BBA Code of Conduct

Draft v2

Preserve. Honor. Inspire.

In a nutshell

A card means an artist has earned a place in the record of tattooing. This is a shared standard, not a rulebook.

- **Your own work:** make your own work and respect everyone else's.
- **Clients:** be honest about price, expectations and mistakes.
- **Safety:** keep it clean and follow the health rules.
- **Respect:** everyone in your chair or shop should feel safe.
- **Apprentices:** teach them for real; never exploit them.
- **Online:** disagree all you want, but stick to the work and the facts.
- **BBA:** keep bios, credits and history accurate.

How BBA responds: honest mistakes get a conversation, patterns get a pause, and serious harm means exclusion from future sets.

A path back always exists. A return is never owed, but it's always possible.

Why this exists

Black Book Archives is an archive first, a collectible second and a game third. A card means an artist has earned a place in the record of tattooing. This page sets out what that place stands for.

It's a shared standard, not a rulebook, and we're not here to police anyone. Most good artists already work this way; writing it down means everyone knows where we stand.

We also believe people grow. Plenty of great artists have been through hard stretches: burnout, money trouble, addiction, mental health struggles, a bad shop, a bad year. None of that disqualifies you, and asking for help is never held against you. Accountability and second chances aren't opposites here. They work together: own what happened, fix what you can, and the door stays open.

The standard

1. Make your own work, and respect everyone else's

In plain words: Your portfolio should be your work, and other artists' work should be treated as theirs.

This looks like:

- Drawing your own designs, or crediting the artist when you tattoo their flash with permission.
- Saying "based on" or "after" when a piece leans heavily on a specific artist.
- Sending BBA only images you made or have permission to share.

This crosses the line:

- Tracing another artist's custom piece and posting it as your own.
- Selling someone else's flash as yours, or reselling it without permission.

Grey areas: Traditional tattooing is built on shared imagery. An eagle, a rose or a panther head belongs to everyone. Working in a tradition is fine; copying one artist's take line for line isn't. When in doubt, credit or ask.

2. Be honest with your clients

In plain words: Clients should know what they're getting, what it costs and what to expect before the needle starts.

This looks like:

- Clear pricing, deposits and cancellation terms, up front.
- Telling someone a design won't hold up that small, even if it costs you the booking.
- Owning a mistake (a blowout, a misspelling, a missed appointment) and offering a real fix.

This crosses the line:

- Changing the price mid-session without agreement.
- Keeping deposits for appointments you cancelled.
- Hiding a mistake, blaming the client for it, or promising results you know you can't deliver.

Grey areas: Healing varies, and not every rough heal is your fault. What matters is being honest about it and treating the client fairly.

3. Keep it clean and safe

In plain words: Clients trust you with their bodies. Protect that trust every session.

This looks like:

- Following the health rules and holding any licence or permit your area requires.
- Single-use needles, proper sterilisation, a clean station, clear aftercare.
- Rescheduling someone who's intoxicated or where tattooing would put them at risk.

This crosses the line:

- Reusing needles or ink caps, skipping sterilisation, working impaired.
- Tattooing minors where it isn't allowed, or anyone who can't really consent.
- Hiding an exposure incident from a client.

Grey areas: Rules differ by place. The bar doesn't: if you'd be uncomfortable showing a client exactly how you work, fix that.

4. Respect and safety for clients, coworkers and guests

In plain words: Everyone in your chair or your shop should feel safe, physically and emotionally.

This looks like:

- Explaining placement and asking before touching, moving clothing or adjusting someone's position. Checking in during long or intimate pieces, and stopping when asked.
- Treating everyone with the same care, whatever their race, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, body or background.

This crosses the line:

- Harassment, threats, intimidation or violence.
- Touching beyond what the work needs, sexual comments, or photographing a client without consent.
- Refusing, mocking or treating people worse because of who they are.

On boundaries: Being interested in someone isn't wrong in itself. What matters is how you handle it. A client in your chair is vulnerable and partly in your hands, so keep the session professional, and don't use booking details or your position to pursue anyone. Outside of that, asking once, respectfully, is fine. If the answer is no, or no answer, that's the answer. Persisting, sulking, badmouthing them, changing how you treat them or making the shop uncomfortable after a rejection crosses the line. With coworkers, power matters: if you own the shop, set the schedule or control someone's chair, your interest carries pressure they may not feel free to refuse.

Grey areas: Banter, hugs with regulars, dark shop humour: fine when it's mutual. If someone goes quiet or pulls back, ease off.

5. Apprentices

In plain words: An apprenticeship is a promise to teach someone the craft. Holding apprentices to a high standard, and holding them accountable for mistakes in their work, is fair and expected. Exploiting them isn't.

This looks like:

- Agreeing up front, even in a simple message, what they'll learn, roughly how long it takes, what they'll do and what it costs or pays.
- Correcting mistakes directly: redoing a stencil, rebuilding a setup, an honest talk about rushed linework. That's teaching, not mistreatment.
- Teaching safety, hygiene and the business side, not just drawing.

