This is a simple, yet comprehensive, guide for the tattoo enthusiast to look at some of the symbolic meanings behind many of the most common tattoo designs. It can also be a great opportunity for one to find different symbols and ideas they can incorporate into their own ink.

**Anamorphosis Tattoos**

Anamorphosis is an artistic technique that creates an optical illusion. It allows the artist to conceal images or messages and was made famous in the Renaissance period by artists like Da Vinci. When the observer shifts their position then a hidden aspect of the image can be seen. Only the most skilled artists can come up with such intricate and creative designs but when done correctly they are breathtaking. It can allow a tattoo enthusiast to embed a secret message to the world that can only be seen by those who have a keen eye.

**Anarchy Tattoos**

Usually decorated with a capital “A” wrapped around with an “O”; “A” is for anarchy and “O” is for order. When they are combined they mean “Anarchy is Order”. Most of the people who get this type of tattoo see themselves as outliers of the acceptable society and do not adhere to the social norms. The anarchy symbol has been used by many different types of groups over the years including punks and members of the gay community. Today many people who wear the anarchy tattoo oppose globalization and the capitalist market and instead promote a more environmentally friendly lifestyle.
The Anchor Tattoo

The anchor tattoo is very symbolic and has a rich history behind it. The ancient Romans believed the anchor was what secured the ship from being consumed by the ocean. In the early 1900’s American sailors would come back home and get an anchor as a rite of passage. Many people apply this to their life spiritually by looking to the anchor as a symbol of stability. The stormy motif is used to represent the stormy seas of life but that there is also something to help hold everything in place.

Anemone Flower Tattoos

Anemone flowers are a symbol of dying hope. In Hebrew it is known as the “Kalanit” and is one of the most well-known flowers in Israel. They were referred to as “the flower of the wind” because it was thought that the wind enabled it to bloom. The anemone flower is usually associated with sleep and death and was used in both World War I and World War II to symbolize the fallen soldiers. These flowers symbolize the cycle of life and death, procreation, and rebirth.

Angel Tattoos

Angel tattoos are one of the most common and religious icons one can get. There are so many types of angels that one can choose to depict an image of love with cherubs or even an image of war and salvation with the Archangels. Angels are believed to be the anthropomorphic winged messengers of God. Angels are mentioned in the Jewish, Christian, and
Muslim faiths and have various depictions. Many symbols associated with the angels are halos, trumpets, swords, and large wings. Angel tattoos do not only symbolize a religious affiliation or a message of faith, but they also convey a message of guidance and protection. As a tattoo it can be a very powerful centerpiece.

**Ankh Tattoos**

Ankh symbols were an important religious symbol in Ancient Egyptian society and meant “life”. The Ankh was a hybrid of two symbols; the cross and the circle. Many people theorize that it is a depiction of the sunrise or sunset. Others claim that it is a symbol of fertility that combines an image of the phallus and the womb to represent an ongoing cycle. Regardless, it is a phenomenal design for a tattoo that can be combined with other religious symbols or motifs that can range from a small arm tattoo to a huge back piece.

**Ankle Tattoos**

Ankle tattoos are most commonly associated with women due to its delicate and sexy nature. Most ankle tattoo designs are simple motifs or designs like flowers and butterflies. It is also assumed that an ankle piece will be smaller in size. Ankle tattoos can be easily flaunted or easily concealed for any purpose. Something to consider is that it will be a relatively painful process but because of its small size it will be less expensive. Something to note is that you should not get an ankle tattoo because it is cheaper but rather because you think it is sexy and exciting; ink that is well invested in is well worth it for health safety and personal satisfaction.
Aquarius Tattoos

Aquarius is a sign that is part of the Western astrological system. Aquarius is associated with air and is also one of the four fixed signs along Scorpio, Leo, and Taurus. People born in the Aquarius period are associated with thought, perspective, and communication. The main depictions of Aquarius are two wave-like lines parallel to each other and someone dumping out water from a jug.

Aries Tattoos

Aries is an astrological sign from March 21 to April 19. Aries iconography is usually shown as the ram because of the Greek myth of the ram which carried Athamas’s son to escape their evil stepmother. Aries is closely associated with fire and is one of the 4 Cardinal signs. Each astrological sign is represented as a body part and the ram represents the face and head.

Armband Tattoos

Armband tattoos are one of the most common and popular design concepts around. CEO’s, managers, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and everyone in between has one of these tattoos. This makes a great first tattoo because it is simple, not too detailed, and conservative. It can be easily concealed and it is not too
graphic. Since there are so many types of designs and patterns out there it is very easy to take what may seem like a generic tattoo and make it unique and personalized. There are tribal designs, Celtic knots, Hawaiian patterns and more. Mythical animals like dragons are also commonly used for armband tattoos.

**Barcode Tattoos**

Barcodes were developed in the 1950’s to maximize efficiency in different industries. Barcode tattoos are an ironical symbol that warns society that if they do not stop being followers instead of independent thinkers then they too will be like a product to the industrial world. People that get barcode tattoos usually feel that when people conform to modern trends they lose their uniqueness and individuality which goes against human nature. It is worn by many celebrities and musicians and has recently been popular on the back of one’s neck.

**Bettie Page Tattoos**

Bettie Page tattoos and iconography have developed a cult following after “the girl with the perfect figure” was titled the “Miss Pin-Up Girl of the World”. Most of Page’s pictures have a sexy combination of sweet and naughty. With her long legs, sexy hips, dark hair, and sultry eyes she could allure any man and almost any woman. She was shy and possessed a “girl next door” quality and a gentle femininity that inspired generations of young women. She represents the freedom of the woman to do what she wants when she wants to and is not scared to be a little sexy all the time.
Bird Tattoos

Birds are considered to be very symbolic in multiple cultures around the world. Americans associate their liberty with the mighty eagle and the Japanese with the phoenix. Birds have been given symbols that represent the whole schema of human emotion. The dove represents peace between mankind while the raven and crow depict mischievous yet clever creatures. Most importantly, birds have always fascinated man not only because of their grace and beautiful feathers but because they can fly. Birds can represent the freedom of a person’s soul or even the act of freeing something and letting time take its course. There are so many designs that can be used with different birds that it is almost impossible to list. Certain birds represent nautical wisdom while others represent fertility. Whatever the meaning behind a tattoo, a beautiful bird can only enhance the symbolic depth.

