



Carnkie Camera Club

Carnkie Institute, Carnkie, Redruth, Cornwall. TR16 6RZ

A Guide for Models

Modelling can be enjoyable. Modelling can be hard work. Modelling can be a career, a money-making side-line or it can be just a bit of fun.

Anyone can be a model. There are no specific requirements. Certain clients will of course have their own requirements, however. Fashion shoots for example typically specify specific gender, age, height, and measurement criteria. One of the most valuable assets a model can have is the ability to organise themselves and to reliably turn up to photoshoots on time and fully prepared. Modelling can be physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing.

It is important to develop a thick skin to protect yourself from the rejection you will face. You will hear the word 'no' more often than 'yes'. Try not to take the rejections personally. They will happen. Anyone hiring models for shoots and castings may well have specific needs, and you may not fit the brief.

Modelling doesn't mean being tall and thin with perfect posture. It means identifying and playing to your own strengths, looking for the type of work that's right for you. Some models specialise in specific genres, such as fashion, fitness, catalogue, lingerie, etc. In recent years, there has been a move towards more 'normally sized' and plus-sized models along with growth in 'alternative models' like tattooed/pierced, steampunk, gothic, etc.

Whatever your reason for thinking about modelling there is one thing you should always remember. Your safety and wellbeing is paramount. While most people you will meet will be genuine, there is always going to be one or two bad apples. Being a model often involves working in close proximity with photographers, MUAs, stylists etc, sometimes in studios, private homes and remote locations which can make you more vulnerable and while I don't want to scare you or put you off, then safety has to be a major consideration

Name and social media Etc.

There are some odd people around. My advice is NEVER to use your own name for modelling. Even if you have no intention of modelling except for a bit of fun, personal pleasure, or as a confidence booster. It's worth having a modelling name (stage name or alias if you prefer), so you can separate your modelling life from everything else.

On that note it's also worth having social media accounts for your modelling that use your model name and allows you to keep your personal life and modelling separate. You may have friends and family from who you don't want to interact with your modelling life and you may have people who follow you as a model that you would rather keep out of your personal life.

It's worth spending a while thinking about your model name. You don't want to be changing it and the name of your social media accounts on a regular basis as that will make it difficult for people to tag and follow you.

Be consistent and use the same model name on all of your social media, Facebook, Instagram, Tic Tok, Twitter etc. Having your own web site is a consideration. Of course, it goes without saying never publish your real name, address or phone number on your social media or web sites etc.

Fees and Charges

Whether you can expect to be paid or not will depend on a number of circumstances. The vast majority of models make little or no money for their work. If you're lucky then as a model you might make a little money occasionally from paid commercial shoots, and commissions from hobbyist photographers, camera clubs, photography tutors and such like. Very few models ever make enough money on a regular basis for it to be a sustainable source of income.

Many experienced photographers normally expect to be paid by the model for providing you with quality images for your portfolio. Generally speaking, who pays who will depend on who is the most experienced and what they are contributing to the shoot.

Some photographers will offer TFP shoots (Time For Portfolio, sometimes just called TF or Trade), which is a mutual agreement in which both the photographer and model will work without fees in exchange for images to be used by both photographer and model. Such a mutually beneficial agreement is very common and allows both to build up a body of work while keeping costs down.

If you are asked to do a commercial shoot, one for which the photographer is being paid and/or the images will be used to promote a product, service or business, then you have a right to expect payment. Be very wary of being exploited and being pressured into accepting 'exposure' in return for a commercial shoot, 'exposure' does not pay the bills. If someone is making money out of a shoot, then you should be paid.

One of the most frequently asked questions is 'How much should I charge?' It's really a matter of what people are prepared to pay you. There is no set scale, good models are worth more, average models are worth less, most models won't get paid at all. Expect more from commercial shoots than from hobbyist photographers. It's also sad, but true, that the more flesh you are prepared to expose, the more you can expect to be paid (see levels).

