

Portraiture 4: About models

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Course Outline

- Module 1. Introduction to Portraiture
- Module 2. Light for portraits
- Module 3. Working with a Model
- Module 4. About Models**
- Module 5. Camera and Lighting
 - equipment and techniques
- Module 6. Post-Processing for portraiture

MODULE 4. About models

Purpose:

Ensuring a successful photoshoot with your model

Outcome/Homework:

Submit one or two photographs for discussion with brief reflective notes on the posing.

Notes:

This unit focuses on you and your model and how you interact and best support each other. It will also be a discussion about how you plan the before, the during and actual the photo shoot.

The engagement

In general, there are two ways that a portrait shoot will come about.

- a. The model is the client who engages a photographer
- b. The photographer engages a model for a photoshoot

Scenario (a), is generally a paid business transaction and/or a favour for friends or family. In this case it is wise to have an extended discussion about the photoshoot, the purpose of the photograph and the style of photograph the client requires.

Scenario (b), is generally arrangement whereby the photographer outlines the purpose and style of photograph. It is also an option to offer the model a personal photograph of their style and choice, particularly if the model is posing without payment.

Pre photoshoot

When we spoke about portraits in our last session, I mentioned that preparing for the shot is important. In all scenarios, it pays to have a discussion with the model prior to the photoshoot.

Discuss/or consider:

- the purpose of the photoshoot
- where will the shoot take place?
- what style of photography will be most suitable?
- what kind of ‘look’ or ‘mood’ would the model/you like e.g colourful, classic?
- how will the model be positioned. Pose, legs, arms, hands?
- the basic ‘attitude’ to be portrayed? ... cool, natural, powerful, businesslike ?
- clothing; colour, style, props, message?
- if the shoot is for an event, plan the procedure for the photographs before the day so you can identify potential issues and resolve them ahead of time. Think about what you will need – what focal lengths will work; what lighting levels to expect; will you need additional lighting, reflectors, backdrops etc; do you need a photographic assistant (eg to hold reflectors, assist in setting up off camera lighting etc.
- For formal events (e.g. weddings) It is customary for the photographer to visit and spend time at the venue with the clients/model(s) before the day, firstly so they know what to expect, and secondly you can discuss with them what you have in mind on location and get their input on what they want given the venue(s).

The day before:

- Double check all your equipment is functional and present, (check your memory card is in the camera, camera and flash batteries and spares fully charged) set up tripods etc. (It is amazing what you don’t have when you haven’t double checked!).
- It pays to make yourself a checklist for these occasions. E.g cameras, lenses (100mm-135mm are a good choice), **charged** batteries, **empty** memory cards, tripod, lights etc.
- For an important once-off event (such as a wedding), it is best to take a backup camera so if something fails on one camera, all is not lost!
- If you have two camera bodies, you then have the opportunity for two lenses. Having a mix of primes and zoom lenses affords you much more opportunity for fabulous photographs.
- <https://www.digitalcameraworld.com/au/buying-guides/best-lenses-for-wedding-and-event-photography>
- Confirm **arrangements**

On the day:

- Be on time, early if possible! (It pays to pre-visit the venue if possible so you have time to think about how you can use the features in the venue – attractive backdrops; archways to frame an image; steps to give you a higher vantage point, or to pose groups in rows behind each other; iconic features that are a memento of the location etc. It gives you time to think about possibilities to be more creative). Think about where the ambient light will be at the time of the event – will you have direct sun, or shade, for example.
- Smile and be chatty! Engage the model in an open conversation upon arrival. Engaging the model in an ‘off topic’ conversation relaxes them considerably.
- Reiterate the agreed procedure for the shoot.

- Check that the model has their equipment at hand (make up/accessories/costumes)
- It pays to have a quick posing session without photographing straight up. (the model loosens up a bit without the pressure of the camera clicking, and, since the pressure is off, you may also have a chance to think more creatively about shooting angles, poses and lighting.)

Provide your model with:

- A place to put their bag, purse and other materials (think security too, if this is a publically accessible venue)
- Access to a bathroom - show them where it is
- A private area to change if required
- Provide drinking water (a snack if there is a lengthy period – although photoshoots should not be long affairs)
- If you are planning a long photoshoot, or are planning poses that are physically demanding, think about timing breaks at appropriate intervals. If your model gets tired, you won't get the best out of them.

Set up the shot***Pose your model***

First things first, set up the area where the photoshoot will occur. As with all photographs of any subject, be aware to check the background and ensure there are no distracting items, lights or shadows that will spoil the photograph.