Buddha Tattoos

Buddha tattoos come in many forms and depictions. They are based on the story of Siddhartha Guatama who was born a prince but then left to become an ascetic. After discovering his 4 noble truths he founded the principles of Buddhism and preached to the world what he believed were the correct ways of attaining ultimate truth and knowledge. One of the basic principles of Buddhism is the detachment of the material world. Many Buddha tattoos depict him meditating on a lotus flower or under a tree. It is one of the best ways to
show ones relationship to the detaching of the material self and the search for a more meaningful life.

**Butterfly Tattoos**

Butterfly tattoos are one of the most popular and most feminine tattoos out there today. Its gentle wings and graceful beauty have associated the butterfly with the form of the woman. All over the world different cultures have given symbolic meaning to the graceful butterfly. In some areas they represented the turbulence and instability of life because the butterfly goes from flower to flower on a lifelong search for nectar and pollen. In Japan the butterfly is regarded as a symbol of emerging grace and is very popular among young girls who are coming of age. Butterflies are continuously regarded as mysterious in nature and will continue to inspire beautiful tattoos because of their diversity and natural beauty. It’s the perfect tattoo for a girl’s lower back, shoulder, or upper back.

**Cancer Tattoo**

Cancer is an astrological sign that falls between June 21 and July 22 in the western zodiac. Cancers are associated with water and is considered as one of the four cardinal signs. It is hypothesized that it takes the form of the crab based on the mythological creature,
Lernaean Hydra, that Heracles destroyed. The cancer sign is usually a “69” or the shape of a crab. It can be a great tattoo almost anywhere on the body from something small on the wrist or ankle to something much more elaborate. The “69” and the crab can be combined to create a variety of designs that show off ones zodiac sign in a classy and sexy manner.

**Capricorn Tattoos**

Capricorn is a sign in the western zodiac that falls between December 22nd and January 20th. It is based off of the constellation Capricornus and begins on the eve of the winter solstice. Capricorns are associated with the earth and the people born under the sign are thought to be conservative and practical. The Capricorn sign is symbolized through the image of a goat.

**Celtic Cross Tattoos**

For many people of Irish, Scottish, and Walsh descent the Celtic cross may more symbolic of one’s heritage then ones faith. Either way the complex design of the Celtic cross with intricate knots and weaves makes it an attractive tattoo for almost anyone. The endless knots represent the endless and eternal cycle of life. The combination of the Celtic patterns and the Christian symbol of faith make a beautiful symbolic collision. The Christian cross represents the 4 corners of the earth and the 4 elements while the circle surrounding the cross is a symbol for eternal life. This is a great first tattoo and can incorporate many other themes and designs taken from tribal and other religious influences.
Celtic Knot Tattoos

Celtic knot designs may seem decorative and appealing to the eye but are embedded with a rich history and deep symbolism. Often times they are comprised of a series of complex interwoven lines that make up mazes, spirals, and other patterns. Most of the Celtic designs seen today were adapted from the Irish book of Kells which displayed many of the rudimentary patterns that tattoo artists build off of today. The ideology behind Celtic knots is not only to represent eternal life and resurrection but also to represent the complexity of nature. Many Celtic knots are associated with the continuous changing of the seasons and the process of life and death. This style of tattooing is very versatile and can be combined with religious references or other designs or patterns. Something that is very beneficial about Celtic knot tattoos is that they are a great first time tattoo, can be virtually any size on any body part, and can range from a simple piece to an armband like design.

Cherry Tattoos

Cherry tattoos are one of the most adorable and sexiest tattoos a girl can get. Cherry tattoos are often associated with the feminine form because of their sexual allure and comparison to sex. Cherries are one of the oldest fruits to be cultivated and mass produced dating back to the Ancient Egyptians. The cherry is seen by most culture as a symbol of fertility. When the cherry is ripe and juicy its sweet juices are compared to the first taste of love. When one bites into a cherry it also gives the appearance of
blood which is where the famous phrase “popping a cherry” may have emerged in reference to a females’ first sexual experience. When the cherry is ripening on the tree it represents purity and chastity but once it is plucked it symbolizes the loss of innocence and the awakening of a sexual appetite. This lustful and passionate design can be put as a sleek and sexy tattoo on the hip or the ankle or as part of a cherry blossom tree on ones back or shoulder. Either way this is one of the sexiest tattoos a girl can get.

Comedy Tragedy Mask Tattoos

The famous comedy/tragedy mask is recognizable to virtually anyone. They are two faces that represent polar opposites; one face exploding with mirth and happiness and the other pours out sorrow and sadness. The masks emerged during the days of Ancient Greece to convey emotions to the crowd. Many people in live theater have been known to get this mask. It is a tattoo that expresses ones’ ability to feel and develop a wide range of emotions implying that the person has an eclectic and dynamic personality. Joy and sorrow are known as two of the most common emotions that anyone can empathize with. The faces on the mask are usually exaggerated and contorted to emphasize the conveyed emotions. This is a beautiful tattoo for anyone who has a diverse personality and is a thespian. This theme can also be altered to include different types of faces and figures from different characters and icons in pop culture.
Cross Tattoos

Cross tattoos are one of the most common, popular, and versatile tattoos today. The cross is universally recognized and dates back to Neolithic Europe. The cross bears with it a sense of religious and spiritual symbolism that carries a message of life, death, the union of nature, the 4 elements, and the 4 corners of the earth. The cross has had many variations over the span of human history but the most popular is by far the Roman Cross. The cross is a great tattoo to get because it is a wonderful way to express ones faith and devotion to a higher being. It is also so versatile that any tattoo enthusiast can alternate its design and incorporate other religious iconography or add other stylistic features to it such as a tribal design or wings.

