



The Piercing Bible: The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing

By *Elayne Angel*

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Piercing pioneer Elayne Angel has performed over 40,000 piercings since the 1980s and has brought many practices, such as tongue-piercing, into the mainstream. She brings her exhaustive knowledge to this groundbreaking manual that covers everything you need to know about the process, including:

- The best piercings and placements for various body parts and body types
- Terminology, tools, and techniques of the trade
- Vital sterility, sanitation, and hygiene information
- Jewelry designs, shapes, and materials
- Advice for people with stretch marks, plastic surgery, and unique anatomy
- Healing, aftercare, and troubleshooting for problem-free piercing

"As a piercer, nurse, and educator, I can say without a doubt that this is the most complete book ever written for all people in our industry."

--DAVID A. VIDRA, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF HEALTH EDUCATORS, INC.

"No one is more qualified to write this book than Elayne Angel. With more than three decades of personal experience to her credit, no one knows the subject better."

--JIM WARD, FOUNDER OF GAUNTLET, THE WORLD'S FIRST BODY PIERCING STUDIO

"This is an exciting book for a field that has exploded in the last two decades. National industry standards are needed, and Elayne provides important data."

--MYRNA L. ARMSTRONG, RN, EdD

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Editorial Review

About the Author

ELAYNE ANGEL has been a professional piercer for more than 20 years and has performed over 40,000 piercings. She was awarded the President's Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Professional Piercers in 2006 and is a contributing writer for PAIN Magazine. She lives in Merida, Mexico.

THE AUTHOR SCOOP

Have you ever met a famous person?

I was acquainted with a piercing customer from the Gauntlet in West Hollywood, and later we became fast friends. One day he asked me if I'd go "on tour" with him to be his "tour piercer." Not knowing precisely what I was getting into, I agreed; it sounded like fun. I arrived just in time to watch him at work. From my vantage point on the side of a gigantic stage, I saw a stadium full of 50,000 screaming fans. That was the moment I realized that my friend Lenny (Kravitz) was a famous rock star! During my two-week journey with them, everyone got a piercing at his urging: all the members of his band, his bus driver, sound engineer, motorcycle mechanic, and others in his entourage. He is a huge fan and I have performed many piercings on him. After I pierced his nipples, which he clearly enjoyed, Lenny Kravitz announced, "I wish I had ten nipples so I could have you pierce all of them."

What's the history of your last name?

Because of the large angel wings I have tattooed on my back, many people had taken to calling me "Angel." Eventually I started to use the name myself because it was easy for people to remember after they saw my tattoo.

Do you have any unusual or special family traditions?

My mom loves to give multiple birthday cards. This year she gave me one that made me laugh so hard it almost brought tears to my eyes.

Cover image: a punk-rocker gal with tattoos, piercings, and a spiked Mohawk.

Her dialogue bubble: "Know how to tell you're getting older?"

Inside: "Your nipple rings clang against your belt buckle. Happy Birthday."

Any unusual hobbies?

In my first career, I was as a sign language interpreter at a university. It always surprises deaf people when they find I can communicate with them so well—particularly when they remark on my appearance before becoming aware that I can understand what they're signing.

What do you like to make by hand?

I love to crochet—especially in public. It utterly confuses people to see a heavily tattooed and pierced woman engaged in such a grandma-type craft. I once crocheted a round queen-size bedspread that was a stunning replica of a large pizza.

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Introduction: Piercing 101

Whether it fascinates or repels, there is something captivating about hard metal worn through tender flesh.

Piercing is thrilling. Literally. The word thrill originates from the Middle English word *thrilten*, "To perforate by a pointed instrument. Hence, to cause a shivering, throbbing, tingling, or exquisite sensation; to pierce; to penetrate."¹ By that account, piercing sounds quite exciting. And so it is! Body piercing is among the most ancient and the most contemporary of practices for ornamenting and customizing the human form.

