



101 Things Every Piercer Should Know **(and also those who think they would like to be)**

“The most gratifying position to take concerning this game called life - is to always be prepared to be both the student and the teacher.”

L. Hickman

These are things that we have learnt over the years. Some will be useful to you and some won't, but they are all true for me.

1. The Golden Rule – **always, always, always** wear gloves when you are handling used jewellery, or touching a client's piercing.
2. A piercer should always be clean and smell good.
3. Every piercing should be marked with a one use only marker – never a reused pen or texta.
4. Gentian Violet with a toothpick is an accurate and cheap marking solution.
5. Every piercing should be taken seriously by you.
6. Every piercing you do matters to someone.
7. Be proud of what you do – every piercing is a walking advertisement of your skills.
8. If there is something you don't know or understand – find out – the resources are out there (now).
9. Change your gloves whenever you touch something that is not part of your setup – this includes yourself and the bin.
10. Clamps and receiving tubes are used to brace the tissue before piercing it.
11. There are many different types of clamps – a basic piercing kit would contain at least 4 types.
12. A smile is the most valuable confidence building thing you can do for a client.



13. Some clamps have a ratchet system that allows it to close – piercers should never use this ratchet.
14. A single use rubber band (size 10) can be used to create some tension on the clamp to hold the tissue.
15. Wrapping the rubber band 4-5 times around the clamp will provide tension without making it too tight.
16. Depending on what you are clamping, you may require more or less tension depending on the thickness of the tissue. Slide the band down the clamp for more tension, and up for less.
17. The tools a piercer uses are very important when it comes to piercing accuracy and client comfort. Have and use the right tool for the job. There are at least 5 kinds of clamps and 5 kinds of tubes.
18. The sharper a piercing needle is, the less the piercing will hurt.
19. In the beginning, piercing needles were so blunt, we usually needed an extra tool called a “needle pusher” to get them through!
20. The cut edge of a needle is called a “bevel”.
21. Blade needles were first designed by “The Gauntlet” back in the 1980’s specifically for piercing use (Our thanks to Jim Ward).
22. Cannular needles (used by the medical profession) have been a later addition.
23. Piercing with a cannular needle can be likened to driving an automatic car, piercing with a blade can be likened to driving a manual. (An automatic license can still be upgraded to a manual though - with some extra training).
24. Not all needles are the same. Experiment with needles from different manufacturers until you find the best. The variations can be significant.
25. Not all tools are the same. There are cheap tools that may not be as good. It is horrible if a tool breaks or fails during a procedure.
26. Replace your tools when they need it. Lower grades of stainless steel are used for cheap clamps, and that will increase the chance of rust and failure.



27. Most people who are getting a piercing are scared or nervous to some degree (even if they are pretending like they're not).
28. When people are scared, they may not be the best version of themselves. Find out what specifically is concerning them and work through it with sensitivity.
29. Once you lose your sensitivity it's time for one of 2 things. The first is to get a piercing and see if that does the trick. The second is to move on. An insensitive piercer is no good to anyone..
30. Someone who is really scared or nervous will have an increased chance of fainting (keep an eye on them).
31. This industry doesn't need "Rock Stars". If that's what you want to be then go home to your Karaoke machine.
32. Getting a piercing done requires energy. If your client hasn't eaten for longer than 4 hours encourage them to do so, before you pierce them!
33. Treat your back kindly. Handle any problems early.
34. As a piercer you will find yourself in all sorts of positions. There may be more than just your client in the room. If you don't want someone to perve – then don't provide the view.
35. A personal opinion – I don't believe that being a body piercer is a 2nd class profession. I believe that people will usually treat you how you require to be treated. If you are consistently being treated poorly, take a look at what your expectations are. Be proud of what you do and how you behave. That's how we can raise the standards in this industry.
36. Clients may not appreciate a close up view of your armpit (covered armpits is a regulation in some health guidelines for piercers).
37. There are two types of non-sterile latex gloves available – powdered and non-powdered.
38. Gloves for piercing should fit your hand "like a glove". Loose gloves result in loose piercings and loose safety.
39. If a client is allergic to latex, nitrile gloves are the next best thing.



40. The surface on gloves varies a lot. Some are slippery. Try different gloves until you find some that you feel confident in.
41. Powder free gloves require your hands to be very dry before trying to put them on.
42. Your skin is your biggest protection against foreign bacteria. Keep the skin on your hands in good condition. Avoid cuts and picking cuticles.
43. Increased hand washing may cause your skin to become quite dry which can then cause cracking if not treated. Use an easily absorbed moisturiser regularly. Sorbolene cream is good and it's cheap.
44. New piercers sometimes develop dermatitis on their hands. It will usually go away in time as your skin gets used to the washing. You may also become reactive to the powder in gloves. Try powder free gloves.
45. An autoclave is a closed unit that sterilises equipment and jewellery using temperature, pressure and time. The pressure is created by a build up of steam.
46. Autoclave packaging is plastic on one side and paper on the other so that steam can enter from the paper side of the package in the autoclave and sterilize what is inside. If you are laying your autoclave packages down in the autoclave, make sure the paper side is facing down (Never use a package that is all plastic as it is waterproof – the only thing that will be sterile is the outside of the package!).
47. An autoclave is the only reliable method available to piercers to sterilize their tools and jewellery.
48. Things change often in this industry. What was right 1, 5, 10 or 15 years ago may not be right today. There are amazing people working in this industry to create new and better ways to do things all the time. Keep learning and sharing.
49. The most respected body-piercing organisation in the world is The Association of Professional Piercers (APP). They do a lot of ongoing work for the industry and currently hold an annual conference in Las Vegas. They also have some great resources. Find them at <http://www.safepiercing.org>



