

Face painting and body painting can be traced back to the indigenous people of Australia and Africa. Since then, it has been considered to serve many purposes. From part of religious or cultural practices to as functional paint like camouflaging military personnel or sports paint. It has also served as a form of art or artistic expression.

But in the recent decade, the face painting activity has grown to be popular as a form of entertainment, be it for Birthdays, Halloween parties, or in a Fundraising Event. Not only children, but the grown-ups enjoy this fun activity too.



1. Health and Safety at Work

If you are undertaking face painting as part of a work activity, i.e. taking payments, then health and safety law applies to you. You should use this guidance to help you complete [your risk assessments](#). If you are face painting for 'fun' you can still use this guidance as best practice.

2. Employers & Public liability Insurance.

It is essential that face painters have their own public liability insurance or that they are covered by the policy of the company or organisation they are working for. Many insurers require a certificate to show they have undergone some training in face painting and the related health and hygiene in order to be covered or that they have attained a certain standard of work. This is not usually asked for until a claim is made and cannot be retrospectively attained. Check with the insurer on what and who is covered. If you are an employer you will need to have [employer liability insurance](#) to cover your employees.

3. Painters should have basic training and experience

Painters should ideally have had basic health and safety training or attended "jams" with other painters to be able to work to best practice standards. In order to join FACE ([The Face Painting Association](#)), painters must pass a certification test and this looks at their practice, standard of painting and conduct with their models.

4. Paints and glitter

Paints, crayons, inks and glitters and other cosmetic preparations must be safe and specifically designed for use on human skin. Always use cosmetically approved professional paints and products which are EU and FDA (Food and Drug Administration) compliant. Only use glitters which are cosmetically approved and cut (polymer glitters) - craft and art glitters are cut differently, are sharper and can seriously damage sight if they get into the eyes.

"Non-toxic" on the labels does not necessarily mean the product is safe to use on skin. Some people are allergic to approved chemicals and colourants used in craft paints and other stationery products.

Beware of purchasing cheaper products from outside of the UK & EU, as they may not be safe.

5. Cleaning and disinfecting sponges, brushes, pens and other tools.

Whenever you touch a persons skin you are going to collect bacteria, viruses, moulds etc on that tool. If you use that tool on another person you will spread those bacteria, viruses, moulds etc to that others persons skin, and it may cause an infection or disease.

- Single-use disposable colour applicators, for example cotton swabs and sponges are strongly recommended. *(If re-using sponges, they should be stored in a separate bag whilst working so as not to risk using the same sponge twice. Sponges should be washed in a net bag in a hot wash at least 60 C degrees)*
- Reusable paint brushes should be washed thoroughly in warm water and soap and soaked in 70 per cent isopropyl alcohol for at least 2 minutes, then left to dry. Brushes should be cleaned after every client
- The water used to clean brushes should be changed after each client.
- The tips of the face painting pens and markers should be wiped with a 70 per cent isopropyl alcohol swab after each use.
- Eye and lip pencils must be resharpened after each use, and the sharpener cleaned regularly.
- Reusable stencils should be made from non-porous, cleanable materials. Wipe down reusable stencils with 70 per cent isopropyl alcohol after each use.
- Use disposable paper towels.

6. Artist and client hygiene

- Artist's must [wash hands](#) before each face or body painting session.
- Disposable hand wipes and hand sanitiser can be used as an alternative to hand washing between clients.
- Careful attention should be paid when painting around the eye area, especially on very young children and those unable to keep still.
- Ensure the body parts to be painted is clean. Ask parents to clean children's mouths etc with a wet wipe prior to painting.
- Single-use elastic bands can be used to manage long hair.

7. You must not paint:

- Children under 3.** Often they cannot themselves consent to being painted and can become distressed by the feeling of paint, young children cannot sit still for long periods (so you may poke them in the eye if they move suddenly). Their skin is not mature enough to deal with cosmetics and in some cases this can lead to a lifetime tendency to break out in contact dermatitis. Often insurances companies will not insure you to paint young children, something you check with your insurer.
- If the client has obvious skin conditions,** such as acne, dermatitis, eczema or other skin as there is a risk of infection, or the condition may be further exacerbated. If the client has dirty

skin, has breaks in the skin (e.g. scratches) and that they do not have contagious infections such as conjunctivitis, cold sores, cold or flu, chicken pox etc

- c. **Children that are distressed.** Ask them to come back when the child has calmed down.
- d. **Anyone, especially children, that have had allergic reactions to body paints in the past.**

8. Know what to do if there is an allergic reaction

Some individuals are allergic to even the most pure and nontoxic colours.

If your client shows any signs of an allergic reaction during the painting session stop the session immediately and seek medical advice.

Always call 999 in an emergency (shortness of breath or unconsciousness) or 111 for mild reactions.

Signs of an allergic reaction can include:

- Paleness
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty in breathing
- Undue swelling and puffiness around the eyes.
- Redness, itchiness and raised areas of the skin, where the paint made contact with he skin.

Other symptoms may also appear.

Further information

10 Health and safety essentials for all businesses	www.lancaster.gov.uk/HSessentials
Safety in the Leisure sector	www.lancaster.gov.uk/hs-leisure
HSE Risk Assessments	www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk
FACE – (Face Painting Association)	www.facepaintingassociation.com
For advice, or to make a complaint about a business, contact the Council on-line	www.lancaster.gov.uk/healthandsafety