

Kid Friendly Batik: No Wax Required!

Batik is a fabric dyeing technique that's popular all over the world, especially in Yunnan, China (where it's believed to have originated), West Africa, and Indonesia, where it's considered an art form. It creates stunning results, but it's usually done with hot wax—not exactly safe for young kids! This flour-and-water method is wax-free and easy, and it creates beautiful batik designs. It can get a little messy, so lay down some newspaper before you start, or take your materials outside, for a fun summer project.



What You Need:

- 4 tablespoons flour
- 3 tablespoons water
- Bowl
- Paintbrush
- Cotton handkerchief, pillowcase, or scarf
- Cold-water dye
- Knife
- Library book about Indonesia (optional)

What You Do:

1. Mix the flour and water together in a bowl to make a smooth paste. Give your child the brush, and ask him to paint a thick layer of paste all over the handkerchief. (He may need a little help!) When the material is totally covered, leave it to dry. This may take up to several hours.
2. When the material is completely dry, scrunch up the fabric so the paste cracks all over. Prepare the cold-water dye according to the package directions. Soak the handkerchief or pillowcase in the dye for about an hour. When the hour's up, rinse the material thoroughly in cold water and allow it to dry.
3. Give your child a butter knife (that's not sharp at all!) and help him scrape off any leftover paste, then rinse the handkerchief again. Finally, wash the material in soapy water and then leave it outside to dry.
4. Batik may be new to your family, but it's a centuries old technique. Once your child tries his hand at the craft, take him to the library and pick up a book on Indonesia, for a glimpse at what people halfway around the world manage to do with just a little wax, and some major creativity.