

## Clueless Case

I Lava You! <3



Join Date: Dec 2002

Photos: 0

### **Homemade Wig Dye**

---

Well...I remember someone talking about what works on dying wigs. The answer is that it has to be alcohol based. Sharpies are alcohol base.

Granted this method is messy but it really works. You take a sharpie and cut it in half taking out the ink cartridge inside without splattering you and your room. In a spriz bottle or spray bottle, fill it up with rubbing alcohol ( the ink to rubbing alcohol ratio will determine how light the color with be.

For example, two red sharpie inks and about 8 oz of alcohol will dye a baby pink shoulder length wig to a watermelon reddish (kohaku game hair color).

It's basically taking the entire sharpie method and composing it in one process. IT SAVES SOO MUCH TIME!!! Though, be in a ventilated area, sharpie smell+ RA= 20 sharpies sniffed together. Now that you have the ink out, (wear gloves) squeeze the dye into the bottle with the RA and swirling every so often (this takes practice and remember dye can come out of the other end...)

Dye is done after mixing the two well. (There maybe some solid material settling on the bottom but that's ok). Spray the wig with the dye and take a fine tooth comb to blend it. Let it Dry and do your rinse out. It's permanent.

Once you get the hang of it, you save time and money rather than buying wig dye or sitting hand coloring. You can mix the sharpie ink too. But make a little and test a swatch. Also, the dye has a pretty good shelf life. You can save it for later. I really hope this helps other cosplayers. I like hit myself on the head like WHY DIDNT I THINK OF IT BEFORE!!! This method can be messy and a bit tricky, but like anything with cosplay PRACTICE PRACTICE PRACTICE!

As for the smell, after the rinse and a some conditioning its gone.

*Continued...*

## More Opinions:

I've found that with wig dying, you have to find out what works for you, personally. I have my own method, and while it is not the same as Katie's, it has been working well for me. Obviously, I have not dyed as many wigs as she has. Just keep in mind you'll need several bottles of alcohol for a long wig. Sometimes I accidentally underestimate and have to go out in the middle of the night to buy more. Kind of aggravating, when you're in the middle of something. Make sure you do a swatch test before you do the whole wig. Also, when I make my home dye, I prefer to not spray it on. Yes, I know I'm the only person who uses this method. But it's what works for me. It's the easiest way for me to get an even coat of dye on the wig. I take a fairly large metal pot with the dye in it, and dye the wig that way.

-----  
If you honestly have looked everywhere and can't find a wig of the appropriate color (which I find VERY unlikely unless you need it done to patchwork colors or something), then your only option is obviously to dye a wig. You can go with Katie Bair's wig dye, which is fine for a short wig and hellishly expensive for a long one, or you can make your own dye. If you've got money to spare, then by all means buy some of Katie's dye. However, if you're on a tighter budget and don't mind experimenting, I say go for it! Even if it does turn out different colors, there are always methods of lightening the darker color.

-----  
Ok, that's it.

I'm making a picture tutorial for this one later. One for us doing this on the cheap and one for us with a little cash on hand. I just finished up a very dark wavy purple wig for Anthy and it looks simply gorgeous.

Far too many people are being put out because something actually takes a bit of effort on their part.

And when I mean bit, I mean an hour and a half for actually coloring a wig.

I want to suggest if you are new to cosplaying with wigs you should get a cheap \$10 wig from a party store and practice cutting in bangs and coloring it if you are really nervous about messing up your first expensive wig.

I have needed a long dark purple wig for ages. Only thing I could find were light purple long ones. So I decided to buy some dye from Katie's site....it was a no go, she only sells light purple. She posted that her method is sharpie and alcohol based though one can understand why she doesn't post a recipe, the girl has to make a living too 😊 So I bought:

- 1 2.50 wig head
- 1 1.75 spray bottle
- 1 .99 91% 16oz. bottle of alcohol
- 5 1.50 dark purple sharpies
- 1 1.35 black sharpie
- 1 60.00 Light purple wig

On hand were:

Tall Jar to sit the wig and head on, 3 trash bags taped together to protect my porch, one wide tooth comb

I went around my wig spraying crown to ends within a 4" area and combed it through and sprayed the underside too. Covering the whole thing took less than 25 mins. Then I left it to dry for an hour in the sun. Next day I drenched it in cold water courtesy of my large salad bowl and the kitchen sink. Took about 6 douses till it was clear and I left it to dry for an hour. Curls sprung back up and there it is in the picture you see.