Cupid Tattoos

Cupid was considered to be the god of erotic love in Ancient Roman mythology. He is usually depicted as a young child with little wings and the famous bow and arrow. No other icon has been associated more with the concept of love than Cupid the cherub. Cupid tattoos are a great way to commemorate love or show ones desire to spread love to society. Cupid tattoos are usually seen on women and are perfect for a sexy hip or ankle tattoo. Since Cupid is directly associated with love other images like the heart can enhance the layout of the tattoo and add definition.
Dagger Tattoos

Daggers and knives are a theme that is used a lot in diverse genres of tattoos and are often tattooed as a lone object or as part of a descriptive and gruesome scene. The knife for a large part of human history was the main tool with which man offered the gods offerings. This caused a special relationship between the man and his tool so that he could slaughter a living creature in exchange of honor, prestige, and prosperity. At the core the dagger symbolized the tool of death. In Aztec temples the dagger was used to remove a man’s living heart to appease the gods. The dagger was carried around by any warrior as a last resort in case one was in a face to face encounter with an enemy. In its day the dagger was much more than just a tool to kill though, it was the main tool used to govern the simple tasks of life. Skinning animals, building shelters, cutting food, and eating were some of the main uses of the dagger. Daggers were also encrusted with jewels and were a sign of wealth and nobility. Daggers are tattooed in many ways. They can be dripping with blood symbolizing a stabbed heart or being stabbed in the back. It can symbolize betrayal of love or of friendship as well. The dagger is usually shown with skulls, demons, and other dark creatures. A more spiritual alternative would be to infuse the image of the cross with that of the dagger.
Daisy Tattoos

The word “daisy” came from the concept of “days eye” because the flower is known to open at sunrise and close at sunset. Daisies are often associated with innocence, chastity, and childhood. The daisy was also a very prominent symbol among the hippie movement of the 1960’s. They daisy is a delicate and simple flower that varies in colors which can be arranged in a beautiful pattern for any sized tattoo. The daisy tattoo is not to conservative but it also not especially provocative. It is the perfect flower to incorporate bees, hummingbirds, or dragonflies to.

Death Tattoos

Death is one of the main aspects of our lives. It is imminent, inescapable, and a fact of life; eventually our time will come. There is no one image to symbolize death in a tattoo. Some choose to use the theme of graveyards, a cloaked skeleton with a sickle, or an evil looking angel. Other images that are incorporated with this theme are the grim reaper, skulls, and the devil. On a brighter note, depictions of death do not have to be in such a melancholic light. One could show a spirit rising into the gates of heaven or the soul being carried to its final destination. Also, one could reference mythological scenes such as Hades and the underworld, the phoenix rebirth from the ashes it died in, and the mighty banquet hall of Valhalla.
Demon Tattoos

Demons are one of the most recognizable figures that are associated with the dark pits of hell and the evil deeds of Satan’s helpers. Demon tattoos are saturated with symbolism and dark imagery. In Christian liturgy demons are lesser evil spirits who follow the guidance of Satan or Lucifer, the fallen angel. Demons are depicted with webbed wings, horns, fangs, claws, and dagger like teeth. In other cultures the concept of a demon is not necessarily evil in nature. Japanese culture believes that demons are spirit like beings who possess the power to both help or harm ones household and well-being. Many people in Japan would hang masks of demons for protection and some would even get them tattooed even though Japanese society looked at tattooing as a feature of the lower classes. Demon tattoos are a theme that can be improvised with to add more gore or fantasy like features to the demon figure. One could alter the wings, fangs, or horns for an exaggerated look that will scare any soccer mom from the suburbs.

Devil Tattoos

The Devil is regarded as the central embodiment of evil in the Abrahamic religions. In Christianity Lucifer was an archangel who was favored by God until he led the angels in a revolt against God. As punishment Lucifer was cast out of heaven. Lucifer then became a symbol for chaos, mischievous behavior, and a predisposition to sinful activities here and there. Tattoos of the devil do not have to be filled with souls being torn apart and a red horned creature glaring through the flames of hell. A devil tattoo can also be a sexy caricature of the devil’s depictions on the hip bone or ankle. They are very versatile and have a lot of room for innovative ideas. A sexier spin on the devil theme would be a seductive and sultry she-devil.
**Dolphin Tattoos**

Humans and dolphins have co-existed for thousands of years and have always felt a strong bond. As humans we have empathetic feeling towards dolphins and due to their high intelligence and learning capacity it even strengthens the bond further. Throughout history man has had a fascination with these beautiful creatures, some cultures to the extent of worshipping them. Many cultures wrote myths about dolphins seducing young girls, being the messengers of gods, and them being the ancestors of all of humankind. Our existence together has created a relationship of curiosity and awe. Dolphin tattoos represent the innate good nature of people and the power of empathy. Dolphin tattoos are an ode to the closeness we have to nature and remind us how embedded we really are in the cycle of life. Often time dolphin tattoos show a beautiful sunset in the background or a group of dolphins together. It can be a great tattoo for the entire shoulder or back or can even be a small tattoo on the wrist or ankle.

**Dove Tattoos**

Doves are the ultimate symbol for peace and tranquility in the world. In the biblical story of the flood, God told Noah to send out a dove to see if the torrential rains had receded. When the dove did not return is signified that the water had retreated and the dove had probably settled on a piece of land. From then on the dove became a symbol of hope. Dove tattoos can signify a lost loved one since they are associated with the soul’s departure during death.
**Dragonfly Tattoos**

Dragonfly tattoos, much like butterflies and fairies, are a very common and popular tattoo among young women. They can be a small sexy design on the lower back or a beautiful lily pond scene with dragonflies twirling around. The dragonfly is unique because it inhabits both air and water. It is a free spirited animal that goes from lily to lily and dew glazed blades of grass. Furthermore they have multiple colors including green, blue, red, yellow, orange, and everything in between which can resonate and inspire anyone.

**Dragon Tattoos**

Dragons are a very ancient symbol and tattoo motif. It is adorned by both sexes and has a mystic aura to them. In ancient Chinese and Japanese mythology the dragon represented the four elements - earth, wind, fire and water - and also the four points of the compass – north, south, east, and west. The dragon in essence represented the forces of nature. The dragon is depicted as short tempered but can also be docile. The forces of nature are not sympathetic and they are in a cycle that is constantly in motion. The dragon is reminiscent of a primitive reptilian creature that breathes fire and roams the sky. It is possible that ancient Chinese dynasties found fossils and conjured the imaginary beast from the remains of prehistoric dinosaurs. In Europe English, Viking, and Roman armies would wear emblems of dragons to signify their army’s strength and power. The dragon tattoo symbolizes nobility, power, magic, courage, and the ability to overcome anything. Asian and European dragons look different.
and can be altered to match any design. Dragons are also great for tattoos that curve around the body such as around the arm or the leg.

