How to Properly Use a Tattoo Kit

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This guide will run through tattoo health and sanitation before getting into setting up the machine and going through each item in your kit. Health and safety are the most important aspects of tattooing, so do not tattoo anybody until you are familiar and comfortable with all of the appropriate steps and precautions you must take to ensure the safety of your customers as well as your own.

While this guide goes through the basics of machine setup and sanitation, it is not intended to replace a formal apprenticeship. An apprenticeship is the very best way to obtain the skills and experience necessary to ensure the safety and satisfaction of your customers.

We can read all about the performance of surgical procedures, but you probably want your surgeon to have obtained formal training before he makes that first incision. The same is true of tattoo artists. Don’t shortchange yourself or your customers by neglecting to obtain the proper training. We’ve even included a Guide to Finding a Tattoo Apprenticeship with some tips to help you as you search for an apprenticeship.

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1. Items in Your Tattoo Machine Kit

Kits vary from one to the next, so the items listed below may not be included in every kit. The good news is that these items are readily available for purchase, so if you come across an item that was not included with your kit you can always purchase it separately.

- **Tattoo Machine**: Tattoo machines may be designed as shaders or liners, and some are used for both. When considering a tattoo machine, consider the position of the front binding post, length of the front spring, the type of coils (i.e. the number of wraps per coil), the armature bar length and width, and other factors that affect the way the machine runs.

- **Power Supply**: Analog and digital power supplies are available. Simply plug the power supply into an electrical outlet, and then plug the clip cord and pedal into the power supply.

- **Pedal Switches**: The pedal switch is the gas pedal to your tattoo machine. Once connected to the power supply, and with the clip cord attached to the power supply and machine, press the pedal and power is supplied to the tattoo machine.

- **Clip Cords**: The clip cord features stainless steel pins that attach to the machine to deliver power to it; the other end of the cord is plugged into the power supply.

- **Inks**: Some kits include only basic colors like black and gray, while others include a more diverse color selection. Still, other kits include no inks at all.

- **Ink Cups**: Disposable ink cups hold ink while you work, making it easy to refill your color or change to a new one.

- **Ink Cup Stand**: An ink cup stand comes in handy to keep your ink cups organized while working, and can keep them from spilling. If you do not own an ink stand, you can dab Vaseline on the bottom of the cups to keep them in place.

- **Mountable LED Work Light**: A work light can come in handy to keep the tattoo area illuminated. This can be helpful especially when working with fine details. Some work lights are attachable to the
tattoo machine, mounting on the machine so your light moves as you move the machine; many
draw their power from the power supply, too.

- **Needles**: Most customers feel safer when disposable needles are used as opposed to reusable
  needles that are sterilized in an autoclave. They come in a variety of sizes and configurations, each
  with its own unique uses. Examples include flats, rounds, and magnums; tight and loose
  configurations are available, and some artists use textured needles that hold more ink.
- Some artists' preference in needles will vary from one task to the next, while some prefer a certain
  needle for all or most tasks.

- **Tips**: The tip is inserted into the bottom of the grip and sits at the bottom of the tube/grip/tip
  assembly. Some prefer disposable tips, while others prefer stainless steel tips that can be reused
  after sterilization in the autoclave. Some tips support round configurations, others flats, and some
  have diamond tips to keep round needles more securely in place.

- **Tubes**: The tube fits on top of the grip, and is part of what guides the needle to the tip. You'll find
  disposable and reusable tubes; if you use the reusable tubes, be sure to put them through the
  autoclave before reuse.

- **Grips**: The grip makes it easier to handle the machine when holding the tube. Several types and sizes
  of grips are available, so choose one you feel comfortable grasping. The grip may be disposable or
  reusable; if reusable always put it through the autoclave before reusing it.

- **Disposable Needle/Tube/Grip Combos**: These come fully ready to use in a sterilized package. The
  needles come in various sizes, and are equipped in the tube/grip/tip assembly. They are for one use
  only, so dispose of them properly when finished.