Levels

It's important that as a model you understand the different categories of work you may be asked to take part in. These are generally known as 'levels'. Unfortunately, there is no single definition of the different levels, but a typical breakdown might be:

- 1. Portrait** – Fully clothed portrait-style shots.
- 2. Fashion** – Fully clothed. Age appropriate, (some outfits can be revealing),
- 3. Lingerie/Swimwear** – some swimwear/lingerie may be see-through or revealing.
- 4. Implied (Topless)** - You may be topless but nothing on show in the resulting images
- 5. Sheer** – clothing may be tight fitting and/or semi-transparent and revealing
- 6. Implied (Nude)** – You may nude but nothing on show in the resulting images
- 7. Topless** – You may be naked from the waist upward.
- 8. Nude/Art Nude** – You may be fully naked.

Be clear which level you are prepared to work to. It is natural that you may feel more relaxed with some photographers than others and are prepared to work at higher levels with them than with others. While it's not unreasonable for a photographer to ask if you are prepared to work to a particular level, they should not pressure you to do something that you are not comfortable with. If they persist, then walk away.

If the model is under 18 then levels are limited to 'Age-Appropriate Fashion'. In essence that means that models will always be fully clothed. Outfits will not be revealing, and poses will not be sensual or provocative. Lingerie and boudoir style shoots are generally not permitted. Swimwear is somewhat a grey area and if done must be managed in sensitive age-appropriate way.

Take a chaperone on the shoot with you if you can, (if you're under 18 it's a requirement), especially when shooting with a new someone new. Always let someone else know where you are and that you have arrived safely and also that you have departed safely. Maybe get them to contact you at some point during the shoot to check that all is well. If you have any doubts, then DON'T SHOOT.

Building a Portfolio

To show your experience, suitability, and versatility you are going to need a quality Portfolio. Normally you should consider both a printed and digital portfolio of professional quality images. Models need an impressive portfolio represent themselves and distinguish them from others.

Potential clients will normally expect to see a simple image of you with little or minimal make-up with natural or flat lighting with a very basic outfit and minimal accessories. A full length shot and a closer shot of your face are useful along with brief 'details sheet' that lists your name, height, measurements, hair and eye colour and other personal details so you should have these available. A brief bio, (no more than 4 or 5 paragraphs on an A4 page), is also worth having. Some clients and magazines may ask for this and it's a lot easier if you have one already prepared.

Potential clients usually want to see versatility and flexibility in models. This is especially true if you're just starting out and don't yet have a strong signature style. It's important that you include quality images from experienced photographers in your portfolio, not a few 'snaps' that auntie Karen has taken on her iPad.

Include a mix of images in your portfolio. This means photos that vary in style and artistic vision, as well as shots that show off different angles and takes on your features. Be ruthless and limit the number of images in your portfolio and as you do more shoots keep your portfolio up-to-date.

For your printed portfolio, then you can get presentation folders with clear plastic pockets which are ideal. Have your photographer provide you with prints, or digital copies that you can have printed at the required size and you can insert them into the pockets and swap them out and replace them as you do more shoots. You can also get 'Photobooks printed by many commercial printers which look very professional, but you'll need to have the whole book reprinted to swap out any images which can get expensive.

For your digital portfolio then that can be done at little or no cost. You can use social media such as Facebook and Instagram, specialist sites such as PurplePort and you can create your own web site. You can easily make a free portfolio yourself using a website builder like Wix. Wix's tools make it easy to set up an eye-catching online presence that has the potential to boost your modelling career.

Social Media Groups

There are some very good social media groups which aim to bring photographers, models, MUAs and stylists together. Some of these are nationally based, some operate in specific areas of the country. Some of these are of course better than others. The better ones are moderated and actively vet members. Some offer mentoring, social group gatherings and organised group shoots. It's probably a good idea to join some of these (using your model account and model name rather than your real name of course). Maybe join and just watch the group for a while without posting or commenting until you're sure it's a group that suits you. When you're ready you can then respond to 'casting calls' or contact photographer's whose work you like.