**Dream Catcher Tattoos**

Dream Catchers have captured the imagination of people around the world since western civilization came into contact with Native American culture. This powerful amulet which was placed above a child’s cradle serves as a means of protection from evil spirits and harm. Dream Catchers are a willow hoop with a weave that replicated a spider web. The webs are woven into intricate patterns and are believed to capture evil dreams and let the sweet and pleasing ones pass through. Often times they also have soft feathers hanging down from them. Lakota legend states that a wise man disguised as a spider spun a web around the willow tree. The holes allowed the evil ideas to pass through while the web caught the pleasant ones. Over time the Dream Catcher was adapted by many Native American tribes and has even become popular in our society. A Dream Catcher tattoo is both intricately beautiful and offers protection to those who wear it. It can also be combined with other Native American motifs for a more detailed piece.

**Eagle Tattoos**

The eagle is a symbol of power and pride. It holds its head high as it soars through the skies constantly hunting. The eagle has had a profound impact on American culture, especially in regards to tattoos. Eagles are associated with America’s patriotism and loyalty to the red, white, and blue. Many military and patriotic tattoo designs incorporate the mighty bird. Americans are
not the only culture to admire the strength of the eagle. In ancient Persian it was as sacred as the sun and to the Egyptians it represented their god Horus. The eagle is undeniably the supreme conqueror of the sky with its ability to glide between clouds and then dive for a kill. It is the perfect tattoo to show off ones love for their country in a patriotic theme or to simply show ones pride and power to the world.

**Egyptian Tattoos**

Ancient Egyptian culture has fascinated us ever since the world heard of the wealth and power the dynasties had. The ancient Egyptians had an allure that involved mysticism, magic, and wonder. They build the pyramids, invented the obelisk, created tombs for kings, and buried their dead in a ritualized manner through mummification. One of the most unique aspects of ancient Egypt was their use of hieroglyphs. Hieroglyphs were based on symbols and images of common objects and are known as one of the oldest written systems in the world. Western archaeologists had a hard time deciphering the characters because they were thought of as symbolic instead of phonetic. The two types of hieroglyphs were phonograms and logograms. Phonograms were phonetic and represented sounds while logograms stood for the object they represented. Many of the common objects and symbols in hieroglyphs were adapted into tattoo designs and themes. One of these symbols is the Ankh which represented “life”. The eye of Horus is also a common which represents the all-seeing-eye and the eye of god. All of these designs can be incorporated together to make an amazing piece of art.
Elf Tattoos

Elves are one of the most popular creatures to come out of folklore and fairy tales. European legends described the elf as mischievous beings but were never thought of as evil like trolls, gnomes, and goblins. According to the German Mythology elves were part of the realm of light which was believed to be a political entity that existed in the natural order. Elves vary in their appearance depending on the myth and the country of origin. Books like “The Lord of the Rings” depict them as tall and slender, wise and agile, and proud and strong. Other depictions show them with wings and pointy ears. Elf tattoos are mostly worn by females and can be incorporated into any fantasy-esque scene. An interesting idea is to incorporate elvish writing to add a final touch.

Fairy Tattoos

Fairies have captured people’s imaginations for hundreds of years since the old folklore was written. Fairies remind us of magic and childhood, especially when thinking about Tinkerbelle but have a deep history behind it. The word “fairy” is derived from the Middle English word “Faierie” and the Latin word “fata” meaning fate because all of the myths surrounding the ethereal creature involved destiny. Fairies are usually depicted as smaller humans with big beautiful wings. Their magical abilities capture our imagination and inspire a beautiful tattoo that can range from any size. Fairies are normally adorned by women and can be conveniently placed on the hip or thigh or even on the entire back. It all depends how naughty or cute you want to be. Fairy tattoos look great when
the fairy is flying with fairy dust behind it or among the stars. Since it’s so versatile it’s a great tattoo for the first timer. The Fairy tattoo symbolizes youth and innocence that fueled our childhood imagination and can be carried with you forever.

**Feather Tattoos**

Feathers have been a powerful symbol for as long as mankind has existed. The power and mystery of flight has fascinated every civilization and has caused the human so stand in awe as feathered creature sweep across the sky. Feathers are also uniquely patterned in an array of shapes, sizes, and color. Some of the more common feather imagery comes from Native American and Ancient Egyptian iconography. In Native American culture the feather was regarded as sacred and was thought to have healing properties. Warriors and tribesmen would decorate themselves with feathers before departing for battle so they would be protected by the sacred Eagles in the sky. Some of the more commonly tattooed feathers are the Eagle, the peacock, the egret, the ostrich, and the Robert Plant symbol.

**Fire and Flame Tattoos**

Fire and flame tattoos are so versatile and flat out cool they can be added and incorporated into virtually every design. They represent passion, transformation, destruction, and change. Fire’s unique properties have led people to both fear, respect, and depend on this divine gift. The same flame we use to cook our food and heat our homes could be the same flame that ravages all in its path mercilessly. In addition to this fire is one of the four elements of the earth and carry with it a reflection of hell and evil. In Judaism the lighting of the Shabbat candles brings in the Sabbath and separates it from the rest of the week. Fire has so many meanings and symbols in different
cultures that it is almost impossible to list and explain them all. Fire tattoos can be designed around a demonic scene, a sleeve, or anything in between. Often they are accompanied by a skull and the Phoenix.

**Flower Tattoos**

Flowers are more than just beautiful. They vary tremendously in size, color, shape, and most importantly meaning. In the Far East the lotus is widely respected while in the west we have the rose. Flowers represent the endless cycle of life, passion, love, lust, and loss. We encounter the different symbols associated with flowers from myths and folklore but flowers have a natural tendency to put a smile on people’s faces. They are given to the sick so quicken the healing process and are brought to remember the last moments of the ones we loved and respected. Flower tattoos can vary simply from the type of flower one chooses to get. But one does not have to resort to one flower, different flowers mean different things and a combination or a bouquet of meanings could be the perfect tattoo! These tattoos can be a simple flower or a chain of petals across a sexy lower back.