Since I spent about 1 1/2 hour of time to dye this. The time for the dye job cost me around \$15.00 if we use what I make at work...so that's about \$29.09 for it all.

Though I consider my time is free if I'm using it 😊 If that's your case it's more like \$14.09 USD.

It's not hard. If I could I'd come to your house and teach you I would. But please keep trying things when you can. There are lots of cheap ways to do things if you think before you do. Anti-frivolity... It's not about making do with what you got, you take what you got and do something with it. Sounds like a stupid poster but it's a decent addage. I don't like forking over my money just cause. I have to have a good reason to do it cause I already gave up my time to get it. I guess what I'm trying to say is think before you do. Consider the best and the worst for trying yourself.

With costumes you can usually have 2 of these things:

Cheap

Fast

Accurate

By the way Sharpies can be bought separately at most craft stores and some office supply stores. You don't have to fork over the cash for a whole pack and be left with so many you can't use.

-----

I understand about spray bottles being faulty. I got mine from Sally's beauty supply. I got two different kinds to make sure one of them would work for me. Turns out one just didn't like me and the other one was great. The So-so one became my bathroom sprayer.

Individual sharpies can be bought at any craft store. That way no waste on what you aren't using. I wouldn't saw open a sharpie. I couple of post up I show in a little video how to easily open a regular sharpie without any tools.

The Cartridge in there should be squeezed to get out 2-3 drops of ink into the waiting bottle of alcohol then cut up in three pieces and then you split those pieces up the middle length wise and drop them into the alcohol too.

The fibers won't be sucked into the spray.

If your hands or pavement get dirty bleach will get it off. Leave the bleach on the pavement for 10 mins and you can rinse it off. Just rub your hands together with bleach and the color will fade off.

Originally I was planning on testing a whole bunch of inks and posting a complete report all at once but I only came up with 3 mixtures before the weather went bad again. That's Oregon for you.

Anyway as far as making homemade wig dye you really just need to find the right ink, both in kind and cost. Alcohol really doesn't have much to do with dying the wig. It doesn't create some special reaction or anything that makes the dye bond to the wig fibers. Alcohol is just a transfer device that keeps the ink from solidifying prematurely. One of the reasons most fabric based dyes don't work on wigs is because the water will drag the dye off the wig without ever giving the dye time to stick. Alcohol evaporates quickly enough that the dye has a chance to stick without getting caught up in the transfer chemical (i.e. like droplets of color from a magic marker on plastic). That's why when you draw with a Sharpie and immediately rub it with your finger it will smear, but if you wait a few seconds and let the alcohol evaporate it will be dry to the touch. Sharpies don't penetrate the wig fiber they just sit on top of it. If you draw on just about anything with one you'll notice it's slightly raised off the surface. That's the dye doing the sticking. So when looking for an ink you're really just looking for a "sticky" dye.

Preferable inks are going to be solvent based or anything marked waterproof. Like I said, I'm currently in the process of testing dozens of different artists inks to find the best results. I use plain ol' isopropyl alcohol, as opposed to ethyl which is more harsh in smell. That type of alcohol could have ill effects on the wig but regardless of what anyone else says, in my experience, I doubt it. I'm yet to see any of the wig fibers break or turn to mush or do anything negative. I've only tested 3 wigs but so far the integrity of the fibers did not change and the wig remained it's original quality.

Oh yeah, in the beginning I tried being really scientific in mixing exact ratios but since really all you're doing is diluting the ink with the alcohol, it doesn't have to be exact. You just want it to a point where it's easy to spray and comb through with minimal clumping of the fibers.

So after that whole mess, ya'all probably want to know what ink I'm using. The one I got best results from so far was "Koh-i-noor Trans-Mix Media Brilliant Ink" and it comes in a plethora of colors. A single bottle costs 2.28 from dickblick.com (you can also get it at Michaels in fewer colors) and I'm sure that that single bottle is enough to mix enough dye for a medium sized wig if not longer. I mixed it with a 5:1 alcohol ink ratio, applied it generously with a spritzer, and gently combed it in making sure as few fibers stuck together as possible. Once it stopped being sopping wet and what I would call a little dryer than damp I let it sit for 10 minutes then washed it out in warm water. I let it dry than combed it once more through to loosen any fibers that might have stuck to one another. You can wash and dry it again once more through if the loose ink isn't completely off. Like the Sharpie technique, Acetone(nail polish remover) will remove the dye.

