[Your business name] — Business Plan

Tattoo shop in [Your city] · Startup plan

Executive summary

[Your business name] is a new tattoo shop in [Your city] offering custom tattoos by appointment: fine line and blackwork; flash days with a set menu at the shop minimum; cover-ups and reworks, after a consultation; touch-ups within the first few months; and a second station for guest and resident artists. The model is one artist's licensed studio: a two-station shop in a street-front unit, the owner tattooing by appointment with deposits, flash days for the walk-in crowd, and the second station rented to guest and resident artists once the shop is open.

Startup budget: $25,652 across 17 items, with funding still to be decided.

Twelve months from now, success looks like this: [What success looks like twelve months from now]

Products and services

[Your business name]'s core service is custom tattoos by appointment: fine line and blackwork. Every appointment is booked with a deposit after a consultation, every client signs the consent form with ID checked and leaves with aftercare in writing, and every station is single-use and reset to the health code between clients.

- Custom tattoos by appointment: fine line and blackwork
- Flash days with a set menu at the shop minimum
- Cover-ups and reworks, after a consultation
- Touch-ups within the first few months
- A second station for guest and resident artists

Market analysis

The customers are the clients who chose the artist on Instagram and booked months out; first-timers who want a small, clean piece from a licensed shop; the collectors who return each season; the Saturday flash-day crowd at the shop minimum; and the guest artists who want a licensed chair.

- Clients who found the artist's work on Instagram and booked months out for a specific piece
- First-timers who want a small, clean tattoo from a licensed, inspected shop
- Collectors who come back every season for the next piece of a sleeve
- Walk-ins and flash-day clients on a Saturday, at the shop minimum
- Guest artists who want a licensed chair in a city they are visiting

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Marketing strategy

Most clients will come from the artist's own feed — the healed photos, the process, the flash sheets — and by word of mouth, the question a healed tattoo gets asked; Google confirms the shop is licensed and open when someone looks, so the Google Business Profile and a website with the portfolio, the booking request form and the deposit policy turn a saved post into a booked chair.

- Instagram and TikTok — the healed photos, the stencil, the process — where clients choose an artist
- Google Business Profile and Google — “tattoo shop” plus your neighborhood, and the artist's name
- Word of mouth from a healed tattoo and the question everyone asks: where did you get it?
- Flash days and the shop's own events, posted a month ahead
- The guest artists, whose followers find the shop
- A website with the portfolio, the booking request form, the deposit policy and aftercare

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Operations plan

The owner is the artist, the booker and the shop manager in year one: deposits on every appointment, single-use everything, the consent form and the aftercare sheet every time, the sharps mailed when full, the inspection kept passable every day, healed photos at four weeks, and the second station rented on paper.

- Every appointment booked with a deposit; consultations for anything over an hour
- Single-use cartridges, grips, ink caps and barriers for every client; sharps in the container, the mail-back shipped when full
- A consent form with ID and age checked every time, allergies asked, aftercare in writing
- The station set up and broken down to the health code between every client; the exposure control plan on the wall
- Healed photos requested at four weeks and posted with permission
- The second station on a weekly rent or a split, with its own license paperwork on file

Startup costs

What it will take to open the doors, with funding still to be decided.

Startup costs

ITEM	AMOUNT
The studio license (and the artist's license where your state issues one)	$580
The bloodborne-pathogens course and your hepatitis B vaccination record	$143
Two wireless rotary machines: a main and a backup	$1,325
Power supply, foot switch, cords, an arm rest and a work lamp	$325
A hydraulic client chair	$1,600
The artist's stool, a work station and trolley, the waiting area and a mirror	$1,000
Opening stock: twenty boxes of cartridges and an ink set	$1,054
Gloves, barrier film, razors, green soap, ointment and ink caps (opening stock)	$450
A sharps mail-back disposal system	$79
The health-code build-out: a hand-washing sink, sealed floors, lighting	$4,750
A street-front unit: the deposit and the first month	$5,000
Liability insurance, with a business owner's policy at the top (first year)	$1,026
Signage, the shop's branding and the first flash sheets	$650
Booking and consent-form software (first year)	$180
Business registration: a sole proprietorship, or an LLC	$150
Website with the portfolio, booking requests and Google Business Profile	$0
Working capital: two months of running costs	$7,340
Total	**$25,652**

Typical range to start a tattoo shop in the US: $14,129–$39,172. Your list is what you decided to spend — replace estimates with real quotes as you get them. Website with the portfolio, booking requests and Google Business Profile: Your Zarla plan includes the website — the portfolio, the booking request form, the deposit and aftercare pages, the

guest-artist calendar — and walks you through your Google Business Profile. Having one built typically costs $1,000 to $2,000 from a freelancer.

Financial plan

The numbers below come from your own startup list and typical monthly costs for a two-station tattoo shop in the US. The license, the chair, the machines and the build-out are the startup; the monthly lines are rent, consumables, insurance and card fees; and the hours in the chair times the hourly rate — plus the second station's rent — decide what is left.

Typical monthly operating costs for a tattoo shop: $2,375–$5,587 a month, before the owner's own pay.

Add a monthly sales target and the plan will show how long it takes to recover the startup budget.