They designed this:

The Piercee's Bill of Rights

1. *To be pierced in a scrupulously hygienic environment, by a clean, conscientious piercer wearing a fresh pair of disposable latex gloves.*
2. *To a sober, friendly, calm and knowledgeable piercer, who will guide them through their piercing experience with confidence and assurance.*
3. *To the peace of mind which comes from knowing that their piercer knows and practices the very highest standards of sterilization and hygiene.*
4. *To be pierced with a brand new, completely sterilized needle, which is immediately disposed of in a medical sharps container after use on the piercee alone.*
5. *To be touched only with freshly sterilized, appropriate implements, properly used and disposed of or resterilized in an autoclave prior to use on anyone else.*
6. *To know that ear-piercing guns are never appropriate, and are often dangerous, when used on anything other than ear lobes.*
7. *To be fitted only with jewellery which is appropriately sized, safe in material, design and construction, and which best promotes healing. Gold plated, gold filled and sterling silver jewellery are never appropriate for any new or unhealed piercing.*
8. *To be informed about proper aftercare, and to have continuing access to their piercer for consultation and assistance with all their piercing-related questions.*

We believe this is an accurate list of the minimum rights your client should expect to have.



50. Unfortunately we now have two types of body jewellery available in this industry – Branded and No Name. They are extremely different in quality. Do you know who makes your body jewellery?
51. The APP has a list of manufacturers that they have approved. If you wish to use great jewellery, but can't be bothered doing any research, use these manufacturers. The APP has already done the work for you. (It is serious business getting approved by these folks).
52. The “crusty bits” that may form at the entry/exit of a piercing are actually called “exudate”.
53. There are a few words that should never be part of a piercer's vocabulary whilst in the piercing room:
 - a. Shit
 - b. Fuck
 - c. Oops
 - d. Oh my god/gosh
 - e. Um
 - f. And any other preferred curses or words of exasperation!
54. If you say any of these on a regular basis, be advised that they may pop out when you least want them to!
55. Remember if anything does go wrong - your client hopefully will not be aware of it unless they have had the piercing - by you - before, or you tell them. If it's possible, fix the problem. Continue talking to your client while you are doing this and if it wasn't a serious mistake they probably won't even know. (unless you cry – then I have no advice). If it is a serious mistake, discuss it with your client and work out what they would like to do.
56. If any of your mistakes are due to lack of knowledge – fix it. Find someone to give you some training in the area who knows what to do.
57. Making mistakes is an important part of becoming a good piercer. The only time they are a negative occurrence is when you don't learn anything from them.
58. Piercing tapers are one of our most useful tools. One of the things we use them for is fixing a problem that can occur while inserting the jewellery. This can save having to pierce again. (see point 55).



- 59.** Animals shouldn't be allowed to hang around in piercing studios (with the exception of guide dogs and other animals necessary to assist with disabilities).
- 60.** Needle stick injury is one of our main health and safety issues. There are many things you can do to minimize the chance of this happening:
- a. Concentrate on what you are doing (sticks are far more common when people don't focus)
 - b. If you are not in a stable, comfortable position before doing the piercing - stop! Change your position or the position of the client
 - c. Don't allow a client to grab you. Make them sit on their hands if you need to.
 - d. Don't allow children in the piercing room
 - e. Only have as many people in the piercing room as you are comfortable with
 - f. Don't allow flash photography
 - g. Make sure observers are at a comfortable distance away from you
 - h. If something feels wrong – stop! Check where everything is before proceeding
- 61.** Inserting piercing jewellery is much easier if you keep your nails shorter. Long, artificial nails are not very useful to a body piercer.
- 62.** Piercer's should keep long hair tied back. There are many reasons for this but one of them is so that your hair doesn't end up in or on your clients fresh piercing.
- 63.** If you need to scratch, blow your nose, cover your mouth for a cough, or anything else that requires you to touch yourself – take your gloves off first. Once you are finished replace them with a fresh pair.
- 64.** There are very few absolutes concerning body piercing. Words like “always” and “never” are rarely true for us after we have been piercing for a few years. Amazing things continue to surprise me.
- 65.** A piercing should be well healed before attempting to stretch it. The longer a piercing is left before stretching, the easier it will be for the client and it will also reduce the chances of damaging the piercing.



