

# CHOOSING A PROFESSIONAL TATTOO ARTIST

So you've decided to go for it and get that first (or second or third) tattoo. Beautiful! Now all you have to do is find a reputable artist to do the work for you. With tattoos being so popular these days many people have decided to "get into" the field. Just because they appear to have the equipment and tell you they can do some "killer" work doesn't mean they can give you your dream tattoo.

## **Here's what you should look for:**

Your potential artist should be knowledgeable about proper sterilization. They should be able to answer all of your questions without hesitation. Every needle and tube should be packaged and opened in front of you. These are single use only items. Needles should be properly disposed of after use and tubes should be washed and prepped for sterilization after use. If the artist is using disposable tubes (these are plastic, not metal) they should be properly disposed of with the needles.

The artist should have a portfolio that contains photographs of their tattoo work. If they don't have a portfolio run the other way. Also keep in mind, even if they do have a portfolio you should ask for references. With technology these days anyone can put together a bunch of photos and claim them as their own work. The key here is to find someone very capable of providing you with the tattoo of your dreams because the quality of your tattoo depends SO much on the talent of the artist.

You should like the work they have in their portfolio. Every artist's style is different and not all artists can tattoo all styles. If their portfolio doesn't seem to have what you are looking for maybe they are not the artist for you. It's ok to ask questions: about their experience, their capability to create the style tattoo you are looking for, and to see a sketch of your idea before going forward with it. Don't be shy – tattoos are FOREVER!

You should feel comfortable with your artist. They shouldn't make you feel rushed or pushed into getting the tattoo. They shouldn't seem like it is "all about the money". Getting tattooed is a very personal experience and you are going to be sitting very close to this person for a length of time – make sure you are comfortable with them, as you will need to be as relaxed as possible to help ensure you get a great piece of art!

Remember – you get what you pay for! A tattoo is permanent and it is an investment. You should never get tattooed on a whim. This usually results in being unhappy with the tattoo down the road. You should be proud of your tattoo, not regretful. This doesn't mean you need to select the highest priced artist – what it means is be skeptical if someone is willing to give you a large tattoo for under \$100. Incompetent and inexperienced artists will be cheaper than someone with years of experience under their belt. Bottom line: a cheap tattoo will look cheap.

They should use proper tattoo terminology. It may sound funny, but the artist should use the proper language when speaking about the art. First and foremost it is an art form. There is history behind it, which they should be somewhat aware of. They should use the proper language when talking about the equipment they use: it is a machine, not a gun. It is 'getting a tattoo' not 'getting shot / getting shot on'. If you hear the word 'gun' or the term 'getting shot/on' you should think twice about letting that person near you with a needle. Again, tattoos are permanent. You don't want to be sorely disappointed with the outcome.

## **To recap:**

Make sure your artist is someone you are comfortable with, that can provide samples of their work and is enthusiastic about your tattoo just like you are. Make sure you can afford the tattoo – and remember that you get what you pay for. They should use proper terminology when talking about their art and they should not be hesitant to answer any of your questions – they should welcome them! They should be able to do "flash" tattoos, but should also be able to do custom work, because seriously, who wants a cookie-cutter tattoo?! You are going in to this hoping for the perfect piece – do your research beforehand and you are that much more apt to actually get it!

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