

Color Discharge on Your Knits

What is color discharge? It is the technical term used when you remove some or all of the color from yarn or textile to reveal a lighter shade. It is also possible that some discharge will reveal a different color, rather than a lighter shade.

It is important that you prepare your swatch or garment before starting the color discharge process. All pieces should be washed, dried and blocked. This also ensures shrinkage (if applicable) has happened before proceeding. Note: always make sure your dye lot is the same for the entire project or you may end up with different color variations. This is especially true with black, which is typically made up of whatever combinations of colors previously used in the dye pot.

The Recipe: Mix 1 part bleach with 3 parts water.

Methods for applying bleach solution:

- 1) Spray bottle
- 2) Rubber stamps (mist lightly)
- 3) Eye dropper
- 4) Syringe
- 5) Paint brush
- 6) Stencils

Straight bleach will work, however you need to be use caution as the fabric can become compromised or weakened. Splash-Less Bleach, fragranced bleach, and bleach pens are fun to work with but are not as strong as a plain bleach solution.

Stop the color discharge: Once you have reached the desired color results you must stop the color discharge action by using either one of the steps below. Left unattended or unstopped, the bleach solution will strip color all the way to white and will eat away at the fibers of your swatch or garment if left long enough.

- 1) Immerse in a bucket of straight peroxide (this will foam and give off fumes – use outdoors or in a well-ventilated area; masks are also a good idea)
- 2) 1/3 cup white vinegar in a bucket of water

Once the color discharge action has been stopped, rinse piece in clear water.

Shibori: A traditional Japanese method for dyeing cloth with a pattern by binding, stitching, folding, or twisting fabric. Using this method with color discharge creates some fabulous designs. Using rubber bands to bind your piece(s) onto a PVC pipe apply the bleach solution at random – this makes some really interesting designs. Other ideas include:

- 1) Scrunching fabric in a small container
- 2) Make accordion pleats in the fabric
- 3) Twist fabric
- 4) Using wide clamps – clamp fabric

A great example of a garment made with color discharge can be seen on Ravelry: <http://www.ravelry.com/projects/janeknits2/color-discharge>