**Tattoo Apprenticeship from Red Dragon Tattoo & Piercing**

So, you want to learn to tattoo?

Tattooing professionally and having a long successful career in the tattoo industry is tougher than it may seem.  Just like other professions such as a doctor, a lawyer, or an architect, it takes education, devotion, and a lot of hard work.  I promise, shortcuts result in limited success.  I’m proud I took the time to first study and learn the tattoo industry through a proper apprenticeship. Now, ten years later the world of tattoos has personally given me and my family so much. I love tattoos. I respect the art form of tattoos, and I absolutely appreciate the profession of tattooing. If you decide to give to this craft, I promise it will give back to you as well.

There are thousands of tattoo “scratchers” all over the world trying to tattoo with limited skills and tools. But there are also thousands of professional tattoo artists that are properly trained safely giving quality tattoos every day.  What’s the difference?  A LOT!  Respect of the craft, proper sterilization, professional customer service, proper technical technique, just to name a few things. My job, as the owner of the shop mentoring your apprenticeship, is to make sure you learn all the skills to make you a professional tattoo artist, not a scratcher. It is my job to teach you all the different facets of this profession, whether I’m teaching you personally, giving to access to books or videos, or having other shop artists teach you particular technical skills, it’s all to ensure you have a long and successful tattoo career.

**TATTOO APPRENTICESHIP REQUIREMENTS**

The candidate must meet several requirements in order to qualify for the apprenticeship.

• Pre-existing artistic ability, on some level, which can be cultivated

• Desire to learn, study, and immerse themselves in tattooing

• Excellent personal hygiene

• Ability to commit minimum of 30-40 hours per week to the education

• Reliable transportation

• Cell phone

**TATTOO APPRENTICESHIP COST**

The cost of the apprenticeship here at Red Dragon Tattoo & Piercing shall be five thousand dollars ( $5,000 ) and will be paid, in full at the outset, unless willing to work shop-help prior to apprenticeship.  In that case, the apprenticeship will be reduced to the cost of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  There will be no refunds in the event the apprentice quits, or for any other reason or circumstance that may arise that prohibits the apprentice from finishing.  In addition to the cost of the apprenticeship, the apprentice further agrees to work for Red Dragon Tattoo & Piercing, LLC, or sister shop for a term of \_\_\_\_\_ year(s).

**TATTOO APPRENTICESHIP DURATION**

The apprenticeship shall last for one year.  At the completion of one year and the program, Red Dragon Tattoo & Piercing will provide you with an official certificate of completion naming you a professional tattoo artist.

**WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE TATTOO APPRENTICESHIP**

Red Dragon Tattoo & Piercing will, over the course of the 12 months, teach the apprentice everything they need to know in order to carry out a successful career in tattooing.  Following are some examples of the types of knowledge which will be passed on…

• Sterilization and aseptic techniques necessary for disease transmission prevention

• Knowledge required to identify, from a tattooers perspective, a “GOOD” tattoo

• Basic book keeping, filing, secretarial, and office duties relative to tattoo studios

• Advanced understanding of client relations guaranteed to increase business overall

• Well-rounded understanding of tattoo industry, community, and local competition

• Lessons that will produce custom tattoo flash

• Every detail involved in the correct tattoo process, from beginning to end

• Opportunity to earn considerable money while tattooing as a student

• All required technical information on how to physically apply a tattoo that will heal properly

• Tattoo-specific techniques to insure tattoo designs are well suited to specific body parts

• Thorough understanding of tattoo machines of all types and how to use / maintain them

• Social Media & branding yourself

• Access to every supply company, and every product necessary for tattooing

• All information relative to being able to work in tattoo studios anywhere

• Opportunity for employment after the apprenticeship is finished

**WHAT’S EXPECTED**

**Accountability**: When the apprentice is given an assignment, they will be expected to complete it by the deadline provided.

**Punctuality**: The apprentice will be expected to maintain the highest standards of punctuality. In the event that a schedule cannot be met, the apprentice will be expected to inform Gabriel (or any relative persons) with as much advance notice as possible. Tardiness to work, late homework, and general disregard for deadlines will absolutely not be tolerated.

**Honesty**: The apprentice will be expected to maintain absolute honest and fairness in all dealings, both privately and within work settings. Theft will ALWAYS result in IMMEDIATE TERMINATION. General deception or lack of moral integrity will not be tolerated. Nobody is perfect; however, the apprentice will be expected to show basic solidity of character, and the ability to be forthright.

