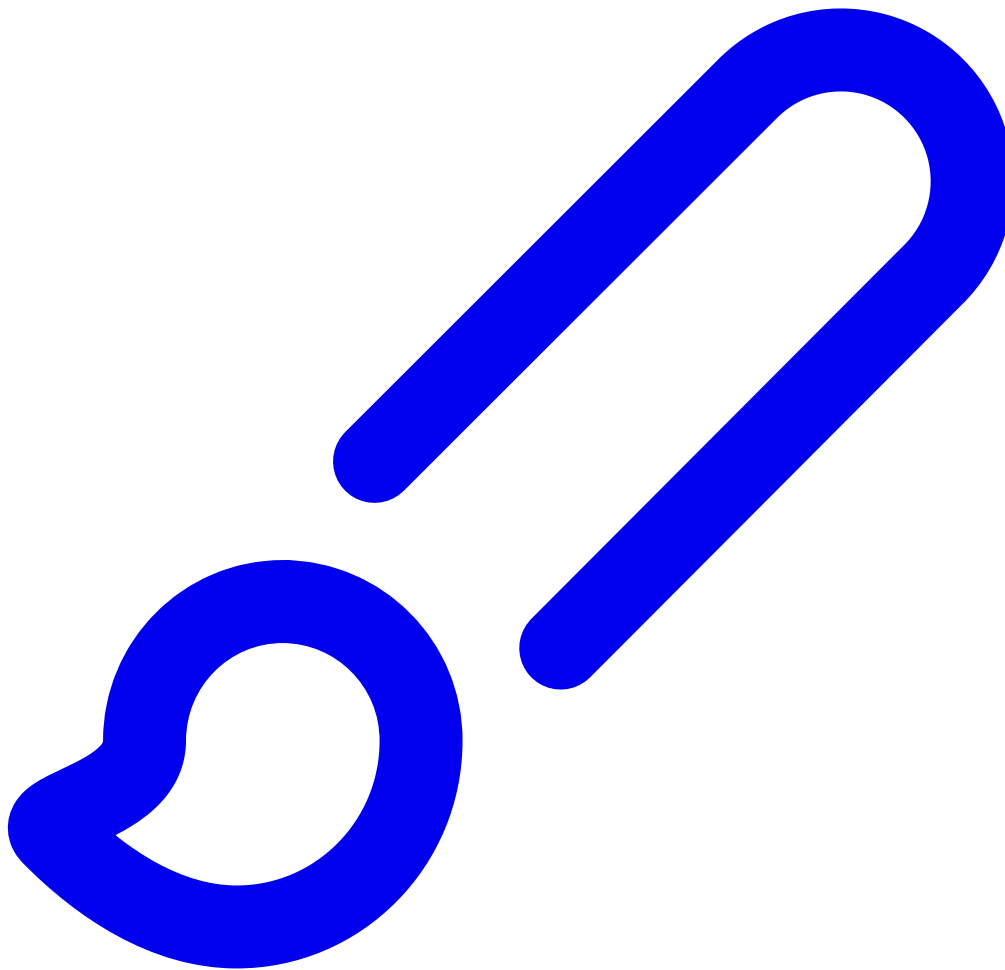




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How to Choose a Tattoo Artist: A Practical Checklist

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

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How to Choose a Tattoo Artist: A Practical Checklist

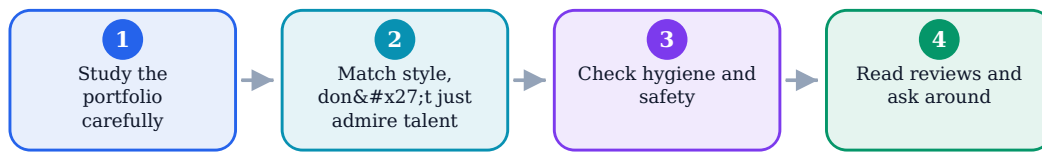


Figure: How to Choose a Tattoo Artist: A Practical Checklist

A tattoo is permanent, and the single biggest factor in how it turns out is who does it. A talented, professional artist working in the right style can turn your idea into something you'll love for life; the wrong choice can leave you with regret and a costly cover-up. Choosing well is worth taking your time over.

This guide is a practical checklist for choosing a tattoo artist — how to assess their portfolio, hygiene, style fit and communication, so you pick someone you can genuinely trust.

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Study the portfolio carefully

An artist's **portfolio** is your best evidence of their work. Look for clean lines, consistent quality across many pieces, and skill in the specific style you want. Where possible, look at **healed work**, not just fresh photos — a tattoo can look great the day it's done but reveal an artist's true skill only once healed. Consistency across their body of work matters more than one impressive piece.

Match style, don't just admire talent

Tattooing has many styles — fine line, traditional, realism, blackwork, colour, and more — and few artists excel at all of them. A brilliant realism artist may not be the right choice for bold traditional work. Find someone whose **portfolio matches the style you want**. Choosing an artist who specialises in your desired style is one of the most

important decisions you'll make.

