

## **Invisible at the Center: Professional Modeling for the Arts**

*(some material from David Quammen, Washington, D.C)*

To most artists, there is probably nothing as fascinating as the human form. While no one knows when an artist first used a model to create art, it was certainly thousands of years ago. The creators of the statues of Greek antiquity obviously used a real human body as a guide, even though the result was often an idealized figure.

The nude human body is an expression of energy as well as form, a powerful statement of what it means to be human. In seeking to render the undraped human figure, the artist hopes to capture the essential qualities of the human being: gesture, proportion, expression, and relationship with the eternal, and to elevate the nude figure as a metaphor for what it means to truly be alive at a certain time, in a certain place.

Such creations are only possible with the participation of a professional fine-art model. Modeling is an artistic and respectable profession. A model serves as both a living example of a human body and an inspiration for the creation of fine art.

The model is a participant in the artistic process, and infuses energy and personality, as well as a physical body, into that process. While the physical human form is certainly a significant part of the model's contribution to a work of art, a model is not just another physical prop; he or she is, rather, a total human being — most often the only living being, and hence the main character, in the scene. Ideally, a model brings his or her total self to the artistic process, inviting the artist to capture his or her unique energy and character. Modeling is an active, not a passive, activity.

Paradoxically, though, while a model is the center of attention during the creation of a work of art, he/she is also invisible. For it is not really the model that the artist sees, but his own individual perception of the model. The model is not the work itself, but a starting point for the artist's inspiration. The finished work may or may not bear any resemblance to the model, as the model perceives him/herself. Hence the model is in a sense transparent; the artist sees, not the model, but the essence of his or her perception of the model and surroundings. He sees beyond and through the model — another dimension of the model.

### **Working as a model**

Models work for individual artists, informal art groups, and educational institutions. Some institutions will consider you a temporary employee and pay you through their regular payroll. Private artists and groups are more likely to pay you immediately at the end of a session, either in cash or by check. Pay is almost always determined by the hour, although a few places may pay a flat fee for a fixed block of time (e.g., \$40 for three hours).

The rate of pay depends on the area of the country you are modeling in, and can vary from \$10 to \$20 or \$25 an hour. But pay rate can be misleading, for some jobs at \$20 per hour may only be two-hour sessions. Travel time may make the effective rate low, not to mention that it may interfere with scheduling other jobs that may pay less, but be worth more because the hours are longer or they require less travel time.

Modeling is a profession requiring skill and commitment. A model should conduct him/herself in a professional manner, and be treated as a professional by those they work with. A freelance model is **not** an employee, but a consultant who provides modeling services and works as a partner with the artist or art instructor.

A model needs to be dependable and punctual, appreciative of art and artists, knowledgeable of his/her own capabilities and limitations, willing and able to work as a partner with the artist, and a reasonably good communicator.

Modeling can be a physically and emotionally stressful activity. To perform at their best, models need a safe and respectful environment in which to work. Artists, too, will do their best work from a model whose pose is not only comfortable for him/her but also expresses that model's energy and character. Negative energy from a model, such as pain, stress or resentment, will detract from the artistic character of the pose.

You will work with a great variety of people, as a model. It's not like working for one boss, or with one group of people, day in and day out, month after month. Artists and instructors vary a great deal in their personalities, their experience in working with models, their style of interaction with both students and models, and in many other ways. You cannot assume that because one instructor treated you one way, another will treat you the same, even at the same institution. You should develop your own guidelines and boundaries about what you are, and are not, comfortable doing, and what kind of support you need from the instructor and students, or from individual artists.

Modeling is really a form of acting, almost like mime, where you use your body and your facial expressions but not your voice. The model stand is your stage. You are putting on a performance for the artists, expressing actions and emotions that provide the artists with the raw material for creating works of art.

### **Set your own boundaries and demand respect**

With experience, you will find out your own unique capabilities and limitations, both physical and emotional. Promote your capabilities: they can help you get more work as a model. Respect your limitations, and demand that artists respect them also.

As a nude model, you deserve special respect. Working with a nude model is a privilege for an artist, not an entitlement. Just because you remove your clothes does not mean you are removing your boundaries, or giving up your rights. The converse, in fact, is true: you need stronger boundaries, and acquire more rights.

In mainstream American culture, nudity is generally associated (incorrectly, to those of us who value the human figure in fine art) only with sexuality and vulnerability. In addition, when you are posing, you are essentially immobilized — almost as if you were physically restrained. Finally, in a culture where nudity is not the norm, a nude person in a room full of clothed people becomes a powerful magnet for attention.

Taking a position where you are exposed, restrained, and at the center of attention, puts you in an extremely vulnerable position. (That's why the Puritans put people in stocks, as punishment.) Artists need to appreciate the risk you are taking as a nude model, to perform the valuable service of posing for fine art work.

