



# Carnkie Camera Club

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## A Photographers Guide to Working with Models

Photographing people is an important aspect of photography and If you're planning to work with models then you need to follow some basic guidelines to ensure both model and photographer get the best from the shoot.

### Finding a Model

Often the first question is where to find a suitable model. Many photographers will start by asking friends or family to model for them. This can be a good starting point as they are often readily available and are people with whom you have a known relationship and are probably comfortable working with. However the time will probably come when you want to shoot with a new model in order to obtain a certain look for your images,

### Social Media

There are many social media groups designed to bring Photographers and Models (and MUAs and Stylists), together. Some of these are local to specific areas, some are national or even international. Maybe join a few, that way you will be able to see the way the groups work, the sort of photography that appeals to you and get to see some models and their particular specialisms. Once you're ready then maybe reply to some casting calls, or place a casting call of your own. Be up front, if you're starting out with little or no experience then say so, most models will understand. Everyone has to start somewhere.

Consider setting up your own social media presence. You'll probably want to create a separate page or account for your photography to keep your personal and photographic lives separate. This will also provide a platform for you to build your own on-line presence and portfolio.

### Specialist Sites

There are some specialist sites such as PurplePort and Model Mayhem which you can join, display your work and get in touch with models and other creatives. Some sites have both free and 'premium' options, you can always start with a 'free' account and upgrade later if you want the additional features.

### Own Web Site

It may be worth investing in your own web site, but do bear in mind that to be effective you'll have to put in a bit of time keeping it up-to-date. You can get free or low cost web-sites from the likes of WIX. Registering your own domain name might be advantageous as will having an email account linked to your domain – it looks more professional than a generic Gmail or Hotmail address.

### Creating a Portfolio

To show your experience, proficiency and versatility as a photographer you are going to need a quality Portfolio. Normally you should consider both a printed and digital portfolio of professional quality images. You may want to build a number of different portfolios if you do a number of different types or styles of photography. Maybe one for commercial shoots, one for fashion, one for environmental portraits etc.

For your printed portfolio, then you can get A4 size presentation folders with clear plastic pockets which are ideal. 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 be expensive.

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## Fees and Charges

Whether you can expect to be paid or not will depend on a number of circumstances. The vast majority of photographers make little or no money for their work. If you're lucky then as a photographer you might make a little money occasionally from paid commercial shoots, and commissions etc.

Very few photographer ever make enough money on a regular basis even if they're shooting weddings, events and commercial shoots, for it to be a sustainable source of income.

As an experienced photographer you may occasionally be paid by a model to provide images for a portfolio or project. As a less experienced photographer then you might find that models expect to be paid by you. Generally speaking, who pays who will depend on who is the most experienced and what they are contributing to the shoot. One of the most frequently asked questions is 'How much should I pay or charge?' It's really a matter of what people are prepared to pay/offer. There is no set scale, good photographers like good models are worth more, average ones are worth less.

A good way to shoot without it costing a fortune is to 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 or work while keeping costs down.

If you doing commercial shoot, ie you are being paid and/or the images will be used to promote a product, service or business, then you have a right to expect payment and any models you use also have a right to be paid also. 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 and your model should be paid.

## Levels

It's important that both the photographer and model understands the different categories of work 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. **Shear** – 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.

Agree with the model before the shoot what the level will be. While it's perfectly acceptable for a photographer to ask if a model will shoot at a particular level or if they would be willing to consider increasing the level, it is not acceptable for the photographer to pressure or push the model into doing something that they are not comfortable with. It is natural that a model may feel more relaxed with some photographers than others and are prepared to work at higher levels with them, especially if they have been shooting with that photographer for a while. You must not take it personally if the model shoots at higher levels with other photographers than with you, especially if you have not established a working relationship. The overriding principle here is the one of consent ensuring that if you agree to do a fashion-based shoot, you won't be insisting a model to remove clothing, or asking them to get into positions which are not in line with what was originally agreed with in the shoot

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

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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 and with the chaperones consent.

Its partly a matter of following legal and safeguarding rules, partly basic respect for the model and partly to avoid being labelled as a GWC (Guy with a Camera). A GWC is a derogatory term for someone who has a camera but isn't really a photographer, rather they are a creep who uses the camera as an excuse to exploit models to see a bit of skin.

## 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 and it's something publishers may ask for safeguarding purposes. 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.

Once images have been taken then you as photographer have the right to use them in perpetuity. The model has no legal right to withdraw consent. The model may of course ask you to stop using an image or set of images, but you have no obligation to comply – though many photographers will in order to foster good relations with models. Even you agree to a models' request not to use the images anymore, once images are out there on the internet it's virtually impossible to prevent their continued circulation.

If you are paying a model for a shoot then it's quite common for the model not to be given copies of the images. If the model is paying you as a photographer, then the contract or model release may specify the number of images you can normally expect. In the case of TFP shoots, the release will normally confirm that the photographer retains the copyright, but that the model is free to use copies of the edited images for their own use but restrict commercial use and re-editing.

## Choosing a model

Once you have placed a casting call you may need to choose which model who has expressed an interest in working with you will be the best to work with for the particular shoot you have in mind.

By all means ask about what experience the model has and maybe ask to see some sample images of their previous work with other photographers but keep to the point. Don't ask personal questions or ask about their personal life. Your conversation should relate directly to the photoshoot.