Check hygiene and safety

This is non-negotiable. A reputable studio should be visibly **clean**, use **single-use, sterile needles**, follow proper sanitation, and meet local licensing and health requirements. Don't hesitate to ask about their practices — good artists are proud to explain them. If a studio seems unclean or evasive about hygiene, walk away, regardless of the artwork.

Read reviews and ask around

Beyond the portfolio, look at **reviews and reputation**. What do past clients say about the experience, professionalism and how tattoos healed? Personal recommendations from people whose tattoos you admire are especially valuable. A pattern of positive, detailed feedback — or repeated red flags — tells you a lot that photos alone can't.

Have a consultation and gauge communication

A **consultation** reveals how an artist works with you. Do they **listen** to your ideas, offer honest professional input, and communicate clearly about the design, placement and process? You want someone who collaborates and is candid — even if that means telling you an idea won't work well — rather than someone dismissive. Good communication now prevents disappointment later.

Don't decide on price alone

Cost matters, but a tattoo is permanent, and choosing purely on **price** is a common mistake. Very cheap work can be a false economy if it means lower quality or shortcuts on hygiene. Skilled artists charge accordingly for good reason. Take your time, weigh everything together — portfolio, hygiene, style fit, communication — and don't rush a permanent decision.

A checklist before you book

Before committing to an artist and a deposit, run through a simple checklist. If you can tick most of these, you're on solid ground:

- Their portfolio shows healed work, not just fresh photos, in your chosen style.
- The studio is clean, licensed where required, and uses single-use needles.
- Reviews and word of mouth are consistently positive.
- The consultation felt like a conversation — they listened and offered honest input.
- Pricing is transparent and you're not choosing on cost alone.

A confident yes to most of these matters far more than a convenient location or the lowest quote.

Matching an artist to your style

Even highly skilled artists specialise, so matching style is as important as judging raw

talent. Different tattoos suit different specialists:

If you want...	Look for an artist who...
Fine-line or delicate work	Shows crisp, consistent thin lines in healed photos
Bold traditional	Has strong, clean lines and solid colour
Realism or portraits	Demonstrates detailed shading and accuracy
Blackwork/geometric	Shows precise, even linework and patterns

An artist whose portfolio already contains work like the tattoo you want is far more likely to deliver it well than a generalist you simply admire.

Questions worth asking at the consultation

The consultation is your best chance to gauge both skill and fit, and asking a few thoughtful questions tells you a lot. It's reasonable to ask how they'd approach your idea, whether the design will work at the size and placement you're considering, and how it's likely to age over the years, since a good artist thinks about longevity rather than just how a piece looks on day one. Asking about their hygiene practices — single-use needles, sterilisation, and their aftercare guidance — is entirely normal, and a professional will answer openly rather than taking offence. Pay attention not only to the answers but to how they communicate: an artist who listens, offers honest opinions even when they differ from your idea, and explains their reasoning is someone you can trust with a permanent piece. Discussing timelines, pricing and deposits up front avoids awkward surprises later, and it's perfectly acceptable to take time to think rather than committing on the spot. If anything about the interaction feels dismissive, rushed or evasive, that's useful information too. Ultimately the consultation is a two-way assessment, and leaving it feeling heard, informed and comfortable is one of the strongest signs you've found the right artist for work that will stay with you for life.

Printable checklist

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

- ☐ Study the portfolio carefully
- ☐ Match style, don't just admire talent
- ☐ Check hygiene and safety
- ☐ Read reviews and ask around
- ☐ Have a consultation and gauge communication
- ☐ Don't decide on price alone
- ☐ A checklist before you book
- ☐ Matching an artist to your style

Summary

Choosing a tattoo artist well means reviewing their portfolio for quality and consistency, confirming the studio meets hygiene and safety standards, and finding someone whose style genuinely matches what you want. Good communication during a consultation matters too — you want an artist who listens and is honest. Read reviews, don't rush, and don't choose on price alone. The right artist for one style may not be right for another.

Key Takeaways

- Who does your tattoo is the biggest factor in how it turns out.
- Review portfolios for quality, consistency and healed work.
- Confirm the studio meets hygiene and safety standards.
- Match the artist's style to what you actually want.
- Don't choose on price alone, and don't rush the decision.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if an artist is good at my style?

Look specifically for that style in their portfolio, ideally with healed examples. An artist strong in one style isn't automatically strong in another, so match their demonstrated work to what you want.

What hygiene practices should I look for?

A clean studio, single-use sterile needles, proper sanitation, and compliance with local licensing and health rules. Reputable artists are happy to explain their practices; evasiveness is a red flag.

Is a cheaper artist a bad idea?

Not necessarily, but choosing on price alone is risky for permanent work. Prioritise quality, hygiene and style fit. Unusually low prices can signal shortcuts, while skilled artists reasonably charge more.

Related Guides

- [Your First Tattoo: What to Expect](#)
- [How to Design a Custom Tattoo](#)
- [Choosing Tattoo Placement](#)
- [Tattoo Hygiene and Safety](#)
- [How to Choose a Tattoo Artist \(Studio Guide\)](#)

Related articles

- [Tattoo Aftercare Guide: How to Heal a New Tattoo Properly](#)
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