Remember, too, that you are posing for the artists, who are (or at least should be) focused on their art. Non-artist visitors, including children, are inappropriate in a studio where you are posing nude. Since such persons' focus will **not** be on art, it will by default be on your nude body, because that is such a powerful presence in the room. You are not there to be on display for curious onlookers. You are there to provide material and inspiration for the artists. Demand that the artists understand and respect that fact.

### **A word about dependability and punctuality**

*{this section will probably be a sidebar, in the final layout}*

Art modeling is not just another job. Without a model, there is no life drawing (painting, sculpture, etc.). You are not just another participant in the process, or just another employee in a group. You are the main event.

When you go to a live theatre performance, you don't expect the lead actress to show up 20 minutes late for her entrance. But when you show up 20 minutes late to a modeling session, that's exactly what you're doing.

If you have any concern about the possibility of traffic congestion or unreliable transportation to a modeling session, don't just allow extra time to get to there; allow **EXTRA** extra time, especially if you have some distance to travel. You may get there half an hour early, if all goes well, but that's better than getting there half an hour late, if everything goes wrong. If you don't have that much time available for travel, don't accept the assignment.

Furthermore, showing up at the door right at the start time of the session is **NOT** equivalent to being on time. Being on time means **being ready to start modeling** at the beginning of the session. Unless you're modeling for a portrait session and don't have to disrobe or change into a costume, you need to arrive **BEFORE** the start time, to get yourself ready to model.

You're the star of the show (even if you're not getting star wages); be there for your entrance.

### **Qualifications for being an art model**

The main qualification for being an art model is to be comfortable in, and able to be expressive with, your body. And of course, a model needs to be able to hold reasonably still for long periods of time, except for photographic modeling.

Having a sense of what constitutes an artistically interesting pose is also very helpful; this is a skill that a good model develops over time, if they don't come into the modeling profession with it.

It also helps to look interesting in some way; blandly good-looking people, while they are in great demand in fashion and commercial modeling, are **not** good candidates for art modeling. They are boring. It is better, however, not to be extremely over-weight, or even worse, under-weight. A body with a lot of contrasts in it will be most interesting to draw, paint or sculpt.

It is **not** necessary to have a "great" physique (however that is culturally defined at the moment) to be an art model. Neither is it necessary to be a contortionist or to be able to hold "difficult" poses for long periods of time. That type of modeling is a specialty, and many models pride themselves on such capabilities. But it is not a requirement for modeling in general.

While there is a lower age limit of 18 to be a nude model, there is no upper age limit for any type of modeling. Young, middle-aged and older human bodies are all interesting in different ways. Whatever your age, nude modeling will be most enjoyable if you are able to get in touch with your “inner toddler” — the one who loves to be the center of attention, show off and be expressive, and hates to wear clothes. (This does **not** mean being irresponsible, however.)

## Types of Modeling Work

There are five basic types of fine-art modeling:

- Nude
- Portrait
- Costumed
- Anatomy
- Photography

While most modeling sessions are of only one type, many include two or more. For example, if you are modeling for a class on basic life drawing, there may be some anatomy lecture as part of the class. Or, even though you are posing nude, some artists may choose to depict only your face.

Nude modeling is the most common type, and portrait-only the second most common. Costumed modeling is a specialty, and if you are asked to be a costume model, it will often be a specific type of costume, such as one from some particular historical period. Anatomy modeling will usually be for classes such as Anatomy for Artists. Photography modeling, as referred to here, is still fine-art modeling, not fashion or commercial modeling.

Nude modeling involves full-body poses, and usually, though not always, starts with short poses of anywhere from 5 seconds to three minutes. When doing short poses, you can do much more dramatic poses, such as putting all your weight on one foot or hand, than you can for longer poses. Many gesture poses are high-action ones, such as athletic positions. Longer poses, while not as dramatic, however, can still be very expressive.

Portrait modeling involves clothed poses in which the artist will be working on depicting only your head and shoulders. It is best to wear an open-necked garment, to reveal your throat and verify that your head is indeed connected to your body. Medium-colored garments are usually best — neither too light nor too dark, with some contrast against your skin color but not too much. Bright colors work well if you look good in them.

Costumed modeling is similar to nude modeling, performing full-body poses, with additional attention to the garment as an object — how it falls, and how the folds, the color, the texture, etc., might add interest to the pose. Some models specialize in costumed modeling and have vast collections of costumes.

Anatomy modeling requires being an example of a living human body, serving as a demonstration rather than as an object of art. Anatomy classes for artists generally involve both a lecture part and a posing part, when the students attempt to draw what they have just learned about particular components or areas of the body.

Photography modeling is less common than other types, for fine-art modeling, and differs from other forms in that poses are generally held for only a few seconds. And, of course, you can be de-

finitively identified in a photograph. Nevertheless, fine-art photography is a valid art form that you may wish to add to your modeling repertoire.

### **Some thoughts about anatomy modeling**

Modeling for an anatomy lecture can seem intrusive a times. You may be called on, not really to pose, but simply to display some part of your body, such as your arms and shoulders, or your backbone. Since such display is a more passive activity than posing, it may feel as though the students are focusing on you as a physical object, rather than on their work, as they do in other types of modeling. While this can make you feel more objectified, it need not.