**Gemini Tattoos**

Gemini is part of the western astrological zodiac and falls between May 21st and June 20th. Gemini’s are associated with fertility and the coming of spring. Gemini’s are air signs and are considered to be the nervous system, the hands, and arms of the body. The images most commonly depicted with Gemini’s are the twins who represent the duality of a Gemini’s personality.
Heart Tattoos

Heart tattoos are a classic standard image representing the feminine pubic triangle and symbolizes romance and love between individuals. Many men used to get this tattoo during the First and Second World Wars to help remind what they needed to come back home to. It is a universal symbol of affection that has multiple variations. One could put an arrow through it to it shows the pleasing sting of love. One could show hands holding a heart representing a parental love. The golden heart represents being one with everything. This is a great tattoo for a first timer.

Hummingbird Tattoos

Not many creatures are so mysterious and unique like the hummingbird. It is a spiritual creature to some cultures because it appears to be dead at night but springs to life at sunrise. The hummingbird can fly both forwards and backwards which reminds us that we can look back and remember our past. It’s endless hunt for sweet nectar is like the yearning for the good things in life and a constant inspiration to try harder and accomplish our goals. As a tattoo it can be done alone or with flowers in a natural setting. It had multiple color varieties and can be a gorgeous back piece. Regardless of size or detail it’s undeniably attractive and carries a deep message with it.
Japanese Tattoos

Japanese tattoo designs capture beautiful landscapes, fierce dragons, large blossoms, and swift samurais. One could get an elegant koi swimming across a thigh or a cherry blossom blooming on a calf. Soon enough you will have a kimono of Japanese inspired tattoos. Tattooing in Japan was originally inspired by woodblock carvers who would design elaborate motifs and images for books and advertisements in the mid 1800’s. Classical tattooing began conforming to certain designs and motifs depicting brave warriors, religious iconography, and an array of floral and animal pieces. The woodblock artist would draw the design on an individual’s body and then the tattooist would make it permanent. These tattoos would cover up the entire body with the exception of the head, the hands, and the feet. Over time cultural influences from China made tattoos a taboo and required inked individuals to live as outcasts of society. By the end of the 17th century Japanese officials had stopped marking criminals with tattoos and tattooing as an art from began to emerge. Firefighters began tattooing images of water as protective amulets against the dangerous flames. Criminals started covering up their tattoos with beautiful images of blossoms and flowers. Criminals belonging to the Yakuza started getting these tattoos around this time and the tradition began forming. Tattoo artists in Japan were considered craftsmen who underwent rigorous 5 year apprenticeships. Since Japanese tattoos were based around the cultural traditions the images that emerged were based on accurate accounts of the surroundings. A snake would never be tattooed with a cherry blossom because they hibernate during that time of the year. Japanese tattoos tell a story through a single image that can reveal a lot about the wearer. They take time and commitment but no tattoo has the same allure as Japanese tattoos.
Jesus Tattoos

The image of Jesus on the cross is one of the most religious and powerful of the Christian style tattoos. It is an image that captures pain and suffering for the sake of others. Often times it shows his thorn crown with a halo around his head and the gates of heaven opening above. This is also a great tattoo to incorporate other religious motifs like angels and heaven. For the true believer this is a wonderful tattoo to carry around and literally have divine inspiration embedded in your skin.

Jewish Tattoos

The book of Leviticus states that one must not mark their skin which is interpreted in Judaism as forbidding tattooing. Some Jews today have reinterpreted this to mean the tattooing of images in other belief systems which would make Jewish themed tattoos and religious neutral tattoos kosher. Some of the more common images seen are the Star of David, passages from the Torah, the Menorah, and enneagram. The Star of David is a hexagram and is a very powerful symbol to the Jewish people. It’s represents the 6 days of the week with the center being the Sabbath.
Kanji Tattoos

Kanji originally emerged in Japan in the 4th century when they borrowed pictograms from the Chinese and Koreans. Since Japanese and Chinese are completely different linguistically the Japanese needed to reconfigure the different characters to the sounds produced by their language. Kanji’s usually convey objects and ideas but was limiting so over time two more alphabets emerged; katakana and hiragana. There are so many letters in the kanji alphabet that 1000 are needed to read an average newspaper and is already mastered by middle school. Since each kanji can have up to 10 meanings the addition of hiragana helps contextualize as grammatical modifiers. It is important to use the right type of hiragana to ensure that the kanji you pick means what you want and will not lead you to eternal embarrassment.

Koi Tattoos

Koi are an ancient and mystical animal in the far east. Myths are written about their journey up river to magically transform into a dragon. The stories talk about their perseverance and vigilance to never turn back. Their elaborate colors have made them very valuable and some have reported certain species sold for over $500,000. These living jewels are regarded as wise and loyal creatures. One koi was once reported to have died at the age of 226. Koi are usually depicted in ponds with big lilies as tattoos and can vary in size. This is a great image to include in a Japanese motif tattoo.
**Ladybug Tattoos**

In almost every country the ladybug is regarded as a sign of good fortune. To the English and French farmers the presence of a ladybug signified good weather for the harvest and in Sweden it’s a sign of love. When there were insects destroying the crops in Europe priests from the Vatican prayed to Mary for help and suddenly ladybugs appeared and ate the plant destroying pests. The church saw this as a miracle and began regarding the ladybug’s red coat as a virgin cloak. Ladybug tattoos can represent more than just good fortune and happy times for the wearer but the amount of dots can signify the amount of children one has or wants. Since they are very gentle creatures they are usually adorned by women. These tattoos are great because they can vary in size and detail. It can look good crawling up a sexy hip or creeping up an ankle. They can also be incorporated with other scenes from nature such as flowers or trees and can also be combined with other animals like the hummingbird or the butterfly.

**Leo Tattoos**

The western astrological sign Leo falls between July 23rd and August 22nd. Leo’s are associated with the power of the sun. Their element is fire and they are thought to be the heart and the spine of the human body. The myth behind the astrological sign is that Hercules was sent to kill Nemean the lion as one of his 12 tasks and casted Nemean to the sky. Zodiac tattoos can incorporate all types of styles like tribal and even Asian inspired techniques to capture your sign and flaunt your essence and temperament.
Leprechaun Tattoos

One of the most recurring characters in Irish mythology and folklore is the famous leprechaun. Countless cartoons, horror movies, children’s television shows, and even food brands have used the image of the leprechaun to brand their items. In ancient myths they were said to be cloggers of the fairy people who were present in Ireland before the Celts arrived. They are described as being quick, nimble, and mischievous. Legends say that if you follow a rainbow to the end you will find a leprechaun and hopefully its pot of gold. These little characters are wonderful to combine with other Irish motifs like the 4-leaf clover, harps, beer, and shamrocks. They can also be depicted as evil or cute which can change the entire aura of the tattoo. It is very versatile between the sexes and can be worn by both men and women. This is a great theme to get creative with!

