



Painful Pleasures Tattoo Glossary

Everyone from tattoo apprentices to those just beginning to explore the world of body modification to full-fledged tattoo enthusiasts can learn something new by reading our Tattoo Glossary. It's chock full of tattoo terminology ranging from a basic definition of tattoos to explanations of the different types of tools used in tattooing to tattoo safety terms and beyond.

Click any of the phrases below to expand your tattooing knowledge, or read straight through for a fairly thorough education on tattoo terminology. Definitions are sorted alphabetically to make it easy to find a specific definition when you want to understand just one tattooing term. When definitions include other terms from this Tattoo Glossary, you can click cross reference links to read related definitions. You'll also find links to related products embedded in relevant definitions, so you can click to see the products being described. The "Learn more..." links at the end of some definitions will take you to related articles and blog posts from our [Information Center](#) that you can read to expand your tattooing knowledge further.

Links to Definitions of Tattoo Terms

A Allen Key	PreSynergy Tattoo System	Tattoo Flash Rack	Tattoo Needle Bar
Antiseptic	Protective Gear for Tattooing	Tattoo Foot Pedal	Tattoo Pen
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H Hypertrophic Scar	Tattoo Anesthetic	Tattoo Machine Grommet	Tattoo Touch-Up
K Keloid Scar	Tattoo Art	Tattoo Machine Nipple	Tattoo Transfer Paper
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Light Box	Tattoo Bandage	Tattoo Machine Power Supply	Tattoo Washer Bottle
M Magnum Tattoo Needles	Tattoo Chair/Table	Tattoo Machine Rubber Band	Tattoo Workstation
Microbiology	Tattoo Collector	Tattoo Machine Spring	Tattooing
P Petrify	Tattoo Cover	Tattoo Machine Stroke	U Ultrasonic Cleaner
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Precision Tattoo Supplies	Tattoo Flash Art	Tattoo Needle	W Wacom Tablet & Pen



Tattoo Terminology

Allen Key - A hexagonal rod bent into an L-shape to create a tool that will turn hex screws, which are screws with hexagonal holes inset in their heads. [Allen keys](#) come in a variety of sizes so they can be used to manipulate hex screws in different sizes, like those used as [contact screws](#) and [binding screws](#) on [tattoo machines](#).

Antiseptic - A product used to free the skin of contaminants like bacteria, viruses and other microorganisms that could cause a tattoo to become infected if not removed before a person is tattooed. After washing a tattoo client's skin with an appropriate [skin cleanser](#) like [Green Soap](#), a [tattoo artist](#) will apply an [antiseptic](#) like rubbing alcohol as a final preventative measure to combat [infection](#) before applying a [tattoo stencil](#) and beginning the [tattooing](#) process.

Armature Bar - A [coil tattoo machine](#) component that works in combination with front and back [tattoo springs](#) to pull [tattoo needles](#) back out of the skin after they've injected [tattoo ink](#) into the [dermis](#). ([Learn how armature bars work with tattoo springs to drive tattoo needles attached to coil tattoo machines.](#))

Autoclave - A machine that uses pressurized steam to sterilize reusable tattoo equipment, such as [steel tattoo tubes](#) and autoclavable [tattoo grips](#). ([Learn more about how autoclaves use steam to sterilize tattoo instruments.](#))

Clean Room - A room or other closed-off area within a tattoo and piercing shop where employees can clean and sterilize tattoo equipment using germicidal [disinfectants](#) and cleaning tools like [Wavicide and bristled brushes](#) and an [autoclave steam sterilizer](#).

Clip Cord - One of two types of connective cords used to power [tattoo machines](#) by connecting them to [tattoo power supply units](#) that send electricity through the cord to the machine. [Clip cords](#) typically have a [quarter inch jack mono plug](#) on one end to plug into a tattoo power supply and a Y-shaped clip cord connector on the opposite end to connect the cable to a tattoo machine.

Cohesive Wrap - A type of medical bandage that sticks to itself but not to skin. [Tattoo artists](#) often use [cohesive wrap](#) to pad their [tattoo grips](#) and make them more comfortable to hold for long periods of time.