For one thing, an anatomy session will often focus on only one part of the body — legs, for example, or shoulders. In addition, the instructor may use other equipment, such as a skeleton, photographs or drawings of muscles, etc., for the lecture. It may not even be necessary for you to pose completely nude, for some types of anatomy lectures, as you may only be called on to model a particular part of the body, or a particular movement, such as bending the knee, flexing the foot, or raising or lowering the arm.

Moreover, whether it is apparent or not, most students, during anatomy lectures, will be thinking about their own bodies and how they might either resemble or differ from, the “norm,” or from yours. Their focus is not really on you as an object.

When demonstrating for anatomy lectures, you should remain on the model stand, which provides a boundary between you and the students. And you need only step forward to display your body when it is a clearly helpful and appropriate part of the lecture. During the rest of the lecture, you can remain off to the side, in your robe.

Anatomy modeling sessions do need to be conducted with the same respect as other types of modeling sessions, though. The instructor should set the tone and treat you with courtesy and professionalism. If they feel they need to touch you — to point out some feature on your body such as a bone protrusion, for example — they should ask your permission, either before the lecture starts or at the time they want to touch you. And you should feel free to refuse; most such demonstrations can be conducted by pointing near the body part being discussed, or even by touching a nearby mannequin, without the need for touching you.

It is **not** appropriate, or even helpful, for a nude model to stand passively in front of a class for an entire half-hour lecture on human anatomy. It would in fact be a distraction for the students, as well as degrading for the model. The students are trying to learn the components of the human body, not focus on your own individual body. And a nude body is a powerful presence, hard to ignore.

### **Photography modeling**

This booklet does not address photographic modeling in detail.

Photographic modeling is an art form in itself. Poses that are photographically interesting are different from those that are interesting for other types of modeling. The photographer is concerned mostly with light and texture, rather than with form. Developing skill as a photographic model requires time and practice, just as does modeling for the traditional art forms.

The most important difference in preparing to model for photography, as opposed to “regular” art, is to avoid wearing anything to the session that will leave marks on your body, such as tight elastic. Disrobe as soon as you get to the modeling site, and put on something that will not leave marks on your body. If you are light-skinned, it is better to avoid getting a suntan, or, if you do, to sunbathe nude, so that you do not have tan marks. It is also a detriment to have highly noticeable marks on your body such as tattoos, or cuts or bruises.

## **Studio environments**

Art studios are designed for artists, not for models. (Sometimes they are not even very well designed for artists, either.) There is rarely any place for you to leave your belongings, especially a coat or umbrella. While you can put your clothes in your model bag, storage for anything else is usually not available, and even finding a clean place to put your bag where it will not be in the way can sometimes be a challenge.

Most studios have no designated area for the model to dress and undress. Restrooms are OK, but are often cold and/or dirty, and usually lack hooks or surfaces on which to lay your clothes or bag while you are changing. If you arrive early enough, the studio is often empty so you can change anywhere in the room. But be prepared for less than ideal accommodations.

Studios also tend to be dirty. Charcoal or clay dust can get into the air and then settle on everything, including the model stand. Art materials are often toxic, and when a studio has been used for types of art that do not use a model, the model stand will often have been used to store some of these materials. Even the most assiduous janitorial staff will not be able to keep up with the amount of dirt and debris that accumulate in art studios.

Nevertheless, you as a model are entitled to a reasonably clean and safe work space. Getting your feet, or even your entire body, covered with charcoal dust, is **NOT** part of your job description. And although it is, strictly speaking, the responsibility of the artist or instructor to clean up the worst of the mess before you start modeling, you may have to spend some time before the start of the session doing your own cleaning up. In art schools, especially, the instructor may be coming from another class and will barely have time to get there before class themselves.

On the positive side, studios will often have other works of art displayed, and these can not only be interesting, but also provide ideas to help you build up your repertoire of poses. There may also be flyers posted announcing art classes, workshops or events at which you might be able to find additional modeling assignments.

Any studio that uses nude models should have at least one working space heater as part of its standard equipment. While it probably won't be needed in warmer weather, it certainly will be in colder weather. Buildings are generally heated only to the temperature needed for clothed persons to feel comfortable. A radiating heater is practically useless for modeling; a space heater that can provide direct heat or forced warm air is best. But be sure the heat is directed, if possible, at your feet, or to the side or back of your body — the parts of your body that will get coldest. Hot air blowing into your face can make you sick.

Generally the layout of the studio will be one of two types: in the round, where the model stand is at the center of the room and the artists are placed around it, or stage-style, where the stand is

against one wall and the artists arranged in a semi-circle around it. Whichever the layout, be sure to vary your poses so that all artists get a variety of side, front and back views of you, as much as possible. (For sculpting, of course, this caveat does not apply, as the artists will be moving around you, or the model stand will be rotated.)