This crosses the line:

- Using them as unpaid labour (months of cleaning and front desk with no real teaching), or charging for training you don't deliver.
- Humiliating them, screaming at them, hazing, or putting them down in front of clients.
- Holding back teaching to keep them dependent.
- Using your control over their training, chair or career to pressure them: threatening to "blacklist" them, keeping their portfolio, or controlling their personal life.
- Pursuing romantic or sexual interest while you hold power over their training. If something is mutual, it waits until that power is gone. Nobody should have to say no to the person who decides their future.

Grey areas: Good apprenticeships still involve chores and long hours. The question is whether the trade is fair: are they actually learning, are they treated with respect, and could they leave without being punished for it?

6. Conduct online

In plain words: Disagree all you want. Keep it to the work and the facts.

This looks like:

- Debating styles, pricing, ethics or the industry.

This crosses the line:

- Pile-ons, doxxing, threats, or sending followers after someone.
- Spreading claims you know are false or haven't checked.
- Posting clients' photos or private messages to mock them.

Grey areas: Sometimes speaking publicly is how people warn others about real harm. Nobody will be penalised by BBA for honestly describing how they were treated. The line is cruelty and dishonesty,

not truth.

7. Be straight with BBA

In plain words: The archive is only as good as what goes into it.

This looks like: Accurate bios, dates, credits and history. Telling us when something's wrong; corrections are normal in a living archive. If something has come up we'd want to know about, it goes better coming from you.

This crosses the line: Made-up credentials or history, submitting someone else's work, or counterfeiting or reproducing BBA cards and materials without permission.

How BBA responds

We'd much rather celebrate artists than step in. When we do, the response matches what happened.

- **Honest mistakes get a conversation.** A wrong credit, a one-off bad call, a heated post you regret. We'll reach out and talk it through, and usually that's the end of it.
- **Patterns get a pause with clear steps.** Repeated issues, or one that wasn't fixed after we talked. We'll pause new work together and tell you plainly what would need to change.
- **Serious harm means exclusion from future sets while the risk is unresolved.** Violence, sexual harm, exploitation of apprentices or clients, hate or fraud. Not a life sentence, but not quick either; the safety of the people affected comes first.

A criminal record, a past accusation or a rough history doesn't automatically disqualify anyone. We look at each situation on its own facts.

A path back

If you've been paused or left out, here's what we weigh when you're ready: - What happened, and how serious it was. - How long ago it was, and what's happened since. - Whether you've taken real responsibility: acknowledging the impact without excuses, not just apologising. - What you've changed in how you run your chair, take bookings, train apprentices or handle conflict. - Ongoing support or work you've done: counselling, treatment, recovery, training, mentorship, or repair where it was welcome. - Whether the people affected are safe, and are not being contacted, pressured or blamed.

Getting help for mental health or addiction counts in your favour here, never against you. It doesn't erase harm, but it's part of how people change.

We will never ask the people who were harmed to meet you, forgive you or approve your return. That isn't their job. Pressuring them to speak up for you will count against you.

A return is never owed. But it's always possible.

How we review concerns

BBA is a small, mostly one-person operation, so we keep our promises realistic:

- **Raising a concern.** Contact TO BE DECIDED [contact email / form]. Tell us what happened and share what you can. If you'd rather the artist not know it came from you, say so and we'll respect that, though it can limit what we're able to do. TO BE DECIDED [Decide: whether anonymous reports are accepted.]
- **Hearing both sides, where it's safe.** The artist will usually get a chance to respond. Where contact could put someone at risk, we won't make it.
- **Confidentiality.** Details stay with the people who need them to look into it. TO BE DECIDED [Decide: who besides Derrick, if anyone, reviews cases, e.g. a trusted outside advisor.]
- **Proportionate decisions.** We follow the ladder above. We're not a court; we only decide about BBA's own cards, pages and partnerships.
- **Explaining decisions.** The artist hears what we decided and why, in plain words. The person who raised the concern hears the outcome, as far as privacy allows.
- **Timing.** We aim to acknowledge concerns within TO BE DECIDED [X days] and reach a decision within TO BE DECIDED [timeframe], and we'll tell you if it's taking longer.
- **Appeals and re-applying.** You can ask us to look again at a decision with new information within TO BE DECIDED [timeframe]. TO BE DECIDED [Decide: who handles appeals.] After a pause or exclusion, you can re-apply TO BE DECIDED [after X months / once the agreed steps are met].

If someone is in immediate danger or a crime has happened, please contact local emergency services or the authorities first. BBA is not a substitute for them.

Printed cards and "not yet"

Cards that are already printed stay in the archive. They're a record of a moment in tattoo history, and an archive doesn't rewrite its past. TO BE DECIDED [Decide: whether an artist's Archive Page is updated, noted or hidden during a pause.]

Being paused or left out of a set means "not yet," not "no." People grow, situations change, and the door can open again.

Thanks for holding the standard with us.