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Coil Tattoo Machine - A type of [tattoo machine](#) that uses electromagnetic current to continuously create and break a circuit with the goal of driving [tattoo needles](#) in and out of the skin. The cyclical breaking and re-establishing of the circuit occurs as various parts of a coil tattoo machine connect and disconnect from each other. At the start of the process, the [front spring](#) attached to the tattoo machine's metal [armature bar](#) is touching a [contact screw](#), creating a complete circuit when the connected [tattoo power supply unit](#) is turned on. The electricity passed from the power supply to the machine via an [RCA cord](#) or [clip cord](#) charges the machine's coils, which then creates an electromagnetic field that attracts the metal armature bar, pulling it down and separating the front spring from the contact screw. This downward motion drives the attached tattoo needles down, out of a [tattoo tube](#) and into the skin, but it also breaks the circuit previously created by the front spring touching the contact screw. When the circuit breaks, the electromagnetic field created by the charged coils collapses, releasing the armature bar and allowing the front spring to reconnect with the contact screw. The tattoo needles then retract back into the tattoo tube until the circuit is re-established, which once again charges the coils, recreating an electromagnetic field and drawing the armature bar back down again. This cycle repeats rapidly as long as power is being delivered to the coil tattoo machine. This type of tattoo machine is responsible for the infamous buzzing sound associated with [tattoo shops](#).

Cover-up Tattoo - A tattoo that completely covers an old tattoo which has faded or is otherwise unsatisfactory to its owner. Creating cover-up tattoos that effectively hide old tattoos is an art in and of itself. If you wish to eliminate an old tattoo by having it completely covered with a new tattoo, it's important to find a tattoo artist who specializes in cover-ups and to choose a design that's large enough and contains the other elements necessary to effectively hide your old tattoo. ([Learn more about cover up tattoos.](#))

Dermis - The secondary layer of skin cells beneath the [epidermis](#). [Tattoo artists](#) create permanent [tattoo art](#) by injecting [tattoo ink](#) into the dermis, since cells in this layer of skin take a long time to regenerate instead of sloughing off daily the way epidermal skin cells do. Eventually, even dermal cells will die and be replaced by new cells that don't contain tattoo ink pigments, which is what gives tattoos the appearance of fading over time--an issue that can be remedied with periodic [touch-ups](#).

Disinfectant - A chemical agent used to eliminate microorganisms from inanimate objects, such as tattoo shop counters and tattoo tools. Types of [disinfectants](#) used in tattoo shops include products like CaviCide1 surface disinfectant, Wavicide germicidal disinfectant soaking solution for tattoo tools, Madacide-FD hospital-grade disinfectant, and UltraDose germicidal disinfectant.



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Epidermis - The surface layer of skin that overlays and protects the [dermis](#) beneath. [Tattoo needles](#) must penetrate the epidermis and inject [tattoo ink](#) into the dermis; otherwise, [tattoo](#) designs would be lost as epidermal skin cells slough off daily.

Flat Tattoo Needles - [Tattoo needles](#) arranged in a flat line on a [needle bar](#). [Flat tattoo needles](#) work well for creating geometric tattoos and can serve other purposes based on a tattoo artist's preferences. ([Learn more about tattoo needles.](#))

Hypertrophic Scar - Raised scar tissue that forms immediately around a wound. Hypertrophic scars tend to be skin tone once established. Some people develop hypertrophic scars over parts of their tattoos, particularly after being tattooed by a novice [tattoo artist](#) or a [scratcher](#) who doesn't have formal training and operates independently from their home or elsewhere rather than working in a licensed, sanitary [tattoo studio](#). It's important to choose a reputable, professional tattoo artist who holds any licenses required in your state and/or who works for a licensed tattoo shop to ensure that you get a quality tattoo and minimize your chances of scarring. ([Learn more about hypertrophic scars.](#) | [Learn more about choosing a professional tattoo artist.](#))

Keloid Scar - Red or purple smooth-surfaced, bulbous scars that form around a wound and well beyond it. Very few people are prone to keloid scarring, which is typically a hereditary issue. If you know you develop keloids around wounds, you should avoid all forms of body modification, including tattoos. Keloid scars can completely obliterate a tattoo, and they have to be treated by a dermatologist using methods like cryotherapy to freeze off the scar tissue, laser therapy to burn it off, corticosteroid injections to shrink the scar tissue, surgical removal, or a combination of methods. ([Learn more about keloid scars.](#))

Laser Tattoo Removal - The process of removing a tattoo in stages with a laser like the [RevLite® SI laser by ConBio](#) over the course of months or a year+. Usually black ink is addressed first, followed by other colors in separate sessions, as needed. The closer a tattoo is to the heart, the faster the ink tends to break up and be absorbed by the body after being treated with a laser, so tattoos on the extremities usually take longer to remove. Old, faded tattoos and black tattoos respond most quickly to laser tattoo removal. ([Learn more about laser tattoo removal.](#) | [Learn about having laser tattoo removal at The Studio at Painful Pleasures.](#))

Light Box - A tool used by tattoo artists to create custom [tattoo stencils](#) for clients. Laying images on a [light box](#) makes them easier to trace and modify to create a tattoo design that meets the client's expectations and that's an appropriate size for the body part to be tattooed.