- **Spray Bottle or Squirt Bottles**: These can be used to dispense green soap, which can be used to
  prepare the skin, to apply stencils, and to clean following the application of the tattoo. If you need a
  bottle for water or a cleaning disinfectant used to wipe down surfaces, you could use the spray
  bottle.

- **Jeweler's Loupe**: The jeweler's loupe is essentially a small magnifying glass that allows close
  inspection of needles to check if they are dull or bent. Always inspect needles before using them, as
  a dull or bent needle may tear the skin.

- **Green Soap**: Used to clean the skin before and after applying the tattoo, as well as to apply the
  stencil to the skin. Green soap is environmentally friendly and safe for use on the skin.
• **Non-Sterile Disposable Marking Pen**: Do not reuse pens on more than one customer, and keep in mind that these pens are not sterile. So do not use them once the skin is broken, and clean the skin before and after use.

• **Transfer Paper**: Used to transfer stencils onto the skin. Use this paper in a specific type of printer—dot-matrix or thermal—or draw your stencil by hand. Most packs of transfer paper will come with instructions for use included. Spirit Paper includes a carbon sheet and a sheet of rice paper that is actually used to transfer the image onto the skin, while some choose to use rice paper alone. Further information in Section 2e.

• **Practice Skins**: Essential for the learning artist, practice skins are common during one's apprenticeship. Use these to practice and develop your skills before tattooing a customer; it often takes months or even years of practice before an artist is ready to start tattooing customers.

• **Flash Images**: Many kits come with flash images to practice while learning. Many flash images are popular tattoos for when you're ready to start tattooing customers, too.

• **Rubber Bands**: Rubber bands are used to keep the needle in place. Many artists use a couple of tattoos per needle. Just wrap the rubber band around the needle and the back of the machine frame. When you're done, dispose of the rubber bands.

• **Grommets**: These go over the nipple located at the end of the armature bar, and hold the loop at the top of the needle to keep it in place. Dispose of grommets following use.

• **O-Rings**: O-rings reduce the amount of noise made by the tattoo machine. They go under the front spring and around the front spring screw.

• **Coil Washers**: The end of the coil wires should not come into contact with the machine frame, which is why spacer washers are used. A lip allows the washer to be stuck into the frame's hole, and the soldering lug will sit on top of it.

• **Allen Wrenches**: Used to turn many of the screws found on a tattoo machine, many kits will include the appropriately sized Allen wrenches for the screw heads on the machine.

• **Disposable Razors**: Used to shave the tattoo area prior to application of the stencil. Always clean the area with an alcohol pad before shaving; always use disposable razors; and never reuse razors from one customer to the next.

• **Cleaning Brushes**: These can be used to clean the tattoo machine. Note that this does not replace sterilization in an autoclave.
• **Aftercare Ointment**: Most artists apply a layer of aftercare ointment/emollient following the application of the tattoo. A common ointment is A+D ointment, which includes vitamins A and D. Many give their client a small sample size of the ointment for use later the same day, and encourage them to purchase a tube for themselves for use throughout healing.

• **Latex, Powder-Free, Disposable Gloves**: Always wear latex, powder-free gloves that are disposable. You should change your gloves often when setting up your work area, performing the tattoo, and taking apart the workstation. If you are ever in doubt as to whether you should change your gloves, just do it. Our health and sanitation section includes further information.

• **Autoclave**: The autoclave uses heat and pressure to sterilize tattoo equipment. Items are placed in sterile bags beforehand, and then put in the autoclave. They may then be stored in the sterile bags until they are ready to be used again.

• **Tongue Depressors**: These come in handy when spreading Vaseline or other mediums onto the skin. Rather than placing Vaseline on your finger and then rubbing it onto your customer's skin, use a sterile tongue depressor. If you must use Speed Stick deodorant to apply stencils—which is not recommended—you should use a tongue depressor to remove some of the deodorant from the stick and then apply it to the skin. This can help avoid cross-contamination by applying a stick to one customer's skin (especially after the skin is broken by shaving the area) and then to another's.

