

# **Your First Tattoo: Tips and Expectations**

Getting inked is something most of us consider at some point, and can be incredibly exciting. Maybe you have a great design in mind, or maybe you're still exploring. But you're hesitant – and understandably so! Before you go under the needle, here are some answers to common questions.

## **How do I pick an artist?**

Unless you have a specific image that you want copied directly onto you, your choice of artist will heavily influence the final look of the tattoo. Each artist has their own approach and may specialize in different styles. Ask around, or search online, to find artists in your area. Many publish portfolios of their work on their personal websites, or through social media services like Facebook and Instagram. Finding someone whose work resonates with you is crucial.

## **How much will it cost?**

Tattoo pricing can vary wildly based on a number of factors, including artist, shop location, tattoo size, and tattoo placement. It is difficult to give a “standard” rate for this reason, but cost should not be a major factor in choosing your artist - you'll be better served by considering their ability and style.

How you'll pay varies as well - different artists may charge by the session, by the hour, or by the piece. This is all perfectly appropriate to discuss before beginning. One thing to note is that tattooing is one of those services where tips are generally appropriate, especially if you're quite happy with the result.

## **Does it hurt?**

The pain, or lack thereof, that comes with a tattoo will vary wildly depending on its location. As a rule of thumb, areas with little between skin and bone (like the ribs or wrists) can be admittedly rough to get inked, but don't let that scare you off. Many people report the “pain” of getting tattooed in most areas to be more like a scratching sensation than anything else.

If this still concerns you, never fear - there are plenty of techniques to help get you through the session. Try holding conversation with the artist, or bring a friend to joke around with. Focus your mind elsewhere and you'll hardly notice the needle.

## **How do I take care of my new tattoo?**

The tattoo will be bandaged at the end of the session, and it's a good idea to leave this in place for at least a few hours. Afterwards, wash it with hot water and a mild soap before applying an ointment. This process will be repeated every few hours for the first two or three days. You'll want to avoid sun exposure, as well as soaking the skin for prolonged periods, during this time (though showers are fine).

After several days, the tattoo may start to peel as the top layer of damaged skin is replaced. There may be some itching too, but be sure not to scratch or pick at it. Your tattoo will take 4-6 weeks to fully heal, but really only requires a high level of care for the first week or two.

(If this seems like a lot to remember, don't worry - your artist will likely provide some written instructions with detailed suggestions.)

### **What if I'm not satisfied with the result?**

Most artists are very accommodating and truly want you to be happy with their work. If (after the tattoo has healed) you have any concerns, definitely voice them. Your artist should be willing to touch the piece up for free - many will even continue to do so for years afterwards.