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Magnum Tattoo Needles - [Tattoo needles](#) attached to a [needle bar](#) in large groupings. Magnum tattoo needles are more appropriate for filling in large areas and shading than other needle configurations. They come in [standard magnum tattoo needle configurations](#) and tightly [stacked magnum needle configurations](#). ([Learn more about tattoo needles.](#))

Microbiology - The study of microscopically small organisms like viruses, bacteria, fungi, and molds. Microbiology is relevant to [tattoo artists](#) because many microorganisms can harm tattoo clients by causing infections and other issues if proper [tattoo skin prep](#) isn't performed prior to tattooing or performing another body modification. ([Learn more about microbiology.](#))

Petrify - A super-absorbent polymer that yields a gel-like material when mixed with liquid. [Petrify](#) is a handy tool for [tattoo artists](#), because it can be used to solidify inky water so that it can be thrown away in a trash can instead of having to be carried to a sink and dumped out. It's especially helpful at tattoo conventions, when there may not be a sink near a tattoo artist's booth. Additionally, Petrify can be added to [Sharps containers](#) to solidify the fluids that collect at the bottom of them so that it isn't a hazard when the containers are sent away to be destroyed.

Pneumatic Tattoo Machine - A type of [tattoo machine](#) powered by air compressors that use pressurized air to drive tattoo needles up and down. The pneumatic tattoo machine was created by tattoo artist Carson Hill in 2000, over 100 years after rotary and [coil tattoo machines](#) were invented. Pneumatic tattoo machines are very lightweight and entirely autoclavable, yet they aren't nearly as popular among tattoo artists as coil and [rotary tattoo machines](#). ([Learn more about tattoo machines.](#))

Precision Tattoo Supplies - A Painful Pleasures line of high-quality tattoo supplies at affordable prices. Precision offers [tattoo artists](#) a wide range of tattoo supplies and medical supplies, like [disposable tattoo tubes](#), [tattoo needles](#), [cohesive wrap](#) for padding [tattoo grips](#), and much, much more. ([Shop for Precision tattoo supplies and medical supplies.](#))

PreSynergy Tattoo System - A tattoo tube system that allows tattoo artists to combine their preferred tattoo tips and tubes/grips to create truly synergistic disposable tattoo tubes. [PreSynergy tattoo tubes and tips](#) save tattoo artists time, money and storage space, because you can stock just your preferred tips and a box or two of grips rather than having to buy entire disposable tattoo tubes in every style and tip size you frequently use. ([Learn more about the PreSynergy tattoo system.](#))



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Protective Gear for Tattooing - Any cover for tattoo equipment or the body that prevents cross contamination by protecting a person or equipment from bodily fluids and harmful microorganisms that may be present during the tattooing process. Examples of [protective gear](#) include clip cord covers, tattoo machine bags, forearm sleeves, [tattoo gloves](#), aprons, dental bibs, blue barrier film, and bottle bags.

Quarter Inch Jack Mono Plug - A type of connector attached to one end of [RCA cords](#) and [clip cords](#) that allows tattoo artists to plug their cables into [tattoo power supply units](#) to deliver power to their [tattoo machines](#). [Quarter inch jack mono plugs](#) are available in straight and right-angle styles. You can purchase them separately if you need to replace the jack on an RCA cord or other cable used for tattoo equipment.

RCA Cable - A type of cord used to connect [tattoo machines](#) to [tattoo power supply units](#). [RCA cables](#) come in a variety of options, like right angle RCA cables, RCA cord sold by the foot that you can connect your preferred phono plug, long RCA cables that give you room to maneuver while you're tattooing, RCA cable connectors that allow you to convert your spring-style clip cord to an RCA cord, and more.

Rotary Tattoo Machine - A quiet type of tattoo machine that has a small motor that rotates clockwise, moving the attached tattoo needles up and down in a smooth, linear pattern. Rotary tattoo machines move tattoo needles in and out of the skin more evenly and fluidly than coil tattoo machines. The very first tattoo machine ever created was a rotary model based on Thomas Edison's electric *Stencil-Pens*. In 1891, Sam O'Reilly modified Edison's invention so he could use it to introduce ink into the skin. He later created the first tattoo tube and needle system and added an ink reservoir. ([Learn more about rotary tattoo machines.](#))

Round Liner Tattoo Needles - [Tattoo needles](#) grouped in a tight, round formation. [Round liner needles](#) are ideal for lining work, like creating the outline of a tattoo.

Round Shader Tattoo Needles - [Tattoo needles](#) grouped in a round formation that isn't as tight as round liner needles. [Round shader needles](#) work best for creating shading in a tattoo design.