I may have more ink reviews in the future but hopefully that'll keep ya'all busy until then. Please ignore all misspellings, miswordings, and weird jumbles of sentences as I am on lots and lots of cough syrup right now.

edit: Forgot one thing. WEAR GLOVES. Unless you like pink/blue/whatever colored nails.

---

You know, I decided to try this on my own the other night (before having read any of this) and see what would happen with a yellow wig, when using the dye from a couple of navy blue sharpies and a dark green one.

I used 91% Isopropyl alcohol, the sharpies, an x-acto knife, and a pair of pliers to pull the two pieces of the sharpie apart.

I managed to keep my hands COMPLETELY clean until I actually got into the dying process... I just took the sharpie apart by pulling the two halves, plunked the colored tip into the alcohol bottle, used an x-acto knife to cut a slit in the plastic around the ink sponge, and dropped that in too. I did this with each marker. I let it sit for awhile (an hour?) shaking it occasionally to help disperse the ink.

The wig I used was a cleo from Amphigory, and one I'd gotten about a year ago when I didn't know which wig I needed to/should order... so it was one I had and wasn't going to use. ^^;

My thinking was that perhaps, with all the dark blue in the dye, I could maybe get the yellow wig to at least somewhat resemble the tealish color of Sailorneptune... wrong.

The wig, after dying (I used a dunking method, pouring the dye over the wig, and then sloshing the wig around in it until it was completely coated, then rinsing with cold water until the water ran clear), looked a purplish yellow... ew. Now that it's dry, it appears to be a pea-soup green in indoor lighting, and in natural sunlight, it appears a non-neon lime green... o.O;;

So yeah... I'm not sure how this happened. ^^ \*shrugs\* Now, I DID try some dye with the 72% alcohol and it didn't seem to stick as well. I ALSO noticed that, if you get the wig wet with water before it's dyed, the dye seems to run off without sticking, so I'm assuming that water works as a type of lubricant to the alcohol, not allowing it to bind with the fiber.

I'm hoping this will be useful to someone here, as I know that I expected my prior art knowledge to aid me, and it didn't quite work how I'd hoped. ^^;

The color you got New Myu was probably due to the colors you had and the amount. For something greener you need more green. I imagine 3 green to 1 blue and possibly 1 yellow as a brightener. The fact is blue is a primary color and is too strong on it's own...and overshadows any other color you mix it with. The pea soup color is a all to common color you get when you don't have the portions going for you. Kinda like anyone who ever tried to make orange with red and yellow. It's almost impossible to get a good shade without overdoing one or the other.

Oh and Clueless Case, thanks so much for posting this method. Now I'm dying to experiment, I believe this same method will help me gradient dye some synthetic fabric not to mention some wigs. ^\_^

---

Grey

It was pretty dark... you might get a small pack of silver sharpies (be careful not to get the poster paint ones...they look EXTREMELY similiar...) and a pack of loose hair

in the color of your wigs, and try dyeing those first with a small amount of dye.

If it's too dark, you can always dilute it with more alcohol, and you can use more markers in the greater amount of alcohol to keep it darker...I used a complete marker in about...maybe half a cup of 91% alcohol, and it was REALLLLY REALLLY dark on some light pink extension pieces I had

To remove the dye, rinse wig in alcohol and then water

My wig dye, or *any* other coloring method (including Sharpies), will not work as well on **TREATED** wig fiber. There are some brands of wigs that use special *stain resistant chemicals* on the fiber in their wigs. (The fiber is basically coated in Teflon, the same stuff on non-stick pans.) The only brand that I know for sure does this *consistently* is Sepia. Unfortunately, as I said in my workshop on Saturday, there is no way to tell if your fiber is coated by just looking at it. However, Amphigory does not carry Sepia wigs, which might be why people are under the impression that they are the only ones that work.

You guys understand that Amphigory is *not* a brand name or a wig manufacturer, right? The wigs they sell are from several different wig companies, they just try to find the best price for each design. (That's why sometimes the colors aren't the same between two different lengths.) As always, if you are going to be custom coloring your wig, test it first. (And testing does include rinsing, not just dipping the fiber.)