personal and functional.

### TIME

- 45–90 minutes (includes dyeing and setup; drying time is separate)

### MATERIALS

- 100% cotton T-shirts (pre-washed)
- Fabric dye (liquid or powder) in various colours
- Plastic squeeze bottles for dye application
- Rubber bands
- Plastic gloves (disposable)
- Plastic aprons or old clothes (to protect clothing)



# Activity Title

- Plastic table covers or trays for workspaces
- Plastic bags (for storing shirts while dye sets)
- Buckets of water or spray bottles for dampening shirts
- Paper towels or wipes for cleanup

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Prepare tables with plastic covers and provide gloves/aprons.
2. Demonstrate a few tie-dye techniques (spiral, stripes, bullseye, crumple). Show a sample shirt if possible.
3. Encourage participants to:
  - Choose a folding/twisting method
  - Secure their shirt with rubber bands
  - Pick their dye colours and apply them with squeeze bottles
  - Place their finished shirt into a labelled ziplock bag to set
4. Once the shirts are rinsed and dried (usually after 6–24 hours), return them to participants to wear and enjoy.

## RESOURCES

- [https://www.instructables.com/How-to-tie-dye-an-old-white-shirt-or-a-new-shirt-/](https://www.instructables.com/How-to-tie-dye-an-old-white-shirt-or-a-new-shirt/)

# Activity Title

## SUPPORTS NEEDED

- Assistance with folding, rubber banding, or applying dye (for those with limited motor skills)
- Providing step-by-step visual guides for folding and dyeing patterns
- Offering limited colour palettes for easier choices (too many can overwhelm)
- Extra cleanup support (dye can get messy)
- Positive encouragement to celebrate each person's unique creation

## OTHER THINGS TO NOTE

- Shirts should be pre-washed for best results.
- Can be adapted to other items (socks, tote bags, bandanas) for variety.
- Works well as a seasonal or event-based activity (e.g., summer camp, team shirts).
- Tie-dye projects make excellent keepsakes, gifts, or group uniforms.
- Be mindful of participants who may dislike getting messy—offer gloves, aprons, and encourage them to direct or choose colours if they prefer less hands-on involvement.