Scarification - The practice of etching permanent designs into the skin using [scalpels](#) or other cutting instruments, branding irons, abrasion with tools like inkless [tattoo machines](#), [electrocautery pens](#), and other implements. Some piercers and [tattoo artists](#) also perform scarification, but there are also dedicated scarification artists. Sometimes scarification artists will rub [tattoo ink](#) into their scarification designs to enhance the look of the finished



scarification pieces. ([Learn more about scarification.](#))

Scratcher - A tattooist who has not participated in a tattoo apprenticeship or other formal training and who doesn't work for a licensed tattoo and piercing shop. Scratchers often work out of their homes or elsewhere, such as at home-based tattoo parties. Although some scratchers are excellent tattoo artists, there are many who are sub-par and leave their clients with [tattoo nightmares](#), ugly scars, [tattoo infections](#), or other unsatisfactory results. It's always best to go to a reputable, professional [tattoo artist](#) who holds whatever [licenses are required in your state](#), if any, or who works for a licensed [tattoo shop](#) to ensure you get a quality tattoo in a sanitary environment.

Sharps Container - A bio-hazard container into which piercing and tattoo artists insert used [tattoo needles](#), scalpel blades and other sharp objects to ensure that they're safely disposed of and that no one inadvertently pricks themselves with a used piercing or tattoo needle. [The Sharps Recovery System](#) allows [tattoo shops](#) to mail away full Sharps containers for proper disposal of this form of medical waste.

Sterilization - A process that destroys microorganisms like bacteria, viruses and fungi, usually utilizing a high-temperature sterilization method involving steam or dry heat. Most [tattoo artists](#) use [autoclaves](#) to sterilize their reusable tattoo equipment, like [grips](#) and [tattoo tubes](#), but smaller shops sometimes use cold sterilization methods involving germicidal [disinfectants](#) like Wavicide instead of an autoclave. ([Learn more about sterilization methods.](#))

Tattoo - A permanent design created by puncturing the skin and inserting pigments in a predetermined pattern. Modern-day tattoos are most often created by [tattoo artists](#) who use either [rotary](#) or [coil tattoo machines](#) to inject [tattoo ink](#) beneath the [epidermis](#) into the [dermis](#), so that the designs they create will hold even as outer layers of skin cells are sloughed off daily. Although tattoos are permanent body art, they may appear to fade over time as cells within the epidermis die and are replaced by new cells that do not hold pigment. [Touch-ups](#) can revitalize the appearance of older tattoos. ([Learn more about tattooing through the ages by reading our History of Tattoos.](#))

Tattoo Aftercare - The process of caring for a new tattoo to ensure that it heals well. Proper tattoo aftercare includes different steps at different stages of the healing process, but throughout, it's important to keep a new tattoo clean. There are a number of quality [tattoo aftercare products](#) available that you can use to keep a new tattoo moisturized, too, like Tattoo Goo ointment and lotion, Hustle Butter, Aquaphor, Redemption, and others. ([Learn more about](#)



[tattoo aftercare.](#))

Tattoo Anesthetic - A cream or spray that contains an over-the-counter numbing agent like 5% lidocaine to numb the surface of the skin and make the tattooing process less painful for clients. Those with low pain thresholds often find [tattoo anesthetic numbing creams and sprays](#) to be a helpful tool for lessening the discomfort of getting tattooed. Tattoo anesthetics should be applied a minimum of 20-30 minutes before the tattooing process, and they can be reapplied throughout the process to maintain their effect.

Tattoo Art - A type of permanent body art that uses human flesh as the canvas for diverse types of artwork created by professional [tattoo artists](#). [Tattoo styles](#) may range from geometric designs to watercolor-style tattoos to symbols to tribal-inspired artwork and beyond. Read the [definition of tattoos](#) for more information.

Tattoo Artist/Tattooist - A professional artist who has learned the art of [tattooing](#) through an apprenticeship and extensive practice. Professional tattoo artists apply [tattoo stencils](#) to the surface of the skin using [tattoo transfer paper](#) and/or [tattoo pens](#), and then they outline, fill in and flesh out those designs with [tattoo machines](#) that inject [tattoo ink](#) beneath the [epidermis](#) into the [dermis](#) so the designs they create will hold over time.

Tattoo Bandage - A temporary covering for new tattoos that protects them and contains excess blood during the first few hours after getting a tattoo. [Tattoo bandages](#) include products like Tatu-Derm breathable film, gauze taped over a tattoo, blue barrier film, and Dri-Loc Pads. Your tattoo artist will tell you how many hours you should keep your new tattoo bandaged. After that time, it's best to let your tattoo breathe. ([Learn more about tattoo aftercare.](#))

Tattoo Chair/Table - A special chair or table that clients sit on during the [tattooing](#) process. These pieces of furniture are usually flexible, so that clients can sit up or recline as needed during the tattooing process, depending on the type of [tattoo](#) they're getting and its location. Sometimes [tattoo artists](#) will supplement a [tattoo chair or table](#) with an arm rest so that a limb can be extended for better accessibility.