Many artists like to listen to music while they work. They never consult the model about what type of music they prefer, or whether they even want music at all. (This is one of those situations in which you can feel totally invisible.) Be prepared to be forced to listen to music you may find totally obnoxious. On the other hand, you may sometimes be able to listen to something you like or even find inspiring.

### **The modeling session**

A typical modeling session usually lasts two or three hours, although some can go for four to six hours, or possibly even longer. Sessions of more than four hours, of course, will have a long break in the middle. For an art class, the session often begins with the instructor spending some time with lecture, or with a review of the homework. In this case, you can stand off to the side to avoid being a distraction for the students, keeping your robe on if it is a nude modeling session.

When you start posing nude, try to find a place for your robe where it will not interfere with the view of your body, including your feet. This does not mean, however, that you need to toss it on a dirty studio floor (unless you want to). You are entitled to a clean place to lay your robe. Often a stool or chair near the model stand will work OK; it's better if that object is lower than the model stand, if possible.

Posing usually starts with short gesture poses and then progresses to longer poses. In portrait modeling, the gestures would consist of different facial expressions; in full-body modeling, with different action poses. Some sessions, however, consist only of long poses, and a pose may even continue through multiple sessions. These multi-session poses are most common for painting and sculpture work.

Both the artists and the model need breaks, and there should be plenty of time for you to recuperate from the stress of posing. While there is no set pattern for breaks, there is generally a break after about every hour to an hour and a half. Breaks vary from five to twenty minutes. Break time is NOT deducted from the time you are paid for.

Most classes and groups have a set time when they take breaks, and you should be informed at the beginning of the session when these are scheduled. Since you are under more physical stress than the artists, however, it is your prerogative to determine when there will be breaks and how long they will be, at least for yourself (if the artists want to continue to work when you are not posing, they may certainly do so). If the standard set is not sufficient for you (or even if it is overly sufficient), let the instructor or monitor know. Most artists will be courteous enough to ask you up front if their break schedule is adequate for you.

If you are modeling nude, or even more skimpily dressed than the room is heated for, you are entitled to a heater that will keep you comfortable. Try to help the instructor or monitor determine a place for the heater where it will minimally block the view of your body, but do not sacrifice your comfort. Conversely, if you are modeling in a heavy costume in hot weather, you should have a fan to keep you cool. This is a rare occurrence, though.

Often the artists will set up a bright light directed at you. This is not to illuminate you, but to provide contrasting lights and shadows. Such contrasts facilitate the translation of a three-dimensional figure (you) into two dimensions (paper or canvas). Avoid looking directly into the light. If you cannot, ask the artists to re-position the light, or let them know that you need to shift your position to avoid having the light shine directly into your eyes. Of course, you can also close your eyes, if you have to, but that is not preferable, and for portrait modeling, is not even appropriate.

Instructors will often comment on some aspect of your pose or some physical characteristic of your body, with remarks such as “See the negative space between his arm and torso,” or “She has a very delicate bone structure.” The point of such instruction is not really to point out your personal characteristics, but to help the students do a better job of depicting the human body. Remember that you are providing a valuable service, giving the students practice in observation. If you are uncomfortable being “talked about” in this way, you may want to reconsider whether you really want to model. On the other hand, no instructor should make really invasive, provocative or insulting remarks. If a remark feels uncomfortable, speak to the instructor about it, either at the time of the remark or later, during your break or at the end of the session.

Be sure to drink plenty of water during sessions. If there is no source nearby, a water bottle is an acceptable addition to your equipment.

Do not make negative comments on the artists’ work. If you see work that you like, though, and would like to have it, ask the artist. Many will give it to you. Alternatively, you can bring a camera and take a picture of the work, with the artist’s permission.

## **Equipment required for modeling**

If you’re posing for a portrait session only, you probably won’t need to take anything special with you, unless the weather is cold and you are dressed in, say, a turtleneck sweater. Such garb would be inappropriate for portrait modeling and you should bring some open-necked garment to wear while you are posing. (Be sure to ask for a heater if you need it, in this situation.)

For any other type of modeling, though, you will need to bring something with you. Obviously if you are doing costumed modeling you will need to bring your costume, unless it is being supplied for you.

For nude modeling, including anatomy, you should bring something that you can slip into and out of easily between posing sessions, such as a robe, tunic or kaftan. Try to find one that is not too heavy or bulky. Hard-soled slippers or sandals are also helpful, as studio floors tend to be quite dirty and/or littered, and are neither comfortable nor safe for walking around on barefoot.

Other helpful items to carry include:

- **Timer:** It’s usually up to the model to time each pose, although some artists or instructors prefer to keep the time themselves. Short poses (less than two minutes) can be timed by counting silently to yourself, but for longer poses, you will need some kind of timing device. While you may occasionally be in a position to see a clock on the wall, more often you will not be. Having your own timer will ensure that there will be one available, even if the studio does not have one



for you to use. Timers that time by the minute are generally be much cheaper than those that keep time to the second, and are perfectly sufficient for your purposes.

