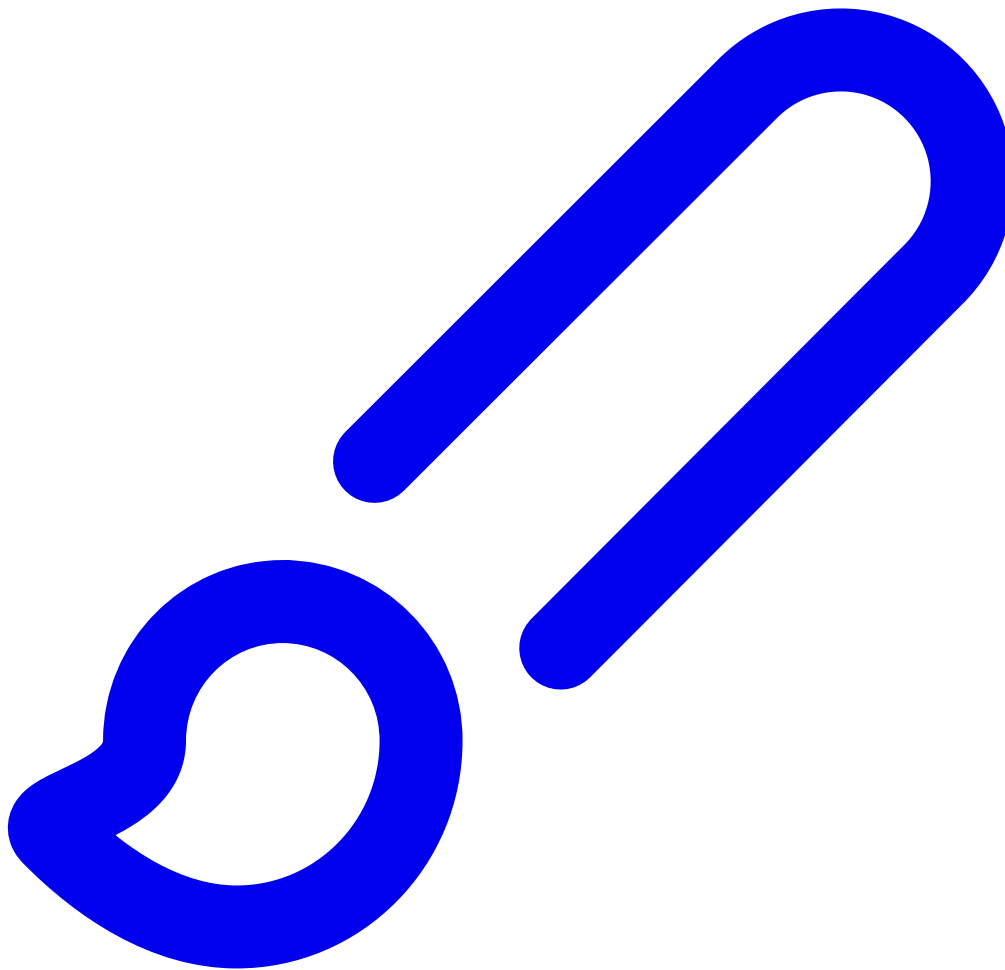




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Choosing Tattoo Placement: Pain, Visibility and Aging Considerations

By the [Double Down Tattoo Editorial Team](#) · Reviewed against our [editorial standards](#) · 8 min read · Last reviewed 2026

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Choosing Tattoo Placement: Pain, Visibility and Aging Considerations

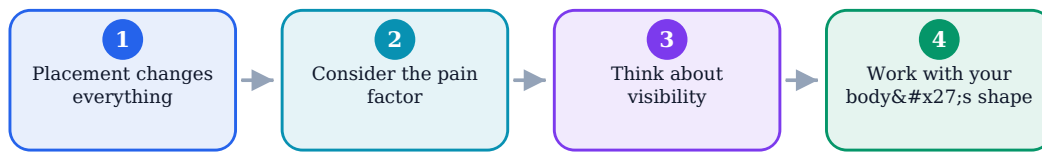


Figure: Choosing Tattoo Placement: Pain, Visibility and Aging Considerations

Where you put a tattoo is almost as important as what the tattoo is. The same design can look completely different on an arm, a ribcage or a foot, and placement affects everything from how much it hurts to how visible it is at work and how well it holds up over the years.

This guide walks through the key considerations for choosing tattoo placement — pain, visibility, how the design flows with your body, and how different areas tend to age — so you can choose a spot you'll be happy with long term.

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Placement changes everything

The same tattoo can look and feel entirely different depending on **where** it goes. Placement affects how the design flows, how much it hurts to get, how visible it is day to day, and how it ages. Because of this, choosing the location deserves as much thought as the design itself — a great design in the wrong spot can disappoint.