Direct your model

Discuss with the model how the posing will happen and what you expect of them. Tell them what you are doing during the setup. It makes them feel included and a little more comfortable

1. Set the camera position
2. Start with the feet
3. Pose the body, then the hands
4. Shoulders
5. Then the head

The more clarity and direction you can give the model, the more relaxed they will become. It is recommended that you develop some 'directives' and words to assist you to pose the model. This avoids you needing to physically touch or push the model. e.g,

- Rather than using right/left, direct the model by pointing in the direction you would like them to move
- Eyes are important. People blink more when they are nervous. Ask the model to close their eyes, when you say 'open', take the shot
- Demonstrate what you mean by physically showing them with your own body
- Share some of your shots in camera preview with the model. Discuss what you would like them to do to improve the pose for you.

Camera height

Prepare your tripod or be aware of the height that you will position your camera

- For **head or head** and shoulders photographs, the camera height should be at nose level
- For **half body and three quarter body** photographs the camera height should be at mid-thorax level)
- For **full length** photographs the camera height should be slightly above waist level

It's OK to break the rules if you want a different look, a creative perspective, but remember that camera placement affects the relative positions of body parts to the camera – things closer to the lens will appear proportionately larger than parts further from the camera.

Photographing that svelte fashion model from a low angle to emphasise her long legs might work better than a low angle for Uncle Jerry on the beach where you'd emphasise his knobby knees and make his scrawny chest look even thinner.

Remember! For a portrait photograph, **do not**, crop through a joint. Eg a three quarter photograph with the hand cut off. Ensure that your model is posed correctly!

Finally, check your photographs in camera as you progress through the poses.

- Histogram
- Light
- Sharpness

Taking the shot

Set your camera's focusing points to suit the composition you are creating. Choose an aperture that gives you the correct depth of field.

Check positions of all body parts for each photograph.

Check camera settings and images along the way to ensure that the exposure is not changing

Things to be aware of:

Focus on the subject's nearest eye! If the eyes are not sharp, take another photo or 10!

- Don't forget composition!
- Leading lines to draw the line in to the subject
- Diagonals add dynamism; horizontals are more peaceful
- Where are the eyes placed? On thirds? Lined up by leading lines?
- Do the elements in the whole frame give a balanced image
- Think about where you want to crop the image. Often it is good to shoot slightly wider and crop in post processing.

Body

- Model leans forward slightly
- Keep hands close to body (avoid a flat hand surface)
- Get lower for a better angle for short people/higher for larger figures
- Head tilts towards lower shoulder for men and high shoulder for women
- Jut chin forward to avoid sagging necks

Couples and groups

- Decide who is the dominant character in each photograph (don't be afraid to swap them around)
- Ask people to lean in towards each other
- Try to be in a higher position for larger groups
- Get the group working with you Say cheese! Louder! etc. make them laugh at and with you
- Let them know when you are about to take the shot, or
 - hand in air then drop the hand, SNAP!
 - Tell them to close their eyes, count 1,2,3! Just like the start of any race. They will then know when to be looking at you and it aids you to keep the groups' focus

Attributes

- Close ups reveal skin faults
- Take larger noses straight on 135mm lens , rather than from the side (use a longer lens)
- Portrait tips <http://stnphotography.com/tips.html#positioning>

Camera

- Take test shots to check there are no over-exposed areas in the frame
- If outdoors, endeavour to find a darker background such as a bush or a wall

Other matters to be aware of:

Street Photography

When is a model a model, and when is it not? When out in the street in Australia, we are free to take photographs of other people, there is no law against it.

A few points to remember

- There is no law or any right to privacy for taking a person's image in Australia
- Respect is important. If a person is obviously uncomfortable, ask or explain your purpose and what you are doing
- Be careful if you take obvious photographs of children not known to you. It is best to ask the parents prior to taking the photograph (if possible).
- If a person is upset or angry that you have taken their photo, offer to delete the photograph in their presence
- Street Photographer's rights information sheet
<https://www.artslaw.com.au/information-sheet/street-photographers-rights/>
- Be aware of the laws in different countries when taking photographs of people, particularly of the police or military.

Portraiture

If you are taking portraits of a person, it is always a good practise to procure a signed model release. (You never know if or when you might need it.)

Your model may be obliging and not care about the release paperwork, but there are competitions that require model release paperwork. If you are procuring honours with the Australian Photographic Society or the Photographic Society of America et al. you may be asked for the model release for the image to be accepted.

There are a range of free and paying model release forms available. Here is an example of a release form from the Australian Institute of Professional Photography
https://fancyphoto.com.au/docs/AIPP_Model_Release_Form.pdf