Tattoo Collector - Someone who has an extensive collection of tattoos and who views their permanent body art as a curated collection. Tattoo collectors often get tattooed by specific, carefully-chosen tattoo artists and use their skin to build a library of body art that's filled with memories and meaning for the collector and the tattoo artists who inked their tattoos. These collections also often serve as a source of inspiration to other tattoo enthusiasts and artists.



[\(Learn more by reading our blog post, Are You a Tattoo Collector?\)](#)

Tattoo Cover - Protective gear used to cover tattoo equipment or a tattoo artist, such as forearm sleeves, tattoo machine bags and clip cord covers. See our [definition of protective gear for tattooing](#) above for more information and links to related products.

Tattoo Enthusiast - Someone who's passionate about tattoo art. Tattoo enthusiasts often have a number of tattoos of their own, but not always. There are enthusiasts who study the art form but don't engage in it. Those who do get tattooed may eventually progress to being [tattoo collectors](#). ([Learn more about tattoo enthusiasts and tattoo collectors.](#))

Tattoo Flash Art - Printed or drawn tattoo designs that appear on the walls of tattoo shops, on [flash racks](#), or in books and magazines that may be very unique designs or more traditional, somewhat stereotypical tattoo art. [Tattoo flash art](#) is intended to give those interested in getting tattooed ideas for tattoo designs, but some people choose to get tattoo flash images tattooed on them without any modifications. Some [tattoo artists](#) create their own flash art, others strictly use store-bought tattoo flash art created by other tattooists, and others yet use a combination of these two types of flash art. ([Learn how to choose the best tattoo design for you.](#))

Tattoo Flash Rack - A wall-mounted or free-standing device for displaying [tattoo flash art](#). Most [tattoo flash racks](#) include pages encased in plastic so that the tattoo shops that utilize them can slide in their own artwork or purchased tattoo flash art.

Tattoo Foot Pedal - A pedal that works much like a sewing machine pedal, but to power a [tattoo machine](#) only when a [tattoo artist](#) is actually tattooing, even if their machine is constantly connected to a running [tattoo power supply](#). There are [tattoo foot pedals](#) that are connected to power supply units and tattoo machines via cables, as well as wireless foot switch options available.

Tattoo Gloves - Protective coverings for the hands that are typically made either of latex or nitrile. [Tattoo gloves](#) protect clients from any microorganisms remaining on a tattoo artist's hands after properly washing them, and they protect artists from their clients' bodily fluids and other contaminants they may be exposed to during the tattooing process. ([Learn more about why it's important to wear gloves when tattooing.](#))



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Tattoo Grip - A piece of tattoo equipment that allows a tattoo artist to comfortably hold a tattoo machine while they work. There are a variety of different [tattoo grips](#) available, including all-in-one [disposable tattoo tubes with built-in grips](#) and autoclavable, reusable [tattoo grips](#) made from materials like stainless steel, aluminum and plastic. Some tattoo artists choose to pad their grips with layers of [cohesive wrap](#) for added comfort, and others use grip covers like our [Precision memory foam grip covers](#).

Tattoo Infection - The presence of a virus, bacteria or other harmful microorganisms introduced during the tattooing process that wreak havoc on the body. Certain colors of tattoo ink can sometimes trigger infections to develop in some people, but improper [tattoo skin prep](#) or unsanitary tattooing conditions are more often to blame. If your tattoo becomes infected, you may experience skin that's hot to the touch, red streaks radiating from your tattoo, discharge of thick, yellowish pus from parts of your tattoo, and/or fever. If you experience any of these symptoms, you can try to combat them by cleaning your tattoo with an [antibacterial skin cleanser](#) and generally ramping up your [tattoo aftercare](#) regime. If your symptoms persist or become worse, you may need to see your primary doctor to get an antibiotic. If an antibiotic is prescribed, make sure you take the full course. Taking a partial course of antibiotics can temporarily suppress an infection only to have it come back stronger and more resistant to antibiotics.

Tattoo Ink - Pigments injected beneath the surface of the skin, into the [dermis](#), to create tattoo designs. [Tattoo ink](#) is not FDA approved, so it's important to use ink manufactured by reputable brands that pride themselves on creating sterile tattoo ink. Many people now request organic and/or vegan-friendly tattoo inks, of which there are many options available. ([Learn more about the top tattoo ink brands.](#))

Tattoo Ink Cup - A small plastic cup or tray of cups that hold small amounts of [tattoo ink](#) pigments. [Tattoo ink cups](#) allow [tattoo artists](#) to easily dip their [tattoo needles](#) into whatever colors of tattoo ink they need throughout the tattooing process.