Libra Tattoos

The western astrological sign Libra falls between September 23rd and October 22nd and beings on the Autumn Equinox. It is known as an air sign and is represented as a set of scales. Libras are thought to be independent thinkers, great at communicating, initiation, and creativity. The scales depict equality and justice. As a tattoo it not only applies to both men and women, and can be designed in virtually any size on any part of the body.
but because its main image is the scales it can be altered and changed to adapt to your personality. The scales can be held by the hand of God or in the hands of a dragon. It can cut across your entire back or can be discretely put behind the ear. The scales do not have to be even either, one could put an angel on one side and a demon on the other. The options are endless!

**Lightning Tattoos**

The powerful lightning bolt has awed humans since we emerged from our primate ancestors. It is one of nature’s most powerful and unpredictable displays. The electric blue cuts through the sky as if by magic and then vanishes as quickly as it came. Early man tried to understand this powerful phenomena and regarded it as the weapon of the almighty Zeus because of the destruction that follow a lightning hit. It splits trees, causes rocks to explode, and melts sand. Since lightening is usually accompanied by rain it is seen as a symbol of fertility and prosperity. Many cultures also regard lightning as the light of truth and inspiration. Its unpredictable nature also reminds us that in our lives anything can happen at any time. Lightning bolts can be added to virtually any tattoo and can vary in size. They can also be used to depict scenes from Greek, Roman, and Norse mythology by expressing the power of Zeus, Jupiter, and Thor respectively.
Lips are one of the most sensual body parts that are visible to everyone. They are soft, move elegantly, are used for kissing, intimate contact, and are one of the main tools used to articulate speech. Lips have special bordering muscles and nerves that allow us to pick up sensory information exceptionally well. Furthermore, lips can seal themselves airtight to prevent food and drink from escaping and can make a narrow funnel shape which increases the suction produced. This suction is essential for breast feeding and for pleasing our mutual partners. Women’s lips are so packed with nerve endings that stimulation of a woman’s mouth during intimate acts has been shown to increase stimulation in their genital organs. Reproductive biologists have shown that the appearances of a woman’s lips are similar to that of the female genitalia. They explain that the more estrogen a woman has the fuller her lips are which indicate to men that she is more fertile and therefore an appropriate mate. Lips are undeniably one of the sexiest body parts and are often enhanced with lipstick and even cosmetic surgery. Lip tattoos can incorporate two sets kissing, a puckered glossy pair lying on your hip, and can even include a cherry or two.

Maori Tattoos

Maori tattooing is one of the most ancient tattooing practices that has been done in a traditional manner since before Captain Cook stumbled upon the Polynesian islands in the late 1700’s. Most Polynesian tattoos are based off of straight line geometric patterns but Maori tattoos incorporated curvilinear designs and
based most of their designs off of the spiral. Their tattoos are distinguished by the use of repetitive design motifs that are called Moko. There are two main types of designs in Maori tattoos. The first is based on a pigmented line and the other is based on darkening a certain area leaving the unpigmented skin with the pattern. Most of the Moko had special rules and taboos especially for facial tattoos. Tattoos were specific to clans, tribes, and rank depending on the village one lived in. Today authentic Maori tattooing is still practiced and can be acquired in the original method of single stroke tattooing with the use of a bone needle.

**Monogram Tattoos**

Monograms are usually a set of initials that are designed in a way the uniquely overlaps and combines the two. Two of the most famous monograms are the LA and NY monograms for Los Angeles and New York respectively. They are often designed by companies as logos to help create a branding image but they have been around for hundreds of years. Artists would create monogram designs to sign their work and to ensure that the product was coming from a reputable source. Monarchs and world leaders would have elaborate monograms designed as their seals and as identifying markers to other empires and kingdoms.

**Moon Tattoos**

The moon has fascinated humans for thousands of years, so much that we were even compelled to step foot on it. The moon represents many things to many different cultures but the common element between them all is how central and important it was. In western astrology the moon represents the natural feelings and
emotions we produce in our lives. Much like the moon, our emotions move in cycles and gradually change. In ancient Assyria the supreme god was that of the moon because of its transitions and cycles. They made it analogous to the crop cycles and centered their rituals and religious ceremonies around it. Hunters would base their tracking patterns and hunting methods around the moon’s cycles because they knew which animals migrated during certain phases of the moons cycles. The moons feminine allure, in contrast to the masculine sun, also began associating itself with the menstrual cycle. The moon is so rich with metaphorical symbolism that it can be apply to ones life in virtually any way they want it to. Moon tattoos are great because of how versatile and how many options they offer. One can portray the moon in any phase of its development and can also add stars, clouds, and different shades of blue that resonate in the night sky. One can even get creative and make it out of cheese or as a scary scene with werewolves and other creatures of the night.

**Music Tattoos**

Music is the one language all humans understand and is found among all cultures everywhere. The most common symbols associated with music are the treble clef, bass clef, notes of the staff, and musical instruments. Some of most unique tattoos incorporate a blend of all of these images. One could get musical instruments covered with flames or even an amplifier spewing out a series of notes on the staff. Also getting the f-holes of a violin or a cello on the forearms or on the calf is also a really unique and cool look.
Native American Tattoos

Native American motifs for tattoos stem from hundreds of different tribes that lived in North America in pre-colonial history. Much of the tradition tattooing has practically vanished in North America because colonization caused indigenous people to leave their native customs and adopt westernized ideologies. Most tribes and clans believed that tattoos were like amulets that provided good fortune and good luck with hunting and gathering. Unfortunately most accounts of Native American tattoos were written and never incorporated designs and images but merely stated that they would mark themselves with distinct patterns. One of the few detailed accounts of tattoos comes from the Haida clans who marked themselves with images of eagles, hummingbirds, frogs, killer whales, and other images that depicted their mythology and traces of origin. Today most Native American motifs include the dream catcher, Indian chiefs, and the spiritual animals associated with Native American culture. These motifs can be combined to create a beautiful piece of ink.
Nautical Star Tattoos

Before the days of GPS navigation and even compasses sailors had to rely on their knowledge of constellations and the stars to help get them home. Sailors would tattoo certain stars and constellations because they believed that the tattoos would protect them from harm and help them get home safely. Over time Nautical stars began being tattooed by all sailors to help them navigate through the rough waters of the ocean and of life. Today the tattoo is adorned by both sailors and everyday members of society who need guidance and inspiration to keep them going to their next destination. It has also been widely associated with listeners of rock n roll and punk rock when it is combined with black and red.