• **Plastic Bags**: You should bag all of your equipment that could get blood and ink splatter on it during the tattoo process. This includes the machine, clip cord, water and green soap bottles, and even your and your customer's chairs, among other items.

2. **Tattoo Machine Setup**

Learning how to setup your machine is one of the first things you'll need to learn. Once you master the basics of setting up your machine, make sure that you see our *Guide to Tattoo Machine Tuning* for a detailed rundown of tuning the different elements of the machine, and our health and sanitation guide in the third section of this document.

Knowing how to put together your tattoo machine and learning the function of the different products included with your kit does not qualify you to start tattooing people, though. To reach that point you need the proper training and experience, which is best acquired through a formal apprenticeship.

**PLACE TATTOO MACHINE DIAGRAM PICTURE**

a. **Machine, Tube, Needle, Grommet, Rubber Bands**

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The first step to putting together the machine so it’s ready to tattoo is to assemble the tube, grip, and tip. Some needle/tube/grip/tip combos come assembled and ready to go; if this is what you’re using, skip ahead to the fourth paragraph. But at some point you’ll end up assembling your own tube, grip, and tip, so learning may not be a bad idea.

The tube inserts into the top of the grip, tightening the top hex head using the Allen wrench. You’ll leave some of the tube sticking out of the top of the grip, but how much is a matter of personal preference. Try inserting the tube halfway, and go from there.

Next, insert the tip into the bottom of the grip, tightening the bottom hex head to secure it in place. Be sure you use the appropriate tip for the needle you plan to use, as tips come with different types of openings for round and flat needles. The amount of the tip you leave sticking out of the bottom is going to be influenced by the depth at which you insert the tube, as well as the amount of the needle you’d like to stick out the tip. Most prefer the needle to stick out about one to two millimeters from the tip, but this is another matter of preference.

Insert the tube into the vice grip at the front of the machine, tightening by turning the wing nut or whichever tightening apparatus is included. Again, the amount you insert the tube into the vice grip and the amount you leave exposed under it is a matter of preference. Make sure the opening of the tip is facing away from the machine.

Make sure you place a grommet on the nipple of the armature bar, and insert the needle into the tube and through the tip. Secure the loop at the top of the needle around the grommet, and wrap a couple rubber bands around the needle and the back of the machine to keep the needle in place.

b. Attaching Power Supply, Pedal, and Clip Cord

There are various types of power supplies, but all will come with a place to plug in the clip cord and the pedal. Simply plug each cord into the appropriate outlet (most are marked). The pedal is ready to go, but the clip cord must still be attached to the machine.

Squeeze the two ends of the cord together so they form a ‘U’, and insert each pin into the appropriate hole on the machine. One pin will insert into the rear binding post, while the other pin will insert into a small hole on the underside of the rear spring deck. Some find it easier to first insert one pin into the rear binding post, and then insert the other pin into the small hole in the underside of the frame’s spring deck.

Once it’s all plugged in, you’re ready to go. Step on the pedal and get a feel for the machine. Before using it on practice skin or melons, the machine should be appropriately tuned. Our Guide to Tattoo Machine Tuning can help. You’ll also need to acquire the appropriate training and experience through an apprenticeship before you begin tattooing customers.
c. **Inks, Ink Caps**

First figure out which colors you'll need for your project, and fill the ink caps with those colors. Use Vaseline to secure the ink caps to the surface of your table if you do not have an ink cap holder. Try to set out all of the ink you'll need for your project so you don't have to refill colors in the middle of the tattoo process, which requires the artist to refill new ink caps after washing their hands and changing gloves so they do not contaminate the ink bottle.

d. **Skin Prep—Alcohol, Razors, Gloves, Marking Pen**

Always wear gloves when preparing the skin, and start by rubbing the area with an alcohol pad. Next, shave the area with a disposable razor. Always shave the area, even if it appears hairless, and never reuse a razor.