Tattoo Ink Cup Holder - A stand that holds [tattoo ink cups](#) in one size or an assortment of sizes. [Ink cup holders](#) make it easier for [tattoo artists](#) to manage their ink cups during the tattooing process.

Tattoo Ink Mixer - A machine that thoroughly stirs up [tattoo ink](#), re-dispersing the pigments and delivering the smoothest, most even colors. There are [tattoo ink mixers](#) available that will shake an entire bottle of tattoo ink, and others that are hand-held devices intended to stir the ink within individual [ink cups](#) after shaking a bottle by hand and pouring the contents into small



cups.

Tattoo Machine - A piece of equipment that utilizes a motor, electromagnetic coils or pressurized air to drive [tattoo needles](#) up and down and deposit [tattoo ink](#) beneath the surface of the skin, into the [dermis](#). The three types of tattoo machines are [coil machines](#), [rotary machines](#) and [pneumatic tattoo machines](#). ([Learn more about tattoo machines.](#))

Tattoo Machine Binding Screw - Flat-topped screws used to connect parts of a [tattoo machine](#). For instance, a [binding screw](#) is used to connect a [rear spring](#) to a [coil tattoo machine's armature bar](#).

Tattoo Machine Coil - A spool-like device comprised of two metal washers capping either end of a cylindrical core made of a highly-conductive material like steel or iron that's been wrapped with fine-gauge magnet wire, like copper wire, so that an electromagnetic current is generated when the coils are charged with electricity. These [coils](#) are what power [coil tattoo machines](#). Most coil machines have two coils, but a single coil or even three coils can be used instead. ([Learn more about tattoo machine coils.](#))

Tattoo Machine Contact Screw - Flat-topped screws with pointed ends used to create the circuits that power [coil tattoo machines](#). A [contact screw](#) has to be touching a coil machine's [front spring](#) to close the circuit that then charges the machine's [coils](#), creating an electromagnetic field that draws down the [armature bar](#) and drives [tattoo needles](#) into the skin. This process separates the front spring and contact screw, which releases the armature bar, draws the tattoo needles back up and out of the skin, and starts the cycle all over again.

Tattoo Machine Grommet - A small piece of rubber shaped like a tire with a groove through the center. You slip a [grommet](#) over the peg that extends from the front of a [coil machine's armature bar](#) to help keep the attached [tattoo needles](#) securely in place. The eye of a tattoo needle or [needle bar](#) slides around the groove on the grommet.

Tattoo Machine Nipple - A top hat-shaped cap that you can use in place of a [grommet](#) to keep [tattoo needles](#) securely attached to a [coil tattoo machine's armature bar](#). The eye of the tattoo needles slides over the smaller end of the [nipple](#), which is then used to cap the peg on the armature bar.



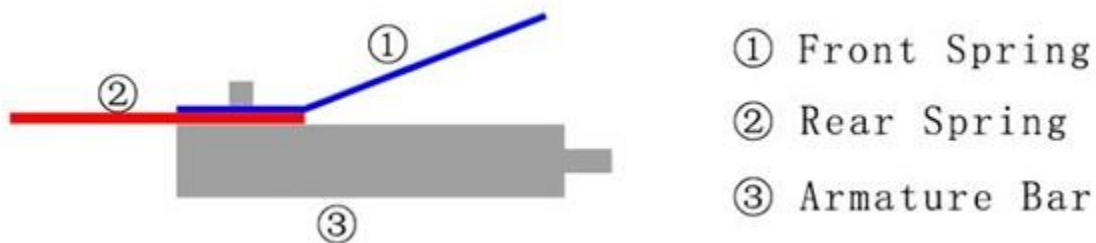
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Tattoo Machine O-Ring - Rubber band-like rings that dampen vibrations, minimize the noise produced by [coil tattoo machines](#), and impact the machine's stroke. Slip an O-ring over the [front spring](#) and around the cap screw that holds the spring and [armature bar](#) together to support the front spring. Gently-sloping springs often don't require O-rings the way that bent springs do. O-rings alter the pivot point of the front spring, creating a shorter stroke that allows the machine to run faster and hit the skin harder. For a longer stroke, you can eliminate the O-ring or adjust its connection points.

Tattoo Machine Power Supply - A device that plugs into an electrical outlet and connects to a tattoo machine via an RCA cable or clip cord to power the machine. [Tattoo machine power supplies](#) can be adjusted to deliver more or less power to a tattoo machine for different results.