Om Tattoos

The Om is one of the most widely recognized religious icons in the world. Its unique shape has set it apart from every western religious icon and has a mysterious allure to it. The Om is considered to be one of the most sacred symbols in Hinduism and embodies the essence of the universe. The Om is believed to be the sound that emerged during the creation and the process that then morphed our universe to the way it is. It is considered the sound of the infinite and is referred to as the breath of life. The sound is used during meditation and when one makes the correct harmony it then resonates into the soul of an individual. The sign is comprised of 3 curves which represent the levels of human consciousness. The upper curve represents dreamless.
sleep, the large lower curve signifies the individual looking outward, and the middle curve is the individual looking inward and being engulfed by inner dreams. The semi-circle between the dot represents illusions of life, and the dot is the highest level of consciousness possible. These triads are often applied to the past, present, and future and to the earth, atmosphere, and heaven. This sacred symbol can be applied to anyone’s life and is a beautiful tattoo alone or when incorporated into other Hindu images.

**Patriotic Tattoos**

The word patriot derives from the Greek word *patris* meaning “fatherland”. It is one of the best ways to show ones love and devotion for their country. The Greeks did not see patriotism as synonymous with nationalism. To be a true patriot one is not just identified with the state but rather follows the cultural patterns shaped by the country and does so with pride. In the American tradition one usually shows their patriotism with the American flag, the bald eagle, and war veteran iconography. All of these can be combined to show off just how much you love your country!
Peace Tattoos

One of the most widely recognized symbol that has infiltrated every country and political symbol, and often confused with the Mercedes symbol is the Peace sign. Peace is a message that is promoted from every corner of the earth and has been a hot topic of discussion since the days of the bible. There are many symbols that connote a message of peace that are often associated with the Peace symbol like the white dove and the olive branch. The symbol was originally created in Britain when protest groups were putting pressure on the government to disarm their nuclear power. Over time it became the most iconic anti-war symbol and has been adopted by virtually every movement since the hippies. This sign can be combined with a tattoo of the globe or with the hand in the “V” shape. Perhaps a bit of tie-dye to fill in the outlines would add a totally groovy look to this totally free spirited tattoo.

Peacock Tattoos

The beautiful and flamboyant feathers of male peacocks have always been appealing to the human eye. Their feathers are often depicted in Asian themed tattoos. The peacock is known for being proud, arrogant, and vain. It is known as “the bird of a hundred eyes” because of all the eye-like shaped patterns on their feathers. Many cultures perceived the feathers to be the home of the evil eye and were cautious to let the feathers enter their home. The peacock is a symbol of wealth and nobility in some empires because of their elegant and proud behavior. In the Hindu religion the god Krishna
wore peacock feathers in his hair and legends tell about Shiva’s children riding on the back of peacocks. In early Christianity the peacock’s feathers were associated with the all-seeing church. The peacock is a wonderful theme for a full back tattoo. Some Asian and far-eastern motifs can go along well with the beauty of the elegant peacock.

**Phoenix Tattoos**

The almighty and mythical phoenix was believed to be the bird of fire. It lived for hundreds of years and then, once it grew tired, would build a nest of its own feather and set itself on fire. After the three days a new born phoenix would resurrect from the ashes. It was said to have a beautiful singing voice feathers of gold and purple. Its resurrection was considered by Christians to be an analogy to the resurrection of Christ while in Judaism it was described as the only animal that did not leave the Garden of Eden with Adam. The phoenix is often associated with a feminine nature and represents purity, continuation of life, and virtue. It can be depicted flying with a trail of fire behind it or in its resurrection from the ashes of its death. Either way this tattoo can be worn on virtually any part of the body and represent you continuation of life and element of purity.

**Pisces Tattoos**

Pisces is the astrological zodiac sign that falls between 19th of February and 20th of March. Pisces is associated with the classical element of water which can provide great imagery for a Pisces tattoo. Its symbol is the fish and is ruled by the planet Jupiter. Since Pisces are water signs they combine with all of the elements. With air they are evaporated, with fire they boil, and with earth they are channeled and shaped. All of this gives the Pisces absolute
adaptability. They are thought to be sensitive and spiritual people. Pisces represent the feet of the body. A tattoo of Pisces can include motifs of fish and water since they go hand in hand. One could incorporate the malleability of Pisces’s personality and they interact with the various elements.

**Praying Hands Tattoos**

The image of praying hands has a very long history behind it. The 15th century German artist, Albrecht Dürer, was commissioned as an altar-piece by the mayor of Frankfurt in 1508. Another version was done in the form of an apostles hand facing the heavens while he stood on a grave. The original was destroyed by fire in 1729, but a copy of the altar-piece, as well as some earlier sketches survived. This image has become one of the most widely tattooed icons. The praying hands are perfect to show one’s devotion and are great to incorporate other images. Some of these can include a rosary, the cross, and the name of a loved one who passed away.

**Rabbit Tattoos**

The rabbit has always had a sexual allure to it. It is known for having a sexual appetite larger than even the most desperate man and since ancient times represented fertility. In most mythology the white rabbit is seen a clever but sly character who is always loveable. In some Native American myths the rabbit often gets himself in trouble because of his boastfulness. One of the most famous rabbits to ever hit...
pop culture other than Bugs Bunny was the Hugh Hefner’s bunny. The playboy bunny has been a symbol of sexual liberation all over the world for men and women. Rabbit tattoos could combine an array of different portrayals of the rabbit. It can be the rabbit on the moon in a more innocent style or a sexually charged playboy bunny in a naughty spot for only a few (or everyone) to admire.

