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GET OUT THERE AND TAKE SOME DAMN PHOTOS!
SELFHELPHOTOGRAPHER.COM

Finding And Working With A Model



Part 1: Finding A Model	3
<i>Your Friends and Family Network</i>	3
<i>Facebook Groups</i>	4
<i>Google</i>	4
<i>Attend Photography and Modeling Events</i>	5
<i>Share Your Work</i>	5
<i>Be Patient</i>	5
Part 2: Contacting Models To Schedule A Shoot	6
<i>Preparation and Sample Message</i>	6
<i>After Sending The Message: No Response/Rejection</i>	7
<i>After Sending The Message: They Want To Work With You</i>	7
Part 3: Preparing For The Shoot	8
<i>Details That Need To Be Confirmed</i>	8
<i>Preparing Your Gear For The Shoot</i>	8
<i>Mentally Preparing For The Shoot</i>	9
Conclusion	11

Part 1: Finding A Model

Have you ever thought, “I’d love to start working with a model”, only to follow that thought immediately with, “How the heck do I even find a model to work with?”

I know that feeling because I’ve been there! When I first wanted to start working with models I had NO idea where to start, what to do or even where to look.

Luckily with persistence and patience I figured it out, but I don’t want you to have to go through the same frustrations I went through, which is why I created this guide for you.

So, let’s get to it! Starting with...

Your Friends and Family Network

Your first and most immediate resource is your friends and family network. It’s entirely likely that someone you know is interested in modeling, or that someone you know, knows someone that is interested in modeling.

The easiest way to get started here is to post to your social networks that you’re looking for a model or someone who is interested in modeling to collaborate with on some photography projects.

Post to any or all of your networks of choice. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, wherever your friends and family are, post there.

And example post might read something like this:

“Friends and Family! I’m working on some new photography projects and I’m looking for a model to collaborate with.

I’ve never worked with a model before, so this will be a learning experience for me, and I’m interested in working with anybody who has modeled before or is interested in modeling.

If you’re interested send me a DM or leave a comment.”

From there you’re pretty much guaranteed to get some kind of response, and with a little patience and communication, this may be all you need to get started.

But reaching out to your friends and family is really just the starting point, which brings us to the next step

Facebook Groups

Regardless of your success finding a model by reaching out to friends and family, you should absolutely join some model and photographer Facebook groups.

These groups are a great way to start networking with models, and other people in the industry, including other photographers, hair and make up artists, and clothing designers to name a few.

These groups are also a great way to learn about photography events that you can attend, which will definitely further your chances and meeting other models that you can start working with.

Finding groups in your region will require a little searching on Facebook, and the easiest way to get started is just to do a search for “*Your State Models and Photographers*” or “*Your City Models and Photographers*”

That should bring up any groups that are local to your state and or city. In addition to searching, below are some links for groups to help you get started.

[United States Models and Photographers](#)

[Midwest Model and Photographer Talent](#)

[Professional Models and Photographers](#)

[Models, Photographers, Agencies, and all Fashion Creatives Connect!](#)

Google

While Facebook searching for groups is hugely important, do not forget that Google is your friend!

With some persistent Google searching you should be able to find some local models, photographers and events to help get you connected with your local network of models, photographers and industry professionals.

Some example searches to help you get started:

Your State Models

Your City Models

Your State Photography Events

Your City Photography Events

Your State Fashion Photographer

Your City Fashion Photographer

Attend Photography and Modeling Events

As a member of industry Facebook groups, and with your industrious searching, you should be learning about photography and modeling events that you can attend. It's important to go, even if you have to invest some money in registration fees!

These events are huge opportunities in two ways.

First, in some cases the events are specifically for you to be able to work with and shoot with models! What more could you ask for?

Second, these events, are opportunities to network. Even if they are not specifically for working with models, attending these events and networking with people will lead to connections that will bear fruit in one way or another. The more connected you are, the more likely you are to find the kind of people you want to work with.

Share Your Work

Finally, you have to put your work out there. The more you share your work, the more people will see it, and after awhile, you'll find models are seeking you out because they were impressed by your work and they want to shoot with you!

So put your work out there on your networks of choice. Whether it's Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Twitter, or some other network, put it out there.

And don't get discouraged if you're not getting likes or shares or hearts or whatever. People are seeing it, and that's what matters!

Be Patient

Finally, it's important to be patient. It will take time for you to build your network, and to build your skills. If you use these resources, and you are genuine and honest in your dealings with people, you will find and build success in your efforts!

Part 2: Contacting Models To Schedule A Shoot

Preparation and Sample Message

1. Have a concept/idea ready for the shoot
 1. Along with this, have an image or two (or a Pinterest board) that you can share in the message you send
2. Look at the models you want to work with and their portfolios
 1. Ask yourself: Which model(s) are right for the concept?
 2. Look at:
 1. Their look
 2. The emotion they can bring
 3. Their expressiveness
 4. Their posing style
 3. Ask yourself: Does the concept align with the work in their portfolio?
 1. But don't pigeonhole.
 2. Have a backup concept in case your original doesn't work for the model.
 4. Draft your message.
 1. Be honest about your skill and experience
 2. Share what prompted you to want to work with the model
 3. Explain your concept for the shoot
 4. Include a photo or the link to help the model visualize the concept
 5. Explain the goal of the shoot (learn lighting, practice working with a model, build your portfolio, etc..)
 6. Share a link to your work (even if it's not work with a model)
 7. Keep the message as short as possible.

Sample Message

Hi! My name is Spyros, I'm a photographer and I've seen some of your work. I really love the boudoir work you did with Colleen Bies.