- Foam rubber: Two small pieces (the firm type) are helpful, primarily for you to stand on during longer standing poses, but they can also be used as extra padding for leaning your arm on something, or even for sitting on. You can purchase these at a store that sells gardening supplies. Foam rubber is much more effective than even the softest cushion, over time. A cushion can feel like concrete after 40 minutes of sitting or lying on it. For standing poses, though, make sure the foam rubber is of the firm type; do not stand on anything that your feet will sink into, as it would make them invisible, and artists need to be able to draw your feet.
- Foot-shaped foam-rubber pads for standing poses; the ultimate in padding for your feet. You can get these from a shoe store or drugstore, and cover them with old socks (with the tops cut off) so that your feet don't stick to them. You can also leave these on the stand during breaks, as markers for your feet, if you are careful not to let them move.
- Towel: for sitting on, if you want to be sure of having something clean. It can also provide some extra padding for leaning your arm on. While most studios will have a towel or sheet there, you cannot depend on this. (Of course, sometimes you can use your robe, which also solves the problem of what to do with it while you are posing.)
- Whisk broom: This is helpful for brushing off the model stand, which more often than not is dirty, as well as cleaning off anything you might want to sit on for a pose, such as those drawing horses, which make excellent seats especially for short-legged persons.
- Sponge: This is also good for cleaning off a dirty model stand, if no covering is provided. Model stands are often dirty. If this doesn't bother you, lucky you. But if it does, be prepared to clean off the stand before you start modeling. And be sure to arrive in plenty of time to do this.
- Masking tape: Most studios have this on hand, but just in case they don't, it's helpful to have your own. Tape is often used to mark the positions of your body so that you can get back into the same pose after a break.
- Water bottle: This can be heavy and you may not want to include it, especially if you are traveling by public transit and have to carry everything. But it is often helpful to have your own water source.
- Appointment book: You may get to book future sessions at the same studio.
- Camera: If you have any interest in recording the work that people do of you, you can ask permission to take photographs of it, and can even build up a portfolio of pieces if you wish. Ask the artist whether they want the work attributed to them by name.
- Privacy sign: You are entitled to privacy from outside observers while you are posing nude. Yet many studios do not have any sign or notice on the outside door, informing potential intruders that entry is restricted. Hence you may want to make your own sign and carry it with you to sessions. It can say something like "Nude model posing; knock before entering." You can tape it to the outside of the door (using the masking tape you brought with you). To make the sign durable, laminate it. Don't forget to take it with you when you leave!

- Anything else you normally take with you, such as cell phone, prescribed medications, reading material for breaks, etc.
- Some sort of bag or satchel to schlep all this stuff around with you. One with outside pockets will be most handy, as you can stick some of the smaller items in there and find them quickly when you need them.
- A checklist of all this stuff, so that you don't forget anything, either when you leave home or when you leave the posing session. For durability, laminate it.

In addition to what you bring to the studio yourself, you can expect to find some props that will be helpful for posing:

- Cushions and chairs are the most basic props. Cushions are absolutely essential for any reclining pose, or any sitting pose of more than ten minutes. (Some chairs, of course, have built-in padding.) Actually, a reclining pose requires a lot of cushions, not just a few. Even better are large foam-rubber pads. Foam rubber is a model's best friend.
- Stools are good not only for sitting on, but also for putting one knee on, or leaning on with one arm, either while standing (a tall stool), or while sitting directly on the model stand (a short stool).
- Large wooden blocks: You can lean back on something like this (with some padding), for a semi-reclining pose, as well as sitting on it, kneeling on it, or resting one foot on it. When modeling in the round, however, large ones will block the view of part of your body and hence limit what the artists can draw.
- Art horses: These are benches with an upright portion at one end for the artist to lean their pad of paper or clipboard against. They also make great props, if there are enough in the studio to spare one for the model. You can sit on them, and also lean an arm, or your back, on the upright part (with some padding), or use that part to brace yourself against. Artists should always have first dibs on these, though. If in doubt, ask whether you can use one.
- Poles are great for leaning on in a standing pose, or even in some sitting poses. They will not provide sufficient support, however, for a standing pose of longer than 20 minutes. For that you need a
- Podium or something else slightly below elbow height. Podia are great for leaning on for longer standing poses. They are, however, rarely available. Sometimes you can use the crossbar of an easel to lean on (with some padding). Easels, though, tend to be large, bulky and dirty.
- Suspended rope: This is also a great prop for grabbing hold of and leaning against. They are not a very common prop, but are wonderful when they are available. You can get very creative with a rope, for short poses. It is not very helpful for longer poses, however.

## **Posing**

Posing is, of course, the main work of modeling. Since a model usually chooses their own poses, you will need to develop a repertoire of poses that are comfortable and easy to remember. In general, poses may reflect activities of daily life, or strong emotions such as fear, determination, or elation. You will probably feel most comfortable doing poses that express your character — gestures and positions that are natural to you and that you can relax into. Your comfort and ease will radiate out to the artists, too, and they will do better work of you than they will if you are in a stressful pose, whether they realize this or not.

