

The Traditions and Symbolism of Tattoos

Submitted by [IHeartCelebs](#) [1] on January 22, 2020 - 3:21pm

Although the [art of tattooing is an old tradition](#) [2], rich with meaning, it has had ups and downs as far as social acceptability. In Scandinavia countries, as well as in France and Portugal, prehistoric tattoo tools have been found that are at least 12,000 years old. Ancient Germanic, Celtic, and Egyptian peoples used tattoos for a variety of reasons. For example, in ancient Egypt, the art form was used to aid healing, show religious significance, and mark a person's status, whether high-ranking or as punishment. Tattoos were used to identify slaves and criminals in many countries.

Eventually, European explorers and sailors became exposed to the tradition and began to embrace it. At first, the habit of applying body art was seen as suitable only for the lower classes, but over time, tattooing has become acceptable to members of mainstream society. Today, people from all walks of life have the option to become tattooed. As individuals consider how they'd like to permanently mark themselves, symbolic images have become popular. If you're interested in sporting a bit of ink, you might consider some of the following popular symbols from around the world and throughout the ages.

Phases of the Moon

Tattoos showing each phase of the moon are popular for representing regeneration, regrowth, and the eternal. Images of the moon phases are especially popular with women because of the moon's link to regular cycles. Each phase has its own symbolism. For example, the new moon is a symbol of new beginnings and the full moon is symbolic of the completion of goals.

Animals

Dolphin tattoos are symbolic of friendship and a sense of belonging, while dragon tattoos represent courage and wisdom. Butterflies may stand for change and freedom, and wings represent aspiration. Snake tattoos are found on many people and may symbolize a search for balance, healing, and transformation. If you're an animal lover, it should be easy to find a creature to represent your goals or passion.

Historical Symbols

You probably wouldn't be surprised to see a simple fish tattoo, a peace sign, or a circle as a tattoo. Other popular [tattoos with historical significance](#) [3] include the Gordian knot, an infinity symbol, a Yin Yang or Taijitu, and an Ankh. Not all historic symbols are as recognizable, however. For example, a [greek symbol of strength](#) [4] may be similar to the triskelion of Celtic origin or look like an oak tree. Whether you know what [the actual greek symbol of strength](#) [5] looks like or not, history is still full of lots of great options.

Culture and Tradition

Tribal tattoos, such as those from the Maori, Celtic, Samoan, Aztec, and Hawaiian peoples, are full of tradition with deep cultural ties. Depending on the tattoo artist, these images may tell stories, depict family timelines, or represent religious beliefs. Filipino tattoo artists may only create traditional *batek* designs if you can prove your Filipino heritage, and the Maori *ta moko* designs are actually carved into the skin with traditional chisels.

Letters and Words

The written word, in all its forms, is a very popular symbol used by tattoo artists. This type of art may show up as a one-word tattoo that carries a powerful meaning, such as breathe, warrior, resilient, and fearless. Phrases and longer quotes are also popular. Other options may include characters and lettering from other cultures, such as Chinese and Japanese characters with specific meanings or popular phrases in an Arabic font.

Your Personal Tattoo

You could copy one of your favorite celebrities and get inked in the same way or search your family history for traditional symbols. Choose a symbol that represents your own triumph over difficulties or memorialize a pet, friend, or loved one. Your options are wide open, and the possibilities are endless.

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