

Viking Dyeing

Archaeological evidence from Coppergate in York shows that the Vikings dyed their clothes bright colours using different types of plants. Popular colours included reds and blues, as well as pinks, purples, greens and yellows.




In this video, Arnleif shows us how to make an easy dye using onion skins and water.

Before you start

Prepare your area. Put down newspaper to protect the surface you'll be working on. You may wish to wear an apron and gloves to avoid staining your clothes and fingers, too. The hob method will give stronger results in less time.

Onion skins are required at a ratio of 3g skins: 10g fabric, so scale up accordingly to suit how much fabric you're using.

 **Always ask an adult to help pour hot water, and add and remove the fabric from your bowl or pan.**

Step 1 – Make your dye bath

Add hot water and onion skins to your pan or bowl.

Hob method: simmer gently for at least 15 minutes (or up to 45 minutes for a stronger colour) to release the dye. Remove from heat.

Bowl method: leave it to steep for 45–60mins to release the dye.

Use a slotted spoon or sieve to remove the skins, leaving a coloured liquid.

Step 2 – Add fabric

Submerge your fabric in the dye bath.

Hob method: leave it to steep for at least 30mins.

Bowl method: leave it to steep overnight.

Step 3 – Remove, rinse and dry

Use the slotted spoon or some kitchen tongs to remove the fabric. Rinse in clean water and hang to dry.

You will need:

- Apron/gloves/newspaper
- Papery outer skins of 2 large onions (approx 3g)
- Pan & hob/heatproof bowl & kettle
- Freshly boiled water (approx. 500ml)
- Sieve/slotted spoon/tongs
- Cotton fabric (handkerchief sized, approx 10g, no synthetic content)

Warning: Dyeing may stain your pan or bowl with repeated/extended use.

Viking Weaving

In the Viking age, fabric was woven from woollen or linen thread which could be dyed different colours. Weaving took place on a loom and different patterns could be created, which would then be removed from the loom and sewn to make clothing.



In this video, Arnleif shows us how to weave a piece of fabric on a smaller scale without needing a loom.

Before You Start ✂

Cut out your weaving card, using the template, onto a thick piece of cardboard. Remember to cut slots along the lines on either sides. Make a shuttle using a small piece of card with two small triangles cut out, like the template, and wrap with yarn.

Step 1 – Creating Warp Threads

Starting at the top corner of your weaving card, thread the yarn down and through the first bottom slot to the back, then through the next bottom slot to the front again, and up to the next top slot, pulling it taught enough to bend the card a little. Repeat until you reach the end.

You will need:

- Cardboard
- Pencil
- Ruler
- Scissors
- Tape
- Yarn (approx. 1.5m for warping, more for weaving with)



Remember to ask for help from an adult when using scissors.

Step 2 – Weaving the Weft

Take a new length of yarn and attach it to a cardboard shuttle, leaving a long tail. Go over one warp thread, then under the next, and repeat this until you get to the other side.

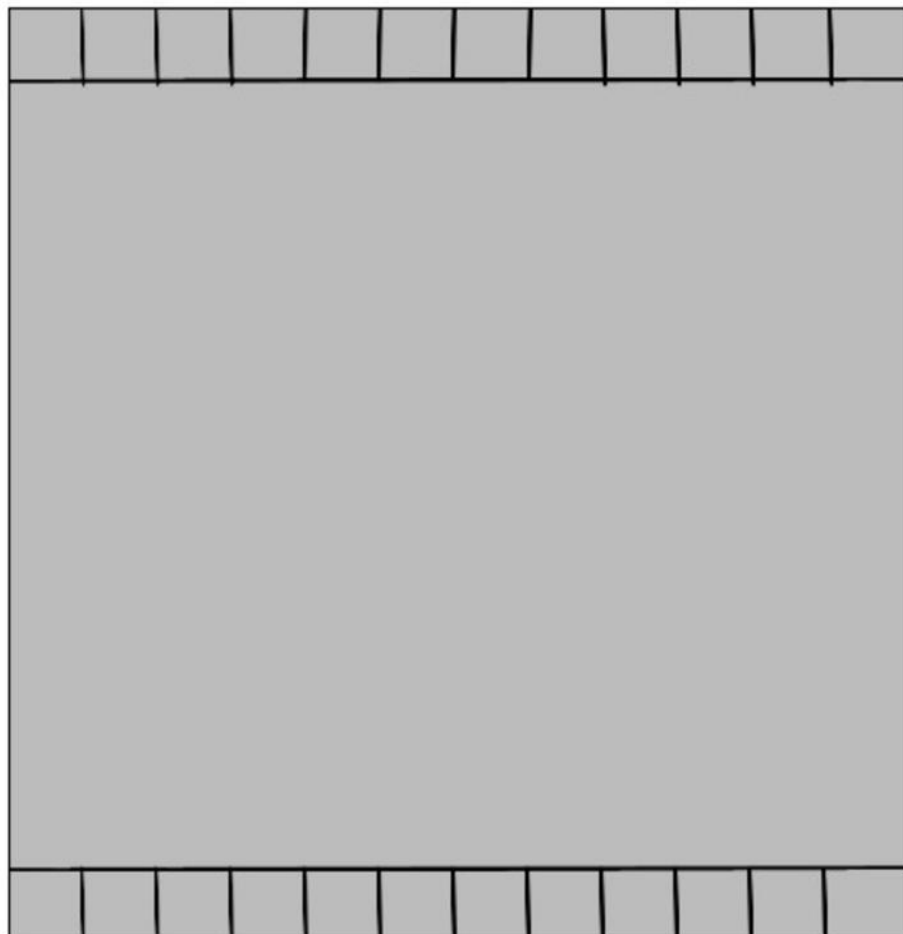
Work back along to where you started, taking care to continue the over-under pattern: if the last move of row 1 was Under, the first move of row 2 will be Over: otherwise, you'll undo everything you've just done!

Join a new thread by leaving a loose end, refilling your shuttle and starting again where you left off.

Step 3 – Finishing off ✂

Cut the warp threads as close to the weaving card as possible and tie the warp threads together in pairs or bundles to stop your weaving sliding off the ends!

Weaving Card Template



Weaving card template: 12cm x 12cm, notches cut at 1cm intervals along top and bottom.

Shuttle template: a small rectangle with 2 triangular notches cut in, and a slit at the point of one notch to help hold the end of your yarn in place while winding on.