The most important aspect of a full-body pose is asymmetry. A symmetrical pose is boring, and what's more, requires the artist to render symmetrical proportions in order to make the work look at all realistic. Any off-center aspect, even turning the head or shifting the weight slightly, will add interest to the pose and give the artist more leeway in depicting the figure with drama and variety. (Occasionally, though, a basically symmetrical pose is OK, if it has some drama in it, and it should still have some element of asymmetry, such as turning the head to the side.)

Perhaps one of the best ways to develop a good pose repertoire is to study the work of the great masters. It will be well worth the time to study—and practice—as many of these as possible, choosing, of course, those that work for you. You may also be able to find books that you want to purchase that show various poses.

Another source of material for poses is the studios you model in. Artists often post their work in their studios, and you can study these works to get ideas for new poses.

You can practice poses at home (with a mirror if possible), finding out what positions are good for short poses, which for longer ones. You can be as creative as you want, without feeling committed to any particular pose, since no one is watching you and expecting you to continue holding the poses.

Sometimes an artist or instructor will ask you to do a pose they have found in an art book or some other source, such as a magazine ad. (Beware of this last category; the models in these poses only held the position for a few seconds, for a photographer to shoot them.) If the pose is comfortable and suitable for you, by all means do try to do it. But do not hesitate to tell the artist that you will have to modify it in some way, in order to hold it without stressing yourself out. Individual capabilities and comfort levels can vary a great deal from one model to another; human bodies are not interchangeable. You are not required to sacrifice your health or suffer injury in order to do this job. And no artist has the right to demand that you do a specific pose, with no modification. Many artists, surprisingly, have little or no idea of what constitutes a reasonable pose.

Remember that the human body, like all animal bodies, is designed to move, not to remain still for long periods of time. Immobility puts a tremendous strain on your body, that it is not designed for. You do not need to be super-human, however, to be a model — to perform extraordinary acts of contortion or endure more physical stress than is safe.

A note about gender: As in most areas of life, women have more freedom and opportunity for variety in posing, than men do. It's fine for a female model to take a fairly "masculine" (i.e., active or assertive) pose, while it just looks weird for a male model to take a "feminine" (i.e., overly expressive or passive) pose. And our culture gives women more freedom to be expressive, in general, than it does to men.

## Types of poses

The most difficult thing about standing poses is keeping your balance. Keeping your balance puts stress on your back, buttock and leg muscles. The next most difficult things are pressure on your feet and lack of circulation in your feet and legs.

Leaning on a pole or a podium can provide some relief for your back; standing on firm foam rubber can provide some relief for your feet.

After 20 to 30 minutes of not moving, however, the blood will start to pool into your feet, and your feet will start to swell and your toes become numb. Hence, even if you are going to do a long standing pose, it's best to take a break at least every 30 minutes. And don't lock your knees; that can cut off circulation even faster. You can also move your feet and legs periodically (but not constantly) during the pose: do shallow knee bends, rock your feet from front to back or side to side, wiggle your toes. These movements will help to keep the circulation going in your feet and legs, but you will still need to take frequent breaks.

If you are new to modeling, a good rule of thumb is to limit your standing poses to: 15 minutes with no support, 20 minutes with a pole, and 45 minutes with a podium. If you find, with practice, that you can do longer standing poses, don't need external support, or can go longer than 30 minutes between breaks, good for you. You can market your exceptional ability.

Sitting, kneeling, crouching and semi-reclining poses are probably the most common and easiest to do, as they provide the most opportunity for variety of positions without stressing out your back, or presenting too much foreshortening to the artist. If you are going to do a long sitting pose, be sure your back is sufficiently supported.

Not all chairs provide good back support; be sure the one you are using does, before you settle into a long pose. Adding cushions in back can help. And, if you have short legs, be sure that you have a footrest, if you cannot rest your feet flat on the floor or model stand. Most chairs are designed for people with "standard" adult-sized legs, AND wearing shoes. If your legs are dangling, or only your toes are touching the surface beneath the chair, you need a footrest. Sometimes a block of wood is available. A thick book (or several thinner ones) can also work. Providing insufficient support for your feet will put additional strain on your back.

Sitting poses can also sometimes cut off circulation to your legs, or even, in certain positions, to your arms. To maintain circulation to your legs, it's best to have some space under your thigh and above the chair, rather than resting your entire thigh directly on the chair. (Another good reason for a footrest, if you're short-legged.) To maintain circulation to your arms, keep them lower than your shoulders for long poses. This will also minimize stress on your shoulders.

Crouching is generally only appropriate for short poses, as it puts a lot of stress on your back, legs, knees and ankles, and squatting can cut off circulation to your legs or feet.

Reclining poses, while often the most comfortable (be careful about cutting off circulation to an arm or a leg, or even your buttocks, however), are a challenge for many artists because any view except a side one will present some foreshortening to the artist. Some artists like that challenge, some do not. Be sure to support your head during long reclining poses (see "A word about the head in poses.")