The marking pen is non-sterile, so do not use it if the skin has already been broken, such as after shaving the area. Only use the marking pen as a means of marking off the tattoo area after you've wiped the skin with the alcohol and prior to shaving the skin. Clean the area following use, too. These pens should be one-use so as not to cross contaminate.

e. **Stencil Application—Flash, Spirit Paper, Green Soap, Spray Bottle**

Many kits come equipped with flash, which are pre-drawn tattoo ideas. If your kit does not come with flash, see if your computer has clip art or search the Internet for free clip art or flash. Make sure that you do not steal any design without the permission of the image creator or owner. Flash is usually very traditional and simple, and can be a good way to practice on fake skin and melons.

Spirit paper comes with four pieces of material per sheet. First remove the tan barrier material, which keeps ink from getting onto the white rice paper. Place your flash design on top of the rice paper, and trace over the flash image; the pressure from the pen will press the bottom of the rice paper into the carbon paper, transferring the image onto the bottom of the rice paper. Cut out the image, leaving about half an inch on all sides.

You could also draw directly onto the rice paper, but just be aware that the image will appear on the other side of the rice paper as the ink from the carbon paper transfers onto it. It is the bottom side that you will place on the skin. If you have only rice paper without the carbon sheet underneath, you can place the flash image under the rice paper, and trace the image directly onto the rice paper.

Before applying the stencil to the skin, you'll need to place a layer of green soap or another medium used to transfer stencils. Green soap is very popular in the industry, and can be used in the skin preparation, stencil application, and post-tattoo process. It is environmentally friendly and is safe for use on the skin. Many keep green soap in a spray or squirt bottle for easy application onto a paper towel, which can be wiped onto the patient's skin—as long as the paper towel is kept sterile.
Other mediums include Stencil Magic, Stencil Stuff, and some even use Speed Stick deodorant. However, if you must use Speed Stick—it is not recommended—do not apply it directly from the stick onto the person's skin. Remember, you broke the skin when you shaved it. The stick is not sterile and can spread diseases from one customer to the next. Use a sterile tongue depressor to grab some of the deodorant from the stick and apply it to the skin. But you're better off with green soap or a stencil transfer medium.

Once the green soap—or whichever medium you use—is on the skin, gently position the rice paper with the ink-side touching the skin, and tap it into place. Then apply even pressure to the stencil, being sure that you do not smudge the image. Remove the rice paper and the stencil should appear on the skin.

f. Tattooing—Practice Skin, Aftercare Ointment

Practice skin, also known as fake skin, is included with many tattoo kits. This is a great way to practice and develop one's skills before tattooing customers. Note that tattooing a few practice skins and melons does not alone prepare one for tattooing customers. An apprenticeship in which the aspiring artist is taught technique, safety and sanitation, and other ins and outs of the industry is essential to developing one's skills to the fullest potential.

Wear disposable gloves every time, and even if you're practicing on fake skin or melons it's a good idea to practice all of the safety and sanitation steps and precautions. This gets you in the habit of taking all of the appropriate steps for when you begin tattooing customers.

After tattooing, apply a coat of the aftercare ointment and educate the customer of all they must do to ensure proper healing. Go through all of the steps necessary to properly breakdown your workstation, and sterilize your equipment in an autoclave afterwards.

g. Maintenance/Adjustment—Allen Keys, Coil Washers, O-Rings, Brushes

Kits should come equipped with Allen keys, also called hex-wrenches or Allen wrenches, required to secure the needle tube and tip, as well as take apart the machine for tuning and adjustment. Brushes for cleaning the machine are included with many kits, too.

O-rings are often included, too; these fit under the front spring and around the front spring screw to reduce noise levels. Coil washers are often included as well. The ends of the coils' wires should not come into contact with the machine frame, so the spacer washers are placed between the soldering lugs (the metal loops at the ends of each coil wire) and frame. A lip in the washer allows it to insert into the frame's hole, and the soldering lug is placed on top of it.
3. Guide to Tattoo Health and Sanitation

One of the main advantages of an apprenticeship, beyond learning technique, is learning proper sanitation and sterilization. This is where a lot of amateur tattoo artists get a bad reputation, having never learned the proper way to prepare the work station and the client, or the safety do’s and do not’s to keep in mind as you’re tattooing.