Typical monthly operating costs

COST	TYPICAL RANGE
Rent on the street-front unit	$1,500–$3,500
Cartridges, ink, gloves, barriers and ointment for about forty appointments	$300–$800
Sharps mail-back disposal	$33–$46
Insurance, by the month	$54–$117
Booking and consent software (included with Zarla)	$0–$30
Power, water, internet and the shop's music license	$150–$400
Flash-day posts, a photographer for the portfolio, cards	$50–$300
The studio and artist licenses, by the month	$22–$38
Card fees (on about $10,000 of deposits and balances across forty payments)	$266–$356

US ranges for a small operation; replace with your own figures as you learn them. Lines marked (included with Zarla) are what those tools cost separately — with Zarla they are part of one monthly plan.

Risks and honest downsides

Every tattoo shop plan should say out loud what can go wrong. For [Your business name], the real risks are:

- The book is the artist: an injury to the owner's hand is zero revenue, and no one else can do the appointments
- One infection complaint — even unfounded — is a health department visit and a quiet month
- A resident artist leaves with their book and the second chair sits empty
- Instagram decides the pipeline; a reach drop or a lost account is the referral channel gone
- The lease and the build-out are sunk: the sink, the floors and the license are tied to the address
- Minors with fake IDs and the parent who changes their mind are legal exposure, not a refund

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Licenses, permits and insurance

What [Your business name] needs before it can legally trade in the US. Rules vary by state and city — confirm each item with your local licensing office and an accountant.

- The studio license, and the artist's where the state issues one — In the US body art is regulated by the state or the county health department, and the rules differ by state: Texas licenses the studio — $900 for a two-year tattoo studio license (25 Tex. Admin. Code §229.403), no individual artist license, but every artist needs annual bloodborne-pathogens training and a hepatitis B vaccination record or declination; Florida licenses the establishment ($200 a year plus any county fee) and the artist ($60, with a state-approved bloodborne-pathogens course passed at 70%); California registers each practitioner with the county for a one-time $25 and each facility for $25 to $45 under the Safe Body Art Act, and the counties may charge more. Some cities license artists on top of the state. Call your county health department before you sign a lease.
- Bloodborne pathogens: OSHA's standard and the health inspection — In the US a shop with any employee falls under OSHA's bloodborne pathogens standard (29 CFR 1910.1030): a written exposure control plan, the hepatitis B vaccine offered to employees at the employer's cost, sharps containers and proper disposal, annual training and a sharps-injury log; the state and county body-art rules add single-use needles or an autoclave with spore tests, a hand-washing sink in the work area and the inspection before you open. The Red Cross course is $35 and the exposure control plan is a template — the inspector wants to see both.
- Minors and ID — In the US the age rule is the state's: California bans tattooing anyone under 18 outright (Penal Code §653 — a misdemeanor, no parental exception); Texas bans it under 18 except to cover an existing tattoo, with the parent present and an affidavit (Health & Safety Code §146.012); Florida allows a 16- or 17-year-old with the parent present and the parent's notarized written consent on the department's form, and nobody under 16 outside a medical purpose (§381.00787). Check a government photo ID and keep a copy with the consent form, every client, every time.
- Inks: regulated as cosmetics by the FDA — In the US tattoo inks are cosmetics under the Modernization of Cosmetics Regulation Act of 2022, which puts the registration and the safety duties on the ink manufacturer; the FDA's final guidance of October 24, 2024 tells makers how to prevent microbial contamination after its 2024 study found 26 of 75 inks contaminated, and firms recalled inks 18 times between 2003 and 2024. Buy from manufacturers who register under MoCRA, record the brand and lot number on every client's form, and never dilute or decant into unlabelled bottles.
- Consent, records and aftercare — In the US the client's signed consent — age and ID checked, allergies and conditions asked, the risks explained — and written aftercare instructions are what the state rules and your insurer require; the records are kept as the state requires (Texas requires a permanent record of each client under Health & Safety Code §146.013, retained for the period the health department's rules set), and your insurer will want them longer. Keep a photo of the finished piece and the stencil with the form.
- Sales tax and insurance — In the US tattooing is a service, untaxed in most states, but the states that tax services broadly tax it — South Dakota taxes most services, New Mexico's gross receipts tax and Hawaii's general excise tax reach services too — and the aftercare products you sell at the counter

are taxable retail wherever there is a sales tax. General liability (Insureon's tattoo median $54 a month) covers the client who trips on the step; professional liability ($50 a month) the misspelled name, the allergic reaction and the infection claim; the business owner's policy ($67 a month) the machines and the chair. Confirm the tax with your accountant and the policy with your broker before the first client.

Milestones: the next 30 days

The first month's to-do list for [Your business name], in order:

- Call the county health department: the studio license, the plan review and the inspection checklist for your state
- Take the bloodborne-pathogens course and get the hepatitis B record in order
- Find the unit, check the sink and the zoning, and get the build-out quoted before you sign
- Register the business, take the free EIN and open a business bank account
- Buy the machines, the chair, the opening stock and the sharps system; write the exposure control plan
- Bind the liability policies and ask the insurer which records and consent language they want
- Write the consent form, the deposit policy and the aftercare sheet
- Put the website live — the portfolio, the booking request form, the deposit policy — and claim the Google Business Profile
- Book the first flash day for the week after the inspection and post it a month out
- Find the first guest artist and agree the station rent in writing

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Appendix: what a lender will ask for

This plan tells the story and shows the numbers. If you take it to a bank, expect to be asked for these documents as well:

- Two years of personal tax returns and a personal financial statement
- The studio license, the inspection report and the artists' training records
- The booking calendar with deposits received and the six-week book
- The equipment list with receipts and the business owner's policy
- The lease and the build-out invoices
- Your credit report and the processing statements

Template: replace every [bracketed] line and every estimate with your own figures. Written with Zarla's free business plan generator — zarla.com/business-plan-generator writes it from five questions.