Specialist Sites

There are also specialist internet sites that exist to bring models and photographers together. Probably the best known of these is PurplePort but others such as Model Mayhem also exist. While these sites will require you to use your real name to sign up, your real details can be hidden from other users. These sites offer a basic account for free, which to be perfectly honest is all that most models (and photographers and other creatives), would ever need. If you want an account with the ability to post more images etc then there is a small annual fee. These sites offer some potentially useful features such as the ability to create and respond to casting calls, take and manage bookings and the ability to read and submit references. In the past vetting of members on such sites has been patchy so again caution is the best policy.

Promotion/Influencer Invitations

Once you have an active social media presence, and especially if you get published in magazines and the like, you may well get unsolicited offers to promote some products. Typically these companies offer to send you make-up, jewellery, T shirts, lingerie etc in exchange for you including such items in a photoshoot and sending them copies of the images or crediting/tagging them when you share the images. Some of these may be scams beware any that want a payment of ANY sort. A lot are however genuine. It's actually a very good way for companies to promote their goods without costly marketing overheads, they send you a few items and in return you send them a few images. As with all things check them out and do your research. Check what the conditions are, if the items are yours to keep etc. before committing to anything. You are very unlikely to make any money by including promoted items in your images, but you can get a few bits and pieces for 'free'. More importantly maybe, is that promotion of your images by the company will drive more traffic to your social media and raise your profile. It is important to make sure your photographer is aware of any arrangements to include promotional items in your images and they are happy with that and so can make sure they ensure the items are prominent in some images.

Model Agencies

It's worth considering signing with a reputable model agency in the medium term. Legitimate model agencies can put paid work your way and help you manage your modelling career. Modelling agencies have had quite a bad press in recent years, and rightly so as many were nothing more than scams. Be very suspicious of any model agencies who contact you. Reputable agencies will normally require that you contact them. Do your research via Google and social media and ask other models and seek recommendations on social media.

It's actually illegal now in the UK for Modelling Agencies to ask for money from you 'up front' so if your asked to pay a signing-on fee then walk away, agencies make their money by getting work for you and taking a cut of your fee, normally directly from the client.

Some less than reputable agencies have attempted to get around the law by asking models to attend a 'free' photoshoot or trial, then billing you for studio hire, make-up and hair, costume hire and/or charging extortionate fee for the edited images.

Some of the more professional agencies also offer 'model schools' for which a legitimate fee may be payable. These can be worthwhile but always check the price and any hidden costs – again seeking recommendations from others is very worthwhile.

Locally based Modelling agencies can often be more effective than nationally based organisations especially if you are just starting out as they are more likely to be able to find you work in your area.

Choosing a Photographer/Photographers

When it comes to choosing a photographer, it pays to take a little time doing your research. It's worth taking a look on local social media groups for Photographers and Models, take a look at some of the photographers on there. These groups tend to be self-regulating, and any dubious models and photographers usually get identified and removed quite quickly. Take a look at photographer's social media feeds and web sites and identify some whose style you like. Maybe ask other models for their recommendations before approaching a photographer.

There are some photographers who you will like and get on with and develop a good working relationship and produce some great images together. There will be other photographers you do not gel with for whatever reason. This is just the way it is. It's important though, especially when building your portfolio, that you don't limit yourself. Shooting with a range of photographers can help to produce a more diverse portfolio and different photographers will bring out different aspects of your personality. Shooting with a trusted photographer on a regular basis can also be very advantageous in many situations – My advice would be to do a bit of both.

Chaperones

Most reputable photographers will be happy for you to bring someone with you to a shoot to act as a chaperone to ensure your safety. If you are under 18 then it is a requirement that a chaperone is present at all times. There are some photographers who aren't especially keen on chaperones, this isn't necessarily a red flag, but you may want to be more cautious in such circumstances. Personally, I have no objection as they serve to ensure the safety of both model and photographer and can make useful assistants.