When it comes to health and safety, there’s no better teacher or guide than experience through an apprenticeship. After watching your mentor several times, you might be asked to prepare the work area and the client. Your mentor should supervise to make sure you are following all of the proper guidelines, but it helps to actually go through all the steps and take the proper precautions yourself rather than watching somebody else do it.

This guide should not replace the hands-on experience of an apprenticeship. It’s meant as a resource to provide a foundation on which the apprentice may build. See our Guide to Finding an Apprenticeship.

a. Tattoo Risks

As a tattoo artist you’re going to have clients who drill you on possible risks inherent in getting a tattoo, and they very well should. If you’re unable to answer or if they’re more knowledgeable than you, you could come off unprofessional. Worse yet, inadequate knowledge of the risks and precautions might lead to improper care, which can lead to cross-contamination.

The most concerning risks associated with tattooing are the spread of blood borne diseases such as hepatitis B and C, and HIV—which leads to AIDS. Allergic reactions to the dye used with tattoos might lead to a rash on the skin, which can recur long after the tattoo is applied. Skin infections are a risk of tattooing as well.

Take a class on Preventing Disease Transmission or other classes concerning cross-contamination with the Red Cross. Some shops, or laws, might even require you take the class before you begin tattooing. Even if this isn’t a requirement, you should take the class. It’s ethical and the knowledge you acquire could even save your life or one of your clients. Proper understanding of cross-contamination prevention is part of what separates the responsible, trusted tattoo artist from the irresponsible, fly-by-night tattoo artist.

b. General Safety Precautions

Wear Gloves

Whenever you’re setting up your work station, preparing the client, performing the tattoo, or cleaning up afterwards, you should be wearing protective gloves. Wash your hands with antibacterial soap and change your gloves before setting up your work station; after you set up your work station and before you prepare the client; after you prepare the client and before you begin the tattoo; and after you finish the tattoo and before you begin the cleanup process. Wash your hands again after finishing the cleanup.
You should also wash your hands and change to a new pair of gloves if you need to refill your ink or touch anything outside of your dirty zone while you are performing the tattoo. (Try to avoid this as much as possible by overestimating the materials you’ll need.) If you’re ever unsure if you should wash your hands and change your gloves, do it.

**Biohazard Disposal**

Any items that contact bodily fluids need to be disposed of properly. This does not mean merely throwing them in a trash bin. You need to throw biohazard materials (those that contact bodily fluids) in a proper receptacle clearly marked as a biohazard bin. Remember, once you throw something away in a regular trash bin, it still might come in contact with a worker at a sanitation plant or waste management facility. Make sure all biohazards go in the proper bin.

Examples of items that must be disposed of in a biohazard waste receptacle include gloves, paper towels, ink caps, ink, protective covers, disposables such as razors, tubes, grips, and tips, and any other item that came in contact with bodily fluids or even that you suspect may have come in contact with bodily fluids.

All needles must be disposed of in a sharps container. This container is usually plastic and will be clearly marked as a biohazard sharps container. Do not throw needles in any other receptacle. Obtain a proper sharps receptacle.

Check with the local health department or with the Red Cross, CDC, or EPA for information regarding biohazard waste disposal and used sharps in your area. Do not take biohazard disposal lightly. This commitment to health and safety is part of what makes a respectable tattoo artist.

**Respect the Workstation and the Client**

Never smoke or eat while you’re tattooing. If you’re hungry, eat before you begin to set up. Not only is this extremely disrespectful to the client, it’s unclean and unsafe.

Would you want somebody wearing dirty clothes with unkempt fingernails giving you a tattoo? Probably not. Wear clean clothes, trim your fingernails, and make sure you’re presentable at all times. In the client’s mind, if you don’t take care of your own hygiene, why would you take care of their health and safety?

If you have any cuts, wounds or abrasions on your hands or forearms, wait until they heal before you tattoo anybody. This is for your clients’ safety as well as your own.