66. One true use for the word “always” concerns lubrication. Whenever you are inserting anything into a piercing, fresh or healed, always make sure it is lubricated. Water based lube is good for this purpose.
67. Whenever you are removing jewellery from a piercing, make sure it is free of any dry matter and moves easily. Lube can be useful here too.
68. When we make a piercing, we are cutting a tunnel through the tissue. The new layer of cells that forms on the inside of this tunnel during the healing process is called a “fistula”.
69. It is disrupting the fistula that we need to be careful of when working with a healed or healing piercing.
70. Anyone who has ever tried to stretch a piercing too fast will have seen a creamy colored tube start to come out of the piercing – this is the fistula. If you continue to push it out completely, the client’s piercing is back to square one from a healing perspective.
71. There are two types of threading available for barbells – internal and external



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72. If your client feels faint there are a few things you can do to help:
 - a. Offer them some sugar like a lolly or some soft drink (unless they are diabetic)
 - b. Cool them down with a water spray (they will usually feel hot)
 - c. Have them lay with their legs higher than their head/heart
 - d. Ask them to contract and release the muscles in their legs
 - e. Don't leave them alone



73. Gloves do not have magic powers – they should be changed once at least once at a minimum during a procedure - immediately prior to picking up the needle to perform the piercing.
74. There are no prizes for finishing a piercing in record time. Obviously speed increases as your experience does, but don't work faster than your experience allows you to. This is how mistakes happen.
75. Always check the placement of a piercing with your client before you do it.
76. Take as much time as you need to when marking a piercing. If the marking is wrong - nothing else will be right.
77. Always measure your piercings before you do them. **Correct width is so important.**
78. The best tool for measuring piercing width and jewellery sizes is a set of "Vernier Callipers". These are available in metric and imperial models and are extremely accurate when used correctly.



79. Jewellery measuring is always done in a certain way. For rings the measurement refers to the distance between the inside edges – known as the internal diameter. For barbells the measurement is the distance from where the ball connects to one end of the bar to where the ball connects at the other end. This may be different to the bar length without balls on it so always measure with the balls on.
80. Needles are always one use only. It doesn't matter if clients are related or friends!
81. Needles should always be disposed of in an approved sharps container.



82. If you are piercing privately at home, needles should never go into regular rubbish. At a minimum, use a screw top glass jar and take them to an appropriate place for disposal. This could be a needle exchange service, a chemist / drug store, doctor's surgery, etc.
83. The following things that may be used during a piercing can all be sterilized in an autoclave:
 - a. Initial piercing jewellery
 - b. Needles
 - c. Tapers
 - d. Clamps
 - e. Tubes
 - f. Pliers
 - g. Cotton buds/tips/Q-tips
 - h. Rubber bands
 - i. Toothpicks
 - j. Corks
84. Body piercing is not usually a sterile procedure, however the things that we use should be. The procedure is considered a "clean" procedure and every precaution should be taken to prevent contamination or cross contamination.
85. Jewellery that has been previously worn by another person should always be sterilized before it is reused in your client for a piercing or insertion.
86. Written and verbal aftercare should always be given.
87. Maintain a professional, friendly approach with your clients.
88. Be prepared to answer their piercing related questions. Make it easy for them to ask what they want to know.
89. When working in a busy studio, look after one client at a time. Great service to one client is so much better than poor service to five. Things can get confused if you lose your concentration or don't have good systems in place.
90. As a piercer you may need to do things for a client that will hurt. Good piercers are often asked to fix problems from other piercers. Whatever you need to do, it will hurt less if you do it quickly.



91. The most common question we are asked is “Does it Hurt?” A considerate answer to this question is “Not as much as you think it will”. If you are good at what you do, you will be right 99% of the time.
92. Try not to focus on tough clients that give you a hard time. Focus on all the great ones.
93. If someone doesn't improve in their personality after the piercing is over – know that it probably isn't about you.
94. If a client is particularly scared (often a young girl), don't allow friends who are getting involved in her fear into the piercing room. Hysterical girls can make it really difficult to control the situation.
95. If you feel uncomfortable with a particular client, try to have someone else in the piercing room with you or if appropriate – leave the door open.
96. Good communication skills are really important for a piercer. If yours need work – get some training.
97. If you work for a studio that you know isn't doing the right thing, speak to the owner to see if they are open to change. If not – do your best from within to improve your environment.
98. Encouraging your clients to breathe deeply through the piercing process will help them considerably. Increased oxygen helps with the stress. Piercing on an exhale is great, ask your client to consciously blow out their breath, instead of holding it, and it will make it a lot easier for them.
99. Keep a spare shirt at work to change into in case your clothing becomes contaminated with body fluids.
100. Know which jewellery in style and size is appropriate for each piercing. Be willing to hold your position even if the client wants a piece that you know is not going to work or heal.
101. Be willing to learn. We have now made an enormous amount of knowledge easily available.

Do a Great Job – This Industry is Counting On You