**Personal hygiene**: The apprentice will be expected to demonstrate good personal hygiene and basic good grooming habits while affiliated Red Dragon Tattoo & Piercing.

**Affiliated costs**: Some exercises and lessons will require added expenditure from the apprentice. For example, painting lessons will require the purchase of art supplies, such as sketch books, canvas, paint, brushes, paper, inks, etc. Other lessons and tasks may require driving, which will require a reliable, insured vehicle, and gas expenses. Furthermore, at some point during the tattoo apprenticeship the student will be required to purchase their own tattoo equipment and machines.

These expenses will NOT be paid by the initial tattoo apprenticeship cost of 5k, and will be the sole responsibility of the apprentice… I would advise any apprentice not being supported by other means, to acquire part time employment in order to support these expenses.

**Dedication**: The apprentice will be expected to show basic respect for, and serious dedication to their teacher, and tattooing in general. Failure to complete assignments on time, disregard for or complaints about lesson content will not be tolerated. By purchasing the tattoo apprenticeship, the apprentice acknowledges that Red Dragon Tattoo & Piercing is qualified to instruct them and must for the duration of the apprenticeship submit to the wisdom and better judgement of Red Dragon Tattoo in regards to all things tattoo related. All assignments and tasks are designed to enable the apprentice to transition into tattooing as a career with all required skills for success, though the relativity of some may not be immediately apparent.

**STRUCTURE**

The time-line of lessons is not set. Each lesson and the timing of the integration of each phase of education is determined based on the apprenticeʼs aptitude and ability. The following are lessons that you will learn throughout your apprenticeship:

• Custodial duties, and basic customer relations.

• Train for management of sterilization procedures

• Social Media & branding yourself

• Take responsibility for inventory and supply acquisition

• Secretarial training (handling of the files, emails, phone calls, ordering of supplies)

• Muscle memory exercises, and basic tattoo design concepts.

• Tattoo aftercare theory and methods

• Tattoo community research and development exercises

• Painting and drawing exercises

• Personal assistant responsibilities

• Compiling data into reference material for future business management

• Selected reading assignments

• Photographing tattoos 101

• Apprentice makes actual tattoos on “volunteers” for free (at our discretion)

• Begin development of tattoo flash

• Tattoo machines 101

• Needles and their uses

• Development of portfolio

• Advanced explanation of tattooing process

• Intermediate painting and drawing exercises

• Promotions tasks

• Apprentice begins to make tattoos on “volunteers” for nominal fee

• Tattoo flash goes into production / distribution

• Advanced painting and drawing exercises

• Acquisition of apprentice’s own tattooing equipment

• Apprentice tattooing as often as possible on “volunteers”

• Apprentice tattooing as close to full time as they can on “volunteers”, at increased rate

**WHAT COMES AFTER THE TATTOO APPRENTICESHIP**

At the end of the twelve months of study, having met all requirements and completing the tattoo apprenticeship, the student graduates. From this point on they are no longer considered an apprentice, but a tattoo artist. Ideally, the apprentice will complete his or her tattoo apprenticeship having created a good relationship with the teacher, and all other shop employees. If this is the case the apprentice, having graduated will be invited to stay on as an artist at the shop. Typically the artist would remain at the studio where they had served their tattoo apprenticeship for at least one year, but hopefully much longer.  As a tattoo artist, one’s responsibility is change. A tattoo artist is responsible for cleaning and sterilizing only their own equipment, handling their own supplies, bookings, and filing. The artist is no longer solely responsible for the custodial duties of the studio, but must continue to see to their own custodial needs.

Many of the responsibilities of apprenticeship do, however, remain… such as maintaining the integrity, passion, drive, honesty and hygiene that qualified them in the first place. These qualities are integral to the success of one’s career, and if they falter at ANY point, at ANY reputable shop, one’s employment comes into jeopardy.

Given an appropriate level of dedication, enthusiasm, and effort, a newly minted tattoo artist in Cincinnati can reasonably expect to make sufficient income to sustain themselves independently. Depending on the raw and developed talent of the artist, they may live quite well, certainly making more and working less than any other service industry job could offer… perhaps 30-50k in the first year.  A tattoo artists income is intimately related to their attitude, their talent, and their level of effort in all areas of the job. It is reasonable to say that any artist who makes a reasonable score in these areas, will increase their income steadily as months and years go by, and as their career develops and their ambition grows, there is really no limit to the dollar amount one can make.

If you have further questions, or need other information feel free to contact me directly.

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Gabriel Lowe- owner Red Dragon Tattoo & Piercing                      Date

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Apprentice- I agree to the aforementioned terms                          Date