**Be Mindful Not to Cross-Contaminate**

Think about what you’re doing as you prepare the workstation, prepare the client, perform the tattoo, and clean up afterwards. Think about what your hands have touched—and what those items have touched—before touching other items. As mentioned, if you’re not sure if you should wash your hands and change you’re gloves, just do it. Never get lazy.
c. Know Your Zones

Right away you need to establish certain zones. These are your sterile zone, dirty zone, and the in-between. You’ll hear them called different things, such as hot, warm, and cold; this is just one example.

1. Sterile Area

In this zone goes everything that should remain sterile throughout the tattoo process. Your sterile area is always separated from the contaminated and in-between zones. An example of a sterile area is a drawer or cabinet not attached to your workstation, and possibly covered on the outside by a disposable plastic barrier. In the sterile zone you can keep clean ink bottles, ink caps, gloves, and other items that should never contact bodily fluids. Do not touch anything from the sterile area until the tattoo process is complete and you’ve properly cleaned up the workstation and washed your hands.

2. Contaminated Area

The contaminated area is any surface or item that is contacted by bodily fluids. This includes but is not limited to the client, the machine (should be covered with plastic), any bottles you’ll be touching (bottles should have plastic covers), and the gloves that you’re wearing. Under no circumstances should your contaminated area contact your sterile area.

3. The In-Between

This is any area that does not have to be touched during the tattoo process, and should not be touched with anything but clean gloves. Items in the in-between should have plastic wrap on them to protect them from spatter. Examples include furniture such as the client’s and the artist’s chair.

d. Prepare the Work Station

Never take shortcuts when preparing your workstation. Not only will cleanliness and proper setup bring in more customers, it’s unethical to take shortcuts and skimp on sterility and sanitation. You’re protecting yourself and your client when you take the time to set up properly.

Make sure you keep things organized. Disorganization can lead to cross-contamination. Always know where everything is, and make sure that the materials you’ll use during the tattoo are within reach so you do not have to go into your sterile area after the client’s skin is broken.

Note: Tattoo machines and equipment should be sterilized in an autoclave beforehand.

1. Wash your hands and forearms with antibacterial soap and warm water. Make sure you wash up to the elbow. Use a paper towel to dry your hands, and use the paper towel to turn off the water. You just touched the faucet handle with your dirty hands to turn on the water; don’t touch it again. Some shops might install an automatic sensor that uses a motion sensor to turn the water on and off.
2. Put on a pair of disposable gloves.
3. Spray MadaCide disinfectant on your work surface, and wipe the surface dry with a paper towel.
4. Put down a layer of disposable plastic on which you will lay out your tools and bottles. Put a couple of lab cloths on top of the plastic. This will guard against any spills or splatter. Tape the plastic and cloth to the table.
5. Place all of your materials on the work surface. This includes disposable razors, paper towels to wipe away ink and blood, and disposable cups with water.
6. Set your ink caps separate from other items because these will be contaminated with bodily fluids as you dip the needle in the ink. You will keep your tattoo machine in this area, too.
7. In this area you should also include a few blobs of Vaseline. With a sterile tongue depressor remove a few scoops and place on a lab cloth. If you must use your finger, change your gloves first. Some artists will place a small amount of Vaseline on the bottom of the ink caps to keep them in place.
8. Wrap in plastic your machine, the clip cord, the power supply, and any bottles you will use while tattooing.
9. Wrap other surfaces in plastic, too. This includes any surface that may be contaminated with bodily fluid as you perform the tattoo such as your chair and any furniture that your client will use. Any items you might touch while tattooing should be covered, too.
10. Place any needles you’ll need on your workstation. Do not open the needles until your client is in front of you and you’ve changed your gloves. Do the same with tubes and grips if these items are disposable.
11. Put ink into the ink caps, being sure to overestimate the amount of ink you’ll need for the tattoo. It’s better to throw away some ink and ink caps after the tattoo than to run out in the middle of the tattoo.

e. Prepare the Client

Once the tattoo area is set up, you’re ready to prepare the client for the tattoo.