The Art of Modern Body Piercing

In recent times, body piercing has exploded as a form of personal expression nearly anyone may use to enhance their appearance, self-image, and quality of life. The phenomenon is so pervasive that housewives, police officers, and schoolteachers wear tongue, navel, nipple, and other piercings (although you might never know if they don't tell you). Millions of people are already pierced, and countless more are considering body piercings or have pierced family members, students, or patients. Nowadays, piercing involves much more than a ring through an earlobe. Wherever there is a natural fold or flap of skin, there is a piercing waiting to happen. Multiple piercings all over the body are pervasive, and people are taking the art to an extreme never seen before.

The practice of body piercing is part of a group of activities that include tattooing, scarification, branding, and other body art. These practices are often grouped under the term body modification. The number of possible placements on the body; the array of jewelry styles, sizes, and materials; and the necessary aftercare all distinguish piercing from other types of body modification. Piercing breaks the protective barrier of the skin and leaves a foreign object in the body, so there are risks of infection and other potential dangers. If every aspect is not handled appropriately, complications are more likely.

The rise in the popularity of body piercing has resulted in a proliferation of piercers and jewelry. Some of the products and services are good, but unfortunately many are of very poor quality. Piercing establishments range from inexpensive jewelry kiosks at shopping malls to high-end specialty studios staffed with professional piercers, the latest equipment, and top-quality jewelry. There is a big difference between them! Choosing the right piercer and jewelry dramatically increases your chances for uneventful healing. The relative newness of professional body piercing--it has been widely practiced only since the 1990s--has many ramifications for consumers. There are still no standardized regulations, piercer training, or competency requirements in the United States. At most, local laws mandate hygiene requirements or restrict the piercing of minors. In many cities, however, even these simple regulations do not exist; in others, local laws are not enforced.

The art of body piercing is still evolving, and its practitioners continue to experiment with its limits and possibilities. Debates persist among professional piercers themselves about basic aspects of the craft, such as the use of tools and regimens for aftercare. The information in this book is intended to distill the most sensible piercing advice available. By educating yourself, you can get a great first--or twentieth--piercing or find the information you need to deal with a bungled job.

How to Use This Book

The Piercing Bible is primarily directed toward piercees, but it also contains a wealth of information for the parents of children who want to get pierced or are already pierced, teachers who work with pierced students, health-care professionals who deal with pierced patients (whether treating problem piercings or performing unrelated medical procedures), and piercers who want an authoritative reference work or an educational tool for clients.

Part 1 touches on the ancient and modern history of this art form and contains general information about who

is getting pierced and what commonly motivates them. The novice piercee should carefully read parts 2 and 3, which provide a rundown on everything that should be taken into consideration when making a decision to get pierced. Part 4 describes each of the most common piercings in detail. Piercees can use it as a reference, and piercers will also find pointers here. This part includes information about jewelry sizes, styles, and piercing placements as well as the techniques I normally use to perform each piercing. Next, part 5 describes basic and alternative aftercare and provides information on troubleshooting healing complications. Part 6 explains the maintenance of healed piercings, describes special situations encountered when living with piercings, and explores advanced practices for healed piercings, including stretching. Finally, part 7 takes a look at the future of body piercing and includes a section on becoming a piercer.

The appendices include "A Piercee's Bill of Rights," a chart of minimum healing times for popular piercings, and a chart for jewelry size conversions (gauge and millimeter). There's also a handy fill-in chart to help you to keep track of your own piercings and jewelry, and a glossary of piercing-related terms.

Why This Book?

Piercing can be dangerous, and it is far more complicated than most people realize. The hazards range from tearing, scarring, migration, and rejection to localized bacterial infections and, though rare, serious infections. Consumers need facts about the risks, choices, and best practices involved. People who interact with piercees also need to be informed about various aspects of piercing. Many myths have persisted, even in academic and medical literature; they are finally dispelled here, too.

