



# Soy Wax MX Dye Paste

## Guidelines and Tips

Artwork by Linda Waddell

Soy wax combined with Procion MX dye creates a unique tool for adding color to fabric. Pastes are specially formulated to make them easy to apply through a stencil, but other approaches work, too! Consider brushing paste directly onto fabric. Blend colors on a palette with a palette knife. Scuff across a textured surface to co-mingle colors and produce varied patterning. Experimenting is the name of the game. The MX dyes don't change the hand of the cloth and colors are bright and fast. Soy wax is biodegradable, so it washes out when the dye washes out, which makes the process a breeze.

### **Preparing the Fabric**

Fiber reactive MX dyes are designed to be used on natural fibers. There are two categories, so you may want to experiment with both types. The first is cellulose fibers, and those include anything that was a plant before it was a fabric - cotton, linen, bamboo, and rayon, which is a wood

pulp derivative. The second category is referred to as protein fiber, and those are derived from animal products. Wool and silk are the most common protein fibers. All fabrics need to be “activated” by pre-soaking in a vinegar bath for protein fibers (silk or wool.) A soda ash bath is used as a pre-soak for cellulose (plant) fibers. Soak in soda ash if using a fiber that is a blend of protein and cellulose, like a silk-cotton blend.

### Silk

Mix 1 cup vinegar with 1 gallon hot water. Soak fabric 10-15 minutes. Air dry.



Artwork by Gwen Hendrix:  
Paste Rubbing on Silk Noil

### Cellulose

Mix 1 cup soda ash with 1 gallon hot water. Soak fabric 10-15 minutes. Air dry.

### Applying the Paste

Soy Wax Dye Paste is especially suited for use with stencils. Use a cosmetic sponge or soft bristle brush to apply the paste to fabric. For best results, iron freezer paper to the back of lightweight fabric. This helps to stabilize the fabric resulting in a clearer image.

**Tip:** Buy an inexpensive, one inch wide, natural bristle brush at a hardware store, or at Lowe’s or Home Depot. These brushes usually cost about a dollar. Cut the bristles short with a pair of scissors - to a length of approximately 1/2 inch. Stenciling wax paste is brutal as far as the brush is concerned, so don’t buy or use expensive stencil brushes. Save those for another project and use the cheaper, DIY version! That way you can afford a brush for every color!

### Mixing Colors

Pastes can be mixed together to make new colors. Use a palette or buy a piece of plexiglass about 8” x 10” - it doesn’t need to be any larger than that. A palette knife is an inexpensive, but very useful tool, and can be purchased at any craft store. Use the knife to mix two or more colors of paste together. Don’t make more than you can use in one

session, unless you have a way to store the new color. Paste may dry out if it's left uncovered for long.

**Tip:** Use the colorless paste to make paler versions of the colors you are using. It can mixed into any color, or combination of colors, using the palette knife.



Artwork by Cheryl Olsen

## Setting the Dye

The fabric must be steamed to permanently set the dye for wax paste applications. Neither the microwave nor a steam iron yield enough steam to produce good results. A stove top or “bullet” type steamer can be used. Watch the video on our website in order to learn how to make your own steamer.

Wrap fabric in newsprint, old newspaper or muslin. Steam for 30-60 minutes, depending on the size of your bundle. Thirty minutes is usually sufficient for smaller pieces of fabric. Heavier fabrics and larger amounts require a longer steaming time. Experiment with timing based on the size of the cloth. If you unwrap fabric and the colors don't look as though they have gotten brighter (a sign the steaming has reacted the dye) wrap the fabric up again and steam for an additional 30 minutes.

## Washing Out the Fabric

Wash steamed fabric in warm water with mild soap. Ivory dish soap is a good choice. The small amount of wax that was applied to the cloth as part of the paste, breaks down in the steamer & releases the dye permanently into the cloth. Only rinsing is needed!