Gesture poses can include all of the above types of poses, although sitting on an object like a chair or stool is less common in the gesture pose. It is not taboo, however; a stool can often be used to good effect in a gesture pose.

A good model treats a gesture session as a dance with smooth transitions between the poses, always having the next pose in mind so that there are no delays, other than to hold each pose for a few seconds longer to allow artists to change paper. Let the artists know when you are done with gesture poses (if the instructor does not announce this fact for you) and are moving on to longer poses.

Open- versus closed-body poses: An open-body pose is one in which your arms and legs are stretched out, away from your torso; a closed-body pose is one in which your limbs are close to, or touching, your torso. Artists working in two dimensions (drawing or painting) will generally prefer open-body poses, as they tend to have more motion in them; sculptors will tend to prefer closed-body poses, because outstretched limbs are hard to shape and to support on the structure of the sculpture, and can even throw the piece off balance. It's a good idea to develop a repertoire of both open- and closed-body poses. Of course, many poses combine the two types, to some extent.

If you are doing a multi-session pose, or taking breaks in a long pose within the same session, you need to choose a pose that is comfortable, and to be sure to get back in the same position, as much as possible, each time you take up the pose. The artists will usually mark the positions of your hands, feet, legs and arms either with masking tape or by drawing on the surface you are posing on (usually paper or a cloth sheet). Be careful not to move the cloth when you get up, or back down. And, if the marking is done with charcoal or chalk, be aware that it may rub off on your body as you get up and back down.

Also, for multi-session poses, try to keep the same appearance as much as possible. Don't get a haircut that drastically changes your hairstyle. If you are doing clothed posing, as for portrait or costumed modeling, wear the same clothing each time.

### **A word about the head in poses**

*{this section will probably be a sidebar, in the final layout}*

When we sit or stand in a normal upright posture, the head is supported by the spinal column. When the head is moved off the top of the spinal column by tilting either the head or the body, this support disappears, and the head must then be held up by the neck muscles. Even turning the head, without tilting it, puts some stress on the neck muscles.

The human head is heavy! (partly because the skull is the densest bone in the body). Neck muscles will tire easily when they are given the job of holding up the head. Any pose that requires moving the head off the center of the spinal column will, therefore, be stressful on the neck. Reclining poses can be particularly deceptive in this way. While they may appear to be relaxing, they can be stressful if the neck and head are not properly supported.

### **Facial Expression and Eyes**

The face is most important, of course, in portrait modeling. For long poses in full-body modeling, though, many artists will want to work on your face as well as the rest of your body.

Facial expression is so important that entire books have been written to describe the various moods that may be displayed. Briefly, these range from sadness to anger, from joy to fear to disgust, pain and surprise. "Of the twenty-six or so muscles that move the face, eleven are responsible for facial expression." (from *Facial Expression* by Gary Faigin). Holding any facial expression other than a fairly neutral one, however, will tire your face muscles quickly. Extreme facial expressions are best reserved for short poses in portrait modeling.

While it is detrimental to your eyes to keep them glued to one spot, try to hold them more or less steady during a long pose. Glancing away, lowering or even closing your eyes, from time to time, is fine, and better for your eyes, too. But try to avoid excessive or constant, roving movement.

Above all, do not make direct eye contact with an artist, for it is distracting to both model and artist. This will probably be intuitive to you.

### **Other miscellaneous issues in posing**

Take care of your body. In long poses, parts of the body may become sore or fall asleep from poor blood circulation. There are several ways to deal with this. Flexing muscles can relieve tension. Often, only one part of the body is tense or sore. By moving only that part, the artist can work on other parts of the pose. Tell the client you will relax that part but keep the rest of the pose intact.

Pay attention to where your main arteries are and don't pose in ways that cut off the blood flow (such as crossing legs). The same goes for nerves, especially in the pelvis. Use cushions or other padding for long poses. Never put all your weight on one joint in a pose longer than seven minutes. Do not lock your knees for standing poses (you'll faint). Flex your fingers from time to time, in a long pose. If you lean part of your weight on your hand, DO NOT place your palm flat on the surface, except for very short poses. Rather, make a fist and put your weight on that. Always rise slowly after a long pose. A leg may have fallen asleep, or you may feel light-headed.

And, as mentioned above, avoid looking directly into a bright light, or gluing your eyes to one spot for a long time.

Maintaining the pose: A method to help maintain the pose is to pick parts of your body as reference markers against stationary spots on the wall or floor. For example, if you look at the tip of your nose or the bend of your knee, you may see that it appears to line up with an easel base, or with a spot of yellow paint on the floor. Periodic checks can determine whether that part is still in the same position—or if not, to help return it to the correct position. By selecting two or three such points, the pose can be held in the right position. Navigators use this method: the term is called triangulation.

If you take a pose you find you can't hold for the designated time, though, you should break the pose and change to another so you don't hurt yourself.

