

Dyeing Cotton with Procion MX Dyes - TQG January 2019

You need Procion MX dyes for dyeing on cotton and other cellulose fibres like bamboo. You will also hear them called fibre reactive dyes. You can buy online from G & S Dyes in Toronto. [Here](#) is a link to their colours. They are also available from maiwa.com in BC.

To make the soda ash dye fixing solution, we used a 4L (or 1 gallon) jug and added 1 cup of soda ash and 1/2 cup regular table salt.

The soda ash fixes the dye to the fabric and the salt will brighten the colours. You need to be sure to buy sodium carbonate. Not sodium bicarbonate which is baking soda

and not 20 Mule Team Borax (although you can use the borax and laundry detergent to wash

your fabrics thoroughly before dyeing). We used Arm & Hammer So Clean Super Washing Soda which I bought at Home Hardware in Port Dover for \$8. You can also buy something like pH Up from a pool supply company. Just check that it is *sodium carbonate*.



Ice Cube Dyeing

We had soaked our fabric in soda ash solution for at least 20 minutes and we placed the loosely scrunched fabric on a rack in a container with 2-3" space underneath for the dye drippings. Cover completely with ice cubes and sprinkle dye all over. For this example we used about 1/2 teaspoonful of both Blue Violet and Purple Procion MX dye in a salt shaker with some regular table salt added. You can also use snow instead of cubes, but the irregular surface of the ice cubes does add something to the finished results. You can also just skip the whole ice thing and just sprinkle the dye onto soaked fabric.

The chemical reaction between the dye and the soda ash dye fix solution happens mostly in the first hour. But try to let it sit for about 4 hours. Some dyers recommend 24-48 hours before you rinse. Hand rinse with mild soap and water and then run through a normal cycle in your washing machine, on hot. It should be colourfast if you have followed all these steps. I used the dripping from the ice dyeing and got some lighter shades of purple and blue. You need to add a little more soda ash water if the dye has sat for more than 4 hours as the chemical reaction will make the dye inactive after 4 hours or so. You should also warm up the dye solution. I used a microwave that I use for dyeing but you could also have the dye in an old jar and heat it in a water bath.

Baggie Dyeing

I would recommend using freezer bags, as they are a little thicker, but any bag will do. For our baggie dyeing, we had about 1/2 teaspoonful of dye again in a baggie with soda ash water to cover it. Add your washed fabric. Squeeze the air out of the baggie and close it up. Squeeze the baggie moving the fabric around every 20 minutes or so for the first hour. If you use a mixed dye like purple, the red and the blue dye particles in the mixture will strike the fabric at different rates. If you want more of a solid colour, use lots of dye solution, don't scrunch your fabric much and agitate often for more even results. And if you don't like the results you can always over-dye it (dye again with the same dye or a different dye).

A fat quarter will fit easily in a medium bag. A metre will fit in an extra large one, if you are looking for a scrunched look. I have dyed a whole backing in a large pail. Consider seaming before dyeing for a more continuous look. Just use more dye for bigger fabrics.

Let your baggies sit for 4-48 hours and then rinse. If there was a lot of colour left in the baggie, I would add more soda ash water and more washed fabric. Each batch will be lighter, although with the Blue Violet dye, the second or third batch was powder blue! All the red/purple dye was exhausted by then.

Simplified Step By Step Directions for Procion MX Dyes

1. Prewash your fabric with hot soapy water.
2. Mix your Soda Ash Dye Fixer using 4L warm water, 1 cup sodium carbonate and 1/2 cup common table salt (salt for brightness only so it can be omitted)
3. Soak your fabric in soda ash water for 20 minutes or place dry fabric in container (baggie) and cover with soda ash water.
4. Sprinkle dye onto fabric or add to container.
5. Let sit for 1-4 hours.
6. Rinse with hot soapy water.