Tattoo Machine Rubber Band - An actual rubber band that prevents tattoo needles from sliding off an armature bar. One end of a [tattoo rubber band](#) wraps around the back of the machine, and the other end goes around the tattoo needles to help keep them securely in place. Not all tattoo machines require use of rubber bands.

Tattoo Machine Spring - A flat piece of metal in one of several fairly standard shapes that attaches to a coil tattoo machine's armature bar. There are [front springs and rear springs](#) that connect to an armature bar in the manner shown in the diagram below. The front spring creates the circuit that powers a coil tattoo machine and acts as a shock absorber for the armature bar when the machine is operating. The rear spring regulates the movement of tattoo needles and does the brunt of the heavy lifting when it's time to draw them back up and out of the skin. ([Learn more about tattoo machine springs.](#))



Tattoo Machine Stroke - The distance [tattoo needles](#) move during each up/down cycle. A longer stroke is best for color packing and shading, and a short stroke is better for lining. With [coil tattoo machines](#), the stroke can be impacted by the weight and length of the [armature bar](#), the thickness of the [tattoo springs](#), the use of [rubber bands](#), and other factors. [Rotary tattoo machines](#) like [Stigma](#) and [Dragonfly machines](#) often have excenters that can be changed out to impact the stroke. [Ego rotary machines](#) use a Power Triangle system to adjust stroke, other



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rotary machines use other methods for adjusting stroke, and some don't have adjustable strokes at all.

Tattoo Machine Washer - A round plastic or steel disc with a hole in the center used in between binding screws and the parts of a coil tattoo machine to which those screws attach. [Washers](#) act as insulators between screws and a coil machine frame.

Tattoo Needle - A long, sharp, pointed stainless steel rod with a ring on one end used to drive [tattoo ink](#) into the skin and deposit it into the [dermis](#). The ring attaches to the [tattoo machine](#), which powers the tattoo needle(s). On a [coil tattoo machine](#), [tattoo needles](#) attach to the [armature bar](#); on a [rotary machine](#), they often attach directly to the motor.

Tattoo Needle Bar - A grouping of multiple tattoo needles attached to a single bar that attaches to the tattoo machine. [Tattoo needle bars](#) can accommodate a few needles or many-- sometimes 50 or more--in [flat](#), [round shader](#), [round liner](#), or [magnum needle](#) groupings.

Tattoo Pen - A sterile marker used to create free-hand [tattoo](#) designs and add accents to [tattoo stencils](#) before the actual [tattooing](#) process begins. An artist then uses the design created with a [tattoo pen](#) and/or stencils to create permanent [tattoo art](#).

Tattoo Practice Skin - Skin tone sheets made of silicone or leather or silicone body parts used to practice the art of [tattooing](#). Since the development of [A Pound of Flesh practice skin products](#), many experienced tattoo artists have started displaying their artwork on silicone hands and feet, too, and some sell this artwork to tattoo enthusiasts.

Tattoo Skin Cleanser - A detergent used by tattoo artists to clean clients' skin before applying an antiseptic and beginning the tattooing process. Green soap is one of the most popular [tattoo skin cleansers](#) used by tattoo artists, but other options like Microsan Rx are also available.

Tattoo Skin Prep - The process of thoroughly cleaning a person's skin before [tattooing](#) them. Proper skin prep involves washing the skin with a [tattoo skin cleanser](#) like Green Soap, and then applying an [antiseptic](#) like rubbing alcohol before proceeding with the process of applying a [tattoo stencil](#) and tattooing.



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Tattoo Stencil - A [tattoo](#) design printed on [tattoo transfer paper](#) using a [thermal printer/copier](#) that can then be applied to a client's skin once it's been coated with a product like [Stencil Stuff](#). Tattoo stencils can also be drawn free-hand using [tattoo pens](#), or tattoo pens can be used to add accents and otherwise enhance a stencil applied with transfer paper.

Tattoo Stool - The chair a tattoo artist sits on while tattooing. [Tattoo stools](#) often have wheels so tattoo artists can roll around within their work space as needed to reach tattoo supplies quickly and effortlessly.

Tattoo Studio/Shop - A licensed business that employs [tattoo artists](#) and sometimes piercing artists and/or other body modification specialists. If you want to get a professional tattoo, it's best to seek a reputable, professional tattoo artist who's employed by a licensed tattoo studio or one who works the tattoo convention circuit.