If after discussing the shoot with the model they agree to the shoot then great. If you decided that they don't rely suit your shoot then explain this to them as gently as possible Be courteous as all times and reply to everyone who has taken the time to contact you. It's important to be courteous and polite as you many want to work with the 'rejected' models on a future shoot.

If a model doesn't want to work with you, or isn't available for a shoot, don't take it personally or take offence. There may be a whole myriad of reasons you don't know about for why they don't want to do the shoot, or arrange a shoot with you.

As you become more experienced shooting with a wide range of models can be advantageous. Both you and the models can get a range of photos in different styles and different levels that improve your range and versatility as photographer.

There is also a lot to be said for using the same model of a frequent basis. You can develop a close working relationship with each other and know how each other thinks shoots become a true symbiosis of the model and photographers' talents.

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## Before the shoot

Discuss the shoot with the model and make sure the model knows what it planned, where it will take place and what make-up, clothing, hair etc are expected. For all but casual shoots it's a good idea to provide some reference shots or a mood-board. The idea is not to copy the samples but rather to give the model an idea of the look and style that you're working towards and to agree the concept, levels and other arrangements. Any payment details need to be established in advance who is paying who and how much, if it's a TFP collaboration then details of copies of images etc need to be agreed.

It's normally a good idea to allow the model to bring a chaperone to a shoot if they wish. If the model is under 18 years of age, then it's a requirement. Some photographers don't encourage chaperones as they feel they can distract the model and interfere with the shoot, but I think any reservations are trumped by the need to safeguard. The chaperone must remain with the model during the shoot.

You can ask the chaperone to help with props or lighting or maybe to adjust the model's hair and clothing etc., that's fine but don't allow them to direct the model or interfere in the shoot itself.

## At the Shoot

Appreciate that the model puts quite a lot of preparation into a shoot, they will do a lot of preparatory work, thinking about clothing, make-up and hair. They may have to arrange child-care. Transport etc is 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 model know as soon as you are aware of the problem.

Some shoots may of course be dependant on the weather, if so you will need to liaise closely with the model and be prepared to reschedule. There can be no excuse for just not turning up at a shoot or cancelling for dubious reasons at short notice.

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

Chat with the model. It's advantageous to talk to the model and develop a professional rapport. This will relax both model and photographer which will result in better images. You'll probably find that the first 1/2hr or more results a very few usable images, don't panic, as you build your professional relationship with the model and you both relax and get into the shoot your hit rate will improve.

As you work with the model, then compliment them, just a few words will do such as 'beautiful', 'that's great', 'amazing' etc. goes a long way. Maybe let them glance at a few images on the rear of your camera. All this helps to build confidence and a trust between photographer and model. Chat as you shoot and in between poses. Maybe ask them questions about what they enjoy about modelling, if they have done any shoots lately with any other photographers, and what sort of shoots they enjoy most. Not only does it build a relationship but you can also find out a lot about the local photography scene. Take care though and avoid personal questions and never make negative comments about others.

As a shoot develops it is permissible for the photographer to clarify levels during the shoot, but as stated elsewhere levels should never be 'pushed' and models never coerced into poses and situations with which they are not comfortable.

Direct the model as you shoot, you can do a lot by waving your hand around! if you're having a trouble trying to explain a pose then do the pose you want yourself and then get the model to mimic you. Not only does this work well, but also will probably elicit a laugh or two which eases the pressure.

It's a good idea to have some reference images available too that you can show to the model to explain the pose and the look or effect you are looking to achieve.

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It should not normally be necessary for you to touch the model. Touching the model intrudes on their personal space and can cross boundaries. Very occasionally it may be simpler and easier for someone other than the model to remove a piece of straw from her back or re-arrange the hair. If the model has brought a chaperone, then you could ask them to do it for you. If you do need to do it yourself, then let the model know what you want to do and get their permission. So maybe say, "Sorry, there is a piece of straw in your hair, do you mind if I remove it?" and wait until there is a clear "Yes" before doing so.

Sometimes, a shoot may involve a change of outfit by the model. This should be discussed with the model prior to the shoot. Where possible you should ensure the model has privacy to do that. In a studio situation that could be done in a separate room. For outside shoots a portable changing tent or the back of a car or van is a possibility. Sometimes when shooting in the middle of nowhere it's not always possible in which case find a private secluded spot for the model and leave and protect the scene until given the OK.

The welfare and safety of your model should be paramount throughout the shoot. This is especially relevant for shoots that happen outside of the studio. While doing a risk assessment for each shoot is probably over the top, you and your model need to be aware of risks and minimise them. There may be dangers inherent in posing the model in water or in the sea, climbing over slippery rocks, or posing by cliff edges etc. There may also be risks to your equipment in such situations. Use your common sense.

### Image sharing, Publication and Attribution

If you 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 be made aware that images provided to them must not be edited without the permission of the photographer. 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 or other publications, then it's 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 to your social media reach as you'll be tagged and credited so helping to get your name out there and raise your own social media profile. Unfortunately, most publications don't pay for publication, but most will provide free tear sheets which you can use and share.

### Insurance considerations

If you're going to start shooting with models on a serious basis, then it would be worth looking at your insurance needs. If you start to get paid for shoots then you are technically shooting professionally so any insurance you may have for your equipment through a household insurance policy will probably become void. If you want to insure your photographic equipment for loss and damage, then a professional equipment policy may be worth investigating. While you're at it you might also want to take out public liability insurance. Brokers such as Simply Business and Policy Bee will be able to provide competitive quotes.