**Sagittarius Tattoos**

Sagittarius is part of the Western astrological zodiac and falls between November 23rd and December 21st. Sagittarius is a fire sign and is often associated with action, energy, and passion. Individuals born under the sign are said to be brave, idealistic and adventurous. Since they are a mutable sign they are considered to be very holistic and adaptable. The brave centaur is the image used for representing Sagittarius and can be manipulated in multiple ways to create the perfect tattoo. The centaur is often depicted with his bow and arrow. Adding a flame to the arrow would be a great touch to the piece. For a more dramatic effect the centaur could be standing on its hind legs thrusting itself forward. Adding other motifs from Greek mythology could also work. It’s a great idea for a large piece.
**Samurai Tattoos**

The Samurai is the all-encompassing figure that represents masculinity, honor, and justice in Japanese culture. Samurai’s used to follow a code of conduct called the “Bushido” which means “the way of the warrior”. Their code was based on the fundamental principles of Zen Buddhism and included ideals such as self-sacrifice and frugality. Samurai warriors were expected to behave as if each day would be their last which prevented them from staying in debt and leaving their families with their own burdens. As a social class they were the military aristocrats and were known for their philosophy and art. The sword is the symbol of the Samurai and was a long swift blade that was designed to kill with one strike. Samurai tattoos are some of the most elaborate and detailed designs in the history of tattooing. The images and motifs that are placed together are based on the environment and the changes in nature. A skilled tattoo artist would not put an animal that hibernates in the spring next to a tree that only blossoms in the spring. The tattoos pay great attention to the detail in the Samurai’s armor which was made of leather and iron. Most of these tattoos are combined with other Japanese motifs such as cherry blossoms and the peacock. When it comes down to it the Samurai tattoo is based around the fact that every moment of life should be lived like it’s our last. We never know what battles may face us tomorrow.

**Scorpio Tattoos**

The astrological sign of Scorpio is one of the most mysterious and puzzling signs in the western zodiac. It is the eighth sign in the zodiac and falls between October 23rd and November 22nd. They are associated with the element of water and is a fixed sign. Scorpios are associated with mysticism, sex, death, and the
occult. The main icon associated with Scorpios is the scorpion. As a water sign it is greatly affected by water which makes it boil, air which will make it evaporate, and earth will channel it.

**Shamrock Tattoos**

Shamrocks are one of the most widely recognized Irish symbols and are often accompanied by images of Leprechauns and beer. The shamrock is very popular among people of Irish descent to show off their heritage and pride. They are a universal symbol for good luck and good fortune and were once considered to be the embodiment of the holy trinity. This is a great amulet of luck to carry around on the wrist or the ankle. Shamrock tattoos are also great for combining with other Irish motifs and since they do not have to be large pieces they can be small, discrete, and concealed.

**Skull Tattoos**

Skulls have been used as icons for centuries and have been used by Pirates in the Jolly Roger flag, warriors, and have been adapted by every tattoo movement and style to date. The image of the skull reminds us of death and how fragile we are as humans. Christian art has represented many of their saints and cardinals with skulls as a constant reminder that one must live a virtuous and pious life. Ancient kingdoms and civilizations would use the image of the skull to intimidate opponents and regarded them as trophies. Some leader went so far as to use skulls as goblets and would drink out of them. The skull is a
constant reminder to us that death is present in life and is inescapable. Skull designs can be devious and evil or can be humorous. One could portray the Jester holding the skull in Hamlet or the Jolly Roger. It can also depict Mexican folklore in regards to “The day of the dead”. Regardless of the type or size of skull you choose to tattoo it will always remind us that death is constantly lingering by and will eventually find and catch us.

**Sun Tattoos**

The sun has been one of the most influential symbols in some of the most ancient religions. The Babylonians, Egyptians, and Greeks all worshipped the sun as a major figure in their belief system. Almost all cultures have myths that describe the creation of the sun and how its cycle of rising and setting represents the cycle of life and death and that of reincarnation. The sun represents passion, fertility, and eternal knowledge. The sun is thought to be a masculine symbol and so it is often paired with the feminine moon that rises as the sun sets and vice versa.

**Sword Tattoos**

The sword is the ultimate symbol for liberty and strength. The design and shape of the sword can tell a lot about its purposes and where it came from. The combination of a sword with a cross is a symbol of the Crusades and the war to keep Christianity growing. When these swords were portrayed with flames they represented purity and sanctity. One could choose to use a saber, scimitar, katana, or a cutlass. One may also combine a slithering snake around the blade or show how it pierces into the skin. One can also add the image of a dragon resting on the handle or on the blade.
Taurus Tattoos

The astrological sign Taurus falls between the 20th of April and the 20th of May. Taurus represents the coming of spring and is represented as a bull. The sign is correlated with the Greek myth of Zeus and how he formed into a bull to win over the love of Europa. Taurus is a fixed earth sign and are thought to be more conservative, sensual, and fond of the finer things in life. They are known for being stubborn and their quick tempers.

Virgo Tattoos

Virgo is the astrological sign that falls from August 23rd to September 22nd. Virgos are associated with fertility and the abundance of the harvest. Virgo’s tend to be thin and are known to pay attention to the detail in everything. Virgo is often associated with the idea of purity and the virgin because it is adapted from the virgin Greek goddess Astraea who was the goddess of justice.
Wing Tattoos

Flight has always fascinated mankind and has sparked myths, stories, and legends of people reaching spiritual levels that allow levitation and the invention of devices that allow one to glide freely among the clouds. Wings in a way symbolize the desire to transcend and liberate ourselves from the constraints of our environment. Often time wings also have a theme of spirituality and divinity to them and incorporate motifs of heaven and angels. They can also depict a more demonic set of wings or even show one angelic and one demonic to show the darkness and the light that resides within us. In the Air force getting a pair of wings is a great honor and is like a rite of passage. When humans look at the creatures that can soar high above we think of their freedom and independence which is something all people yearn for.

Yin and Yang Tattoos

Yin and Yang are the intertwining duality of all things in nature. As Newton once put it, every reaction has an equal and opposite reaction. Yin and Yang are polar opposites and represent how everything, though it is relative, encompasses both. They are interdependent and cannot exist without each other. Day cannot exist without night and the light can’t exist if there is no darkness to compare it to. They both support each other and just as the dots show us, one always possess a bit of the other.
This tattoo can represent your duality and express the two polar opposites of your life and how they morph together to make you unique and different. Yin and Yang tattoos can be incorporated into other motifs and styles by adding Kanji or other Asian tattoo designs.

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