

Tattoo Artist

Draw on skin for a living. No licence, a long unpaid apprenticeship, and income that depends on your art and your following.

TYPICAL PAY

\$42,000

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$31k to \$62k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Moderate

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

Tattoo studios, private studios, conventions

How you get there

- 1 Draw, constantly** Years
 A portfolio of 50 to 100 finished drawings in tattoo-friendly styles. Art classes in high school or college help, but the sketchbook is what studios look at.
- 2 Find an apprenticeship** Months to years
 Walk into studios with your portfolio. Expect many no's. Good apprenticeships are free and strict; be wary of ones that charge thousands.
- 3 Apprentice** 1 to 3 years
 Cleaning, sterilization, setting up stations, drawing designs, then practising on fake skin and finally on volunteers under supervision. Unpaid.
- 4 Health and safety training** Days
 Bloodborne pathogen certificate and first aid. Public health inspects studios for sterilization, single-use needles and records.
- 5 Working artist** Ongoing
 Your own chair, your own clients, a share of each tattoo. Building a following takes years more.

Pros and cons

- + Your art, your style, your clients
- + Set your own hours and rates once established
- + Travel through conventions and guest spots
- Unpaid apprenticeship for 1 to 3 years
- Income depends on bookings, which depend on your following
- Back, neck and hand strain

Good to know

No licence anywhere in Canada

You can legally tattoo in every province without a certificate. The studio, not the artist, is what public health inspects, and it can be closed for poor sterilization.

The apprenticeship is the gate

Since there is no school, the only way in is convincing a working artist to teach you. Good apprenticeships are unpaid but free; apprenticeships that charge thousands are a warning sign in the indu...

Optional boosts

A recognizable style. A large social following. Conventions and guest spots. Large-scale work.

Where these numbers come from

Job Bank: Tattoo artist, wages (updated Nov 2025)

Job Bank: Tattoo artist, job prospects

Job Bank: Estheticians and related, requirements by province

Toronto Public Health: BodySafe inspections

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in Canadian dollars, based on Government of Canada Job Bank wage data and published salary grids. They vary by province, employer and experience. Tuition is for domestic students. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/ca/careers/tattoo-artist>



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