Body piercings are often associated with tattoos, and they are frequently performed in the same establishments. However, tattoos are comparatively straightforward; healing is rapid, and there are seldom complications. The same is not true of body piercings. Piercings require special attention during a prolonged period of healing plus regular maintenance once they are healed. There is a baffling array of options for where to pierce, what jewelry to put in the perforation, and how to care for the wound. Many people get the bulk of their "facts" about piercing from the Internet; unfortunately, the Web can be unreliable, offering contradictory information from questionable sources. Countless piercees have experienced needless pain, healing problems, and undesirable outcomes from a lack of sound information.

Will your pierced body part turn green and fall off if you don't follow every rule and guideline in the book? Probably not, but by educating yourself and being conscientious, you will have a much greater chance of having a healthy piercing that heals well, gives you a minimum of trouble, and provides the greatest enjoyment. Admittedly, not every piercee who fails to adhere to sound practices has a terrible catastrophe--but some of them do. This book takes a cautionary tone because the risks are real.

Disclaimers and Sound Advice

The Piercing Bible is deliberately limited in scope to provide detailed, useful information about the most common body piercings. Related subjects such as "play" (temporary) piercings, implants, and suspensions, which are all part of the broader piercing scene, will be touched on only in passing. Tattoos and more extreme forms of body modification, such as scarification, branding, tongue splitting, and so on, will not be addressed.

This book is *not* an instructional manual on how to perform body piercings on yourself or others. Visit a competent professional piercer for all permanent piercings. If you are interested in becoming a piercer, I urge you to seek out appropriate training under the guidance of an experienced mentor before attempting to do any piercings.

Some piercers exercise poor judgment and lack ethics, so you must maintain your own: never request that a piercing be performed on an animal, anyone who is intoxicated, or any other unsuitable candidate. Read more about the ethics of piercing in "Infant and Child Ear Piercing," page 251.

The Piercing Bible does not cover every possible situation, but it deals with all the areas I'm most frequently asked about. Popular terminology and names for piercings vary by region and change over time. The modern piercing industry is a new and growing field: changes are fast, frequent, and sometimes drastic. I can only present information that is current at the time of publication.

Substantive research studies, statistical analyses, and other definitive resource materials related to modern piercing are in short supply; therefore, the information, practices, and procedures described in this book are largely based on my own extensive, clinical experience. I've integrated industry standards where they exist, but there is still precious little that is truly standard, so my opinions are a primary component of many chapters.

There are few absolutes when it comes to body piercing since each individual is unique. For the sake of accuracy, words such as "frequently," "commonly," "generally," and so on are used throughout.

Finally, and importantly, I am a professional in the field of piercing, not medicine; this book is not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. There is no substitute for a hands-on consultation with an experienced piercer or, when needed, the counsel of a health-care provider. This book is intended to support--not replace--the relationships that exist between piercee and piercer or doctor.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Betty Castaneda:

Nowadays reading books are more than want or need but also get a life style. This reading addiction give you lot of advantages. Advantages you got of course the knowledge the rest of the information inside the book this improve your knowledge and information. The data you get based on what kind of e-book you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with training books but if you want feel happy read one having theme for entertaining including comic or novel. The particular *The Piercing Bible: The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing* is kind of book which is giving the reader erratic experience.

Herman Lewis:

This *The Piercing Bible: The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing* is great e-book for you because the content which can be full of information for you who also always deal with world and get to make decision every minute. This book reveal it details accurately using great coordinate word or we can state no rambling sentences inside. So if you are read the item hurriedly you can have whole details in it. Doesn't mean it only will give you straight forward sentences but hard core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having *The Piercing Bible: The Definitive Guide to Safe Body Piercing* in your hand like keeping the world in your arm, details in it is not ridiculous 1. We can say that no publication that offer you world inside ten or fifteen small right but this publication already do that. So , this is certainly good reading book. Hey Mr. and Mrs. busy do you still doubt that?

James Newman:

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Roger Hodge:

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