Contracts and Model Releases

Unless specifically stated otherwise and agreed in writing beforehand, the photographer owns the copyright to all the images taken during a shoot and is free to do with them whatever they like. In practice it is normal that the model be asked to complete a model release, where the model is under 18, then for contractual reasons the model release must be signed by a responsible adult, normally the parent or guardian of the model or someone over 18 acting as their agent. A model release formally grants the photographer the right to shoot and edit images of the model.

Do bear in mind that once photographs have been taken then the copyright holder has the right to them in perpetuity. If sometime in the future, you have a change of mind for whatever reason the copyright owner has no obligation to stop using the images. Even if the copyright owner does agree to your requests not to use the images, once images are out there on the internet it's virtually impossible to prevent their continued use.

If you are being paid for a shoot then it's quite normal for the model NOT to be given copies of the images. If you are paying the photographer, then the contract or model release may specify the number of images you can normally expect to be given to you. In the case of TFP shoots, the release will normally confirm that the photographer retains the copyright, but that you are given royalty free use of the images for non-commercial purposes.

Before the shoot

Discuss the shoot with the photographer and make sure you know what it planned, where it will take place and what make-up, clothing, hair etc are expected. Ask the photographer for samples or a mood board to get an idea of the look and style proposed and agree levels and other arrangements. Any payment details need to be established in advance who is paying who and how much, it's a TFP collaboration then details of copies of images etc need to be agreed.

At the Shoot

Appreciate that the photographer puts quite a lot into organising a shoot, they will do a lot of preparatory work, thinking about styles, poses, lighting and the like and may even have gone to the expense of hiring venues and/or making other arrangements. Its important therefore that if you agree to a shoot, you turn up at the agreed place at the agreed time, prepared to shoot. If you have to cancel or reschedule for any reason then let the photographer know as soon as you are aware of the problem.

There can be no excuse for just not turning up at a shoot. If you make a habit of cancelations or no-shows, then word of your unreliability will soon spread.

A model release should always be completed before the shoot starts. These are standard documents that establish the position of all parties involved. If you are under 18 years of age then your parent/guardian/agent must sign or countersign the agreement.

If you take a chaperone ensure that they remain with you during the shoot. The photographer may sometimes ask the chaperone to help with props or lighting or maybe to adjust your hair and clothing etc., that's fine but don't allow the chaperone to direct you or interfere in the shoot itself,

While it is permissible for photographers to clarify levels during the shoot, levels should never be 'pushed' and models never coerced into poses and situations with which they are not comfortable.

If during the shoot you become uncomfortable for any reason then make your excuses and leave.

Image sharing, Publication and Attribution

If photographers supply images to models, then unless it is specifically stated otherwise, such images may normally be shared on social media and web sites and used in the portfolios of all involved.

Models should not edit images or allow anyone else to edit them without the permission of the Photographer. Any watermarks should be retained and not edited or cropped out. When images are shared then the entire creative team, model, photographer, MUA, Stylist etc., should be credited unless they have specifically asked otherwise. This is beneficial to all involved as tagging all creatives will drive more traffic to everyone's social media and raise their profiles.

If images are to be submitted to magazines, then its normally implicit on the photographer to do this as the photographer is the copyright owner. Submitting to magazines is really not that much different from publishing on social media except those submissions to magazines are assessed, quality checked and carefully curated, they don't accept just anyone and anything. indeed, most work sent to magazines is rejected. Having your images accepted for publication is a real accomplishment. Since magazines typically have a large amount of followers publication can be a real boost your social media reach as you'll be tagged and credited so helping to get your name out there and raises your own social media profile. Unfortunately, most magazines don't pay for publication, but most will provide free tear sheets which you are free to use and share.