*Note:* Some tattoo artists still use deodorant on the client’s skin before applying the tattoo. Do not do this. Before applying the deodorant you’re shaving the client’s skin, which breaks it. Then you’re putting the deodorant on the broken skin. You would then use the same stick of deodorant on your next client, whose skin you just broke, exposing him or her to blood from the previous client. Avoid using deodorant if you can, but if you must, use a sterile tongue depressor to remove a layer of deodorant and then apply it to the client’s skin with a clean glove.

12. Wash your hands and change your gloves, properly disposing of the old ones.
13. Wipe down the area using Green Soap. Clean the area thoroughly, being sure to clean a few inches beyond where you plan to tattoo.
14. Apply a bit more Green Soap and shave the area you plan to tattoo using a disposable razor. Never reuse razors. Shave a few inches beyond the area you plan to tattoo. Even if you do not see hair, shave the area anyway. Use a paper towel to wipe the area.
15. Some artists will use Green Soap to apply the stencil, but others use commercially available stencil application products like Stencil-Pro, Stencil Magic and Stencil Stuff. Some use Dettol. Different...
artists will use different products. Whatever you use, make sure it is safe and apply it lightly to the skin.

16. You should create your stencil before beginning your set up. See our Guide to Creating Tattoo Stencils for information and tips on making stencils.

17. Position the tattoo on the client’s skin where they want it. First set it lightly on the skin, and carefully press it, being careful not to smear or smudge it.

18. Allow the area to dry, and when ready to begin place a light layer of Vaseline over the area.

f. While You’re Tattooing

19. Wash your hands and change your gloves, properly disposing of the old ones.

20. With new gloves, open the needle, grip and/or needle tubes and attach them to your machine.

21. Your Green Soap bottle should be covered with plastic around the body where you grab it, but the nozzle will not. Do not squirt the soap directly on the client’s skin. Instead, spray the Green Soap onto a paper towel, and then use that to wipe away ink or blood. This applies to any bottle whose contents you will apply to the client.

22. You might see some artists using a pen to redraw stencil lines that are wiped away. Do not do this. Doing so can lead to cross-contamination. The best defense against losing stencil lines is to properly apply the stencil before beginning the tattoo.

23. You should overestimate the amount of ink and Vaseline you need to perform the tattoo. If you have to add more ink, though, you need to remove your gloves, wash your hands up to your elbow, put on new gloves, take out new ink caps, remove the ink bottle from the sterile zone, fill the new ink caps away from the old ink caps, replace the ink bottles in your sterile zone, change your gloves again, and you may resume the tattoo process.

24. Wash your hands and change your gloves before applying the dressing to the tattoo.

g. Cleaning Up the Work Area

25. Apply the aftercare ointment to the tattoo, and then the sterile dressing.

26. Go over aftercare instructions with the client, and answer any of his or her questions. Aftercare is important to ensuring that your tattoos heal properly, becoming living testaments to your skills as an artist.

27. Change your gloves and wash your hands again. Try to keep one glove clean and the other dirty, grabbing items appropriately. For instance, remove the water bottle's bag with the dirty glove, and grab the bottle with the clean glove to place it in its sterile storage area after cleaning it with MadaCide.

28. Remove bags from machine, clip cord, chair, etc. Dispose of all used bags.

29. Dispose of used tubes, ink cups, and other disposable items.

30. Dispose of the needle in a designated sharps container.

31. Spray a few paper towels with MadaCide, and use them to wipe down the work area and any equipment you used.

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32. Wipe down machine and its parts with a paper towel sprayed with MadaCide, and dispose of the paper towel.
33. All items that go in the autoclave must first be cleaned in an ultra-sonic cleaner, which works to remove any lingering blood or other particles.
34. Once these items have been cleaned in the ultra-sonic cleaner, rinse them in cold water and place them in the autoclave bags to go into the autoclave.
35. See your local health department for autoclave information and instructions. This is an important step, as proper autoclave operation is essential to keeping your tools sterile and maintaining your reputation as a responsible artist.