Tattoo Studio Software - Software that helps [tattoo studios](#) manage appointments and their artists' schedules, keep track of merchandise and reorder as necessary, send clients appointment reminders and aftercare information automatically, monitor business performance with KPI reports, and much, much more. [Rev23's Tattoo Management Studio](#) is the only software currently available that was designed specifically for tattoo and piercing shops, but it does *everything* you need it to and then some. ([Learn more about Tattoo Management Studio and what it can do for your tattoo shop.](#))

Tattoo Styles - There are a wide variety of tattoo ideas available from which you can choose, including tribal tattoo designs, Egyptian tattoos, Japanese tattoos, Chinese tattoos, nature and wildlife tattoos, celestial tattoos, death tattoos, Christian tattoos, bio-mechanical tattoos, geometric tattoos, Celtic tattoos, breast cancer tattoos, military tattoos, [cover-up tattoos](#) (which can be any style), and many more. The sky's the limit when it comes to tattoo designs. You can pick pretty much any subject matter and have it applied as a realism tattoo, an abstract tattoo, a watercolor tattoo, or in just about any other artistic style. ([Learn more in our Tattoo Style Guide.](#))

Tattoo Tape - [Medical tape](#) such as paper tape that's used to affix tattoo bandages over new tattoos and for other purposes as needed by tattoo artists. ([Compare types of tattoo tape side-by-side.](#))

Tattoo Thermal Copier - A machine used to copy [tattoo designs](#) onto [thermal transfer paper](#) that allows tattoo artists to apply a [tattoo stencil](#) of a client's chosen tattoo design to their skin.



[\(Shop for tattoo thermal copiers.\)](#)

Tattoo Tip - Tapered tubes that guide tattoo needles as a tattoo machine drives them up and down. [Disposable tattoo tubes](#) have tattoo tips built into them, but autoclavable [tattoo tips](#) can be reused many times in conjunction with reusable [tattoo tubes](#) and [grips](#).

Tattoo Touch-up - The process of re-tracing an original [tattoo](#) design with fresh [tattoo ink](#) to fill in gaps or spots that are too light and to brighten old, faded tattoos.

Tattoo Transfer Paper - Special heat-activated paper onto which tattoo designs can be copied using a tattoo thermal copier. The design on the [tattoo transfer paper](#) can then be applied onto a client's skin with the aid of a stencil lubricant like Stencil Stuff.

Tattoo Tube - A tube that connects to a tattoo machine and guides tattoo needles into the skin. Tattoo tubes come in autoclavable and disposable forms. [Disposable tattoo tubes](#) contain a grip, tube and tip in one unit, whereas [reusable tattoo tubes](#) have to be combined with autoclavable [tattoo tips](#) and [grips](#).

Tattoo Washer Bottle - A plastic squeeze bottle with a pour spout used to apply skin cleansers to clients' skin during the tattoo skin prep process. [Tattoo washer bottles](#) are available in [16 oz.](#) and [8 oz.](#) sizes.

Tattoo Work Station - An area where a tattoo artist can store supplies and set out everything needed to complete a tattoo, from [tattoo ink](#) to tattoo machine stands and beyond. There are [portable tattoo workstations](#) available for traveling artists and those who want the convenience of installing a complete work station in their tattoo shop.

Tattooing - The act of creating permanent [tattoo](#) designs by puncturing the skin and inserting pigments in a predetermined pattern. The tattooing process is typically performed by trained [tattoo artists](#) who use either [coil](#) or [rotary tattoo machines](#) to insert [tattoo ink](#) beneath the [epidermis](#) into the [dermis](#) so that the design will hold over time. ([Learn more about the history of tattooing.](#))

Ultrasonic Cleaner - A machine that removes contaminants from tattoo tools and other objects in a tank filled with liquid that's rapidly moved by inaudible, high frequency sound waves that



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act like brushes on the tank's contents. [Ultrasonic cleaners](#) loosen any debris clinging to tattoo instruments and clean them thoroughly, making it safe to then run the instruments through an autoclave sterilization cycle. The [Ink-Out Ultrasonic Cleaner](#) is a system intended specifically for cleaning inky [tattoo tubes](#). ([Learn more about ultrasonic cleaners.](#))

UV Tattoo Ink - A type of phosphorescent tattoo ink that glows brightly under black lights. UV tattoo ink can be used to create "invisible" tattoos or to add cool surprise accents to tattoos that only appear under black lights. ([Learn more about UV tattoo ink and black light tattoos.](#))

Wacom Tablet & Pen - A technological advancement that allows tattoo artists to create tattoo designs electronically and overlay them on photos of the body parts tattoo clients want tattooed to create perfect [tattoo stencils](#) easily. [Wacom tablets and pens](#) are especially useful for creating geometric tattoos. There are many different models available ranging from tablets you can draw on to see designs appear on your computer screen to full-color tablets onto which you can design directly. ([Learn more about Wacom tablets and pens.](#))