I was wondering if you'd be interested in collaborating on a concept I'm working on. I'm new to working with models and am looking to build my portfolio.

The concept is a fire themed shoot using Tulle fabric. Attached is a photo I'm using as inspiration for the shoot.

I look forward to hearing from you!
Spyros

After Sending The Message: No Response/Rejection

1. First possibility: No Response
 1. Don't take it personally. It's not a big deal
 2. Don't make any assumptions. You have no idea what's going on in their life
 3. Don't wait around, reach out to other models.
2. Second possibility: Rejection
 1. Don't take it personally, again, it's not a big deal.
 2. Politely thank them and move on.

Sample Message

Thank you for getting back to me. I appreciate you letting me know, and if there's ever a concept in the future that you thing I'd be a good fit for, I'd be open to collaborating in the future.

Thanks!
Spyros

After Sending The Message: They Want To Work With You

1. Keep the communication open and strong
2. Continue to be respectful
3. Remember that it's a collaboration, and be prepared to have a fun and successful shoot!

Part 3: Preparing For The Shoot

Details That Need To Be Confirmed

Location

Are you shooting on location, or in studio. If you are shooting on location, do you need permission from the owner, or any permits to shoot?

Wardrobe & Props

Based on your messaging you should already have a concept worked out with the model, but you will want to work with the model to discuss the wardrobe for the shoot and to coordinate any props you might need.

Hair & Makeup

Is the model doing his/her own hair and makeup? This is often the case, but not always, and it is something you definitely want to talk about and confirm.

If the model is not, then you need to coordinate with a hair and/or makeup artist and schedule time for hair and makeup before the shoot.

Preparing Your Gear For The Shoot

Shooting in Studio

This is easier, because if you are in your own studio, all of your gear should already be there. However you'll still want to check everything and do any studio cleanup necessary, as well as prepping your shooting area with the backdrop(s) or other studio setups you may be using.

Shooting on Location

If you will be shooting on location, you will need to pack all of your gear in preparation for the shoot, and you should have a checklist that you use for packing. If you do not, [click here to download a customizable packing list](#).

Charge All Of Your Batteries

Make sure all of your batteries are charged up and ready for the shoot. All of your camera batteries, all of your lighting batteries, and any other batteries you may need for the shoot.

Mentally Preparing For The Shoot

Be Prepared To Communicate and Give Direction

This is one of the hardest things for photographers that are new to working with models to do. You need to communicate with the model as you are shooting. The things you want to communicate are:

Encouragement: Compliment the models posing and how he/she looks in regard to the concept and the photos you are shooting. This helps motivate the model and keeps up the energy and positivity.

Posing Direction: This is critical. You need to communicate to the model what you want out of them for the pose to create the photo. This includes the generality of the pose. For example, “I’d like a fierce pose”

It also includes specifics, such as showing reference photos for posing, and giving specific posing directions.

Show and Tell: However, the BEST way to communicate posing direction is to show the model by doing what you want them to do with your own body. This eliminates the confusion that arises from unclear direction like, “move your foot back a little bit”. By showing the model visually what you want, as you are saying it, they will intuitively do what you want them to do.

Show Your Work: You don’t have to chimp and show every single photo to the model, but when you get a particularly good shot, it’s really worth it to show them the photo on the back of the camera. This is encouraging and motivating to you and the model, keeping up the energy and positivity of the shoot.

In addition to that, when you’re struggling to get a pose, showing the model the photo on the back of the camera to discuss the pose and what you are looking for is invaluable. The visual of what the photo looks like is hugely helpful to the model in seeing what’s not working in the shot and how to correct it.

Respect The Model's Personal Space

The model you are working with is a person, and you need to respect them and their personal space.

This means it is not okay to grab the model and “pose” them. The model is a person, not a doll, which is why it is so important that you communicate what you need as described above.

Now sometimes there are wardrobe issues that need to be addressed, whether that be a wardrobe adjustment, or removing lint or hair.

These are important details that you want to be aware of as a photographer, but you do not want to assume that it's okay to adjust the clothing or remove hair or lint without first asking.

Be Open to Ideas and Feedback From The Model

When you are working with a model, it is a collaboration, and it would be foolish to ignore the input from the person you are collaborating with. Models can offer you valuable feedback during the shoot, both in execution of the shoot and concept, and to you as a photographer. Be open to that feedback. You will not regret it.

Be Ready to Move Around

Sometimes you're working a shot and it just doesn't look right to you. During your shoot it's easy to get hyper focused on trying to correct the pose for the shoot, but sometimes the model is perfectly posed and the problem is that you're shooting from the wrong angle.

This is why it's important to move as you shoot and periodically try different camera angles to make sure that you and the model work together to execute the shot.

Don't Drag Out The Shoot

Once you've got the shot, don't keep dragging the shoot on. This will wear on you, and the model. If you have time left over, try something new or different!

Of course communication is key! Talk to the model and let them know you've got the shot, and then ask if it's okay if you try something new. More often than not the model will absolutely be up for it and together you have some fun as you experiment!

Wrapping the Shoot

The shoot is done, but your job as a photographer is not over. You still have to edit and deliver photos to the model. Again, you want to communicate. Let the model know the expected timeline for delivery, but do not over commit here. Don't tell the model, "I'll have 20 photos to you by next week."

You haven't reviewed these photos yet and you have no idea if you actually have 20 photos to deliver. Instead, give the timeframe of delivery and as you edit, occasionally send sneak peek to the model.

Conclusion

If you haven't noticed, the theme that runs throughout all of this is good communication. That more than anything else is key! If you are honest and respectful in your communication all will be well.

Now if you haven't already, find a model to work with, and then...

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