Consider the pain factor

Different areas of the body vary in **sensitivity**. As a general rule, areas with more muscle or fat and fewer nerve endings (like the outer upper arm or thigh) tend to be more comfortable, while **bonier, thinner-skinned or more sensitive areas** (like ribs, hands, feet, or over bone) are often reported as more painful. If pain is a big concern — especially for a first tattoo — it's worth factoring in.

Think about visibility

How **visible** you want your tattoo is a major decision. Some people want their ink on display; others prefer it easily covered for work or personal reasons. Consider your **workplace and lifestyle**: highly visible placements like hands, neck and face are harder to conceal and may not suit every profession. Choosing a placement that fits how visible you want it prevents future regret.

Work with your body's shape

The best placements **flow with the body**. A design that follows the natural lines and contours of a limb or muscle tends to look more harmonious than one fighting against them. Consider the size and shape of the design and how it will sit and move on that part of your body. A skilled artist is invaluable here — they can advise on how a design will drape and flow in a given spot.

Factor in how areas age

Different parts of the body **age and wear differently**. Areas that stretch, crease, or get heavy friction and sun exposure (like hands, feet, and fingers) tend to fade or blur faster and may hold fine detail less well over time. Areas with more stable skin often keep tattoos crisper for longer. If longevity and detail matter to you, weigh this into your choice.

Discuss it with your artist

Finally, don't decide alone — **talk it through with your artist**. They understand how designs translate to different areas, how placements age, and what will flow well with your body. Bring your priorities (pain tolerance, visibility, longevity) to the conversation, and let their experience guide the final decision. There's no single 'best' placement; the right one balances the design with what matters most to you.

Placement and pain: a rough guide

Pain varies by person, but placement has a real influence. This general guide helps set expectations:

Tends to hurt less	Tends to hurt more
Outer arm, forearm	Ribs, sternum
Outer thigh, calf	Inner arm, elbow/knee area
Shoulder	Hands, feet, ankles
Fleshier areas generally	Areas over bone or with thin skin

If pain is a big concern for a first tattoo, choosing a less sensitive spot can make the experience easier.

Practical factors beyond aesthetics

Where a tattoo looks best isn't the only consideration; practical factors shape a good decision too:

- **Visibility:** how it fits with your work and lifestyle, and whether you want it easily seen or covered.
- **Body shape:** designs that follow your contours usually look more natural.
- **Ageing:** some areas hold a tattoo better over time than others.
- **Future plans:** leaving room if you might extend the piece later.

Talking placement through with your artist

Because placement affects appearance, comfort, ageing and how a design flows, it's one of the most valuable things to discuss openly with your artist before committing. An experienced artist has seen how designs sit and age across many bodies and placements, so their input can save you from choices that look appealing in the abstract but work poorly in practice — a detailed design squeezed into a spot too small for it, for instance, or a piece placed where it fights the body's natural lines. Sharing your priorities helps them advise you well: if visibility matters for professional reasons, if pain tolerance is a concern, or if you might want to build the tattoo into a larger piece later, all of that shapes the ideal location. It's common and sensible to have the stencil applied and to view it in a mirror before any needle touches skin, since seeing the placement on your own body often clarifies what a description or drawing cannot, and adjustments at that stage are effortless compared with regret afterward. A good artist will happily reposition until it looks right, because they want the finished tattoo to suit you as well as possible. Treating placement as a collaborative decision rather than a snap choice — combining your preferences with the artist's practical experience — is one of the simplest ways to ensure you're happy with a tattoo not just on the day, but for the many years it will stay with you.

Printable checklist

Print this page or save the PDF to keep these steps handy.

- ☐ Placement changes everything
- ☐ Consider the pain factor
- ☐ Think about visibility
- ☐ Work with your body's shape
- ☐ Factor in how areas age
- ☐ Discuss it with your artist
- ☐ Placement and pain: a rough guide
- ☐ Practical factors beyond aesthetics

Summary

Choosing tattoo placement means weighing several factors: how much a given area

tends to hurt, how visible you want the tattoo to be (including for work), how well the design flows with your body's shape, and how the area ages and holds detail over time. There's no single best spot — it depends on the design and your priorities. Discuss placement with your artist, who can advise on what works. This is general information, not medical advice.

Key Takeaways

- Placement changes how a design looks, hurts, shows and ages.
- More sensitive, bonier areas tend to be more painful.
- Decide how visible you want it, including for work.
- Choose placement that flows with your body's natural shape.
- Some areas hold detail and age better than others.

Frequently Asked Questions

Which tattoo placements hurt the most?

It varies by person, but bonier, thinner-skinned and more sensitive areas — such as ribs, hands, feet and over bone — are commonly reported as more painful than fleshier areas like the outer upper arm or thigh.

Where should I get a tattoo if I want to hide it for work?

Areas easily covered by clothing — such as the upper arm, back, shoulder or thigh — are simpler to conceal than highly visible spots like the hands, neck or face.

Do some placements fade faster?

Yes. Areas with lots of friction, stretching, or sun exposure — like hands, feet and fingers — tend to fade or blur faster and hold fine detail less well over time.

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