If you are modeling for sculpture rather than two-dimensional art, you have more leeway. Sculptors are simply not working at the level of detail that two-dimensional artists are. Hence you do not have to hold as still or maintain as exact a position of all body parts, as you do for painting and drawing.

Conversing with artists: It's counter-intuitive for us to carry on a conversation with someone without looking at them. If you do wish to engage in brief conversations with the artists while you are posing, you must not break the pose to do so. It's better to minimize conversation during the pose.

Itches: Minor itches will go away after two or three minutes if you ignore them. If they don't, it's OK to scratch an itch once, quickly, but minimize your movement as much as possible. If you have a serious itch caused by a rash or insect bite, treat it before the session if you can (see "How to Treat Itches").

Hands: While hands are visible in most poses, they generally don't play a significant role in the composition. But do be aware of how they appear to the artists. Interlocked fingers, or fingers spread apart fanlike, are hard to draw. Keep your fingers relatively close to each other if you can. If your hands touch each other, holding one (or part of one) within the other will be easier for the artist than interlocking your fingers. Hands look better when they relate to props or to the body itself.

Body hair: Body hair is not a major issue in art modeling, and you can either shave it completely or leave it completely natural, as you wish. Another alternative, though, is to trim the body hair so that it follows the contours of your body, rather than becoming a part to be drawn in itself. It will provide additional contrast in color without significant contrast in form.

While it is difficult to trim underarm hair, unless you are ambidextrous and possess both right- and left-handed scissors, an alternative is to shave it and then let it grow out to a half inch or so. Pubic hair, especially for women, will look better if it is trimmed; otherwise, its unruliness can detract from the smooth lines that are one of the most artistic characteristics of the adult female body. See what you are comfortable with.

Appropriate poses: Unless you are modeling for erotic art, it is not appropriate to take a sexually explicit or suggestive pose. To do so would be an act of disrespect to anyone in the room who is sexually attracted to your gender. If an artist wants you to take a sexual pose, they need to let you know that when they schedule the session with you, and respect your limitations around that request.

Art exhibits: If an artist wishes to exhibit a work of you in which you are recognizable, particularly a photograph, they need to get your written permission. You are welcome to refuse this permission if you are not comfortable with the work's being exhibited in a public place or published in a book. The artist needs to let you know ahead of time if the work is being commissioned for display in some public venue. If it is, you also need to express your reservations at that time, and not wait until the work is well underway.

Disrespectful treatment: It is truly amazing how many ways artists can find to mistreat models. Their creativity in this area is beyond our ability to predict. Some common ways are:

- subtle sexual harassment, such as repeatedly pointing out to the class something like "see how the light falls on the breasts", in every single pose
- announcing to the class what poses you will be doing, before even consulting you
- not greeting you or acknowledging your presence in any way, when you arrive

- not telling you how long the lecture period at the beginning of class will last, before posing begins (so that you don't know whether you have time to go get a drink of water or use the restroom)
- expecting you to extend a pose beyond the agreed-on length of time ("Could you just hold that 10 more minutes?" for a 15-minute pose)
- allowing non-artists visitors into the studio where you are posing nude, without consulting you
- not providing sufficient window coverings in the studio where you are posing nude

This is, unfortunately, not an exhaustive list.

There is no reason, however, for you to put up with disrespectful treatment of any kind. If you are not successful in communicating your distress to the artist or instructor, you are free to never pose for them again. Be sure to let other models know of the problems, too, so that they can be prepared, or decline work from that artist. If you are severely mistreated, you could consider leaving the session early, but that is obviously an extreme measure.

### **How to Treat Itches**

*{this section will probably be a sidebar, in the final layout}*

Hot water is the best treatment for itches. Not just comfortably hot water, such as you would use to bathe, but really hot water — as hot as you can tolerate without burning yourself (which is not what you want to do).

Sometimes tap water is hot enough to work, but only if you can hold the affected body part (hand, foot, arm, etc.) directly under the tap. Otherwise, you can heat water on a stove, then pour it onto a washcloth and hold the cloth against the itch for a few seconds. Be careful: there's a point at which it burns, a point at which it works, and a point at which it's too cold to be effective. You have to catch it at the right time.

It's worth the effort, though, as this treatment normally relieves an itch for eight to twelve hours. The danger with this long time, of course, is that you may forget about the itch, and forget to re-treat it, and then be caught somewhere that you can't treat it, just when the treatment is wearing off.

It's the heat that works, not the moisture, so even holding your itching arm against something like a mug filled with a hot liquid, or the surface of a car that's been sitting in the sun on a hot day, will work.

It's a good idea, though not essential, to follow up the heat treatment with a soothing lotion.

For really severe cases of poison ivy or oak, the treatment may only last an hour or less, but you probably are not going to be modeling when you are in that condition.

### **Finding Work as a Model**

Because it is difficult to make a living from modeling alone, most models have other jobs. Modeling is often better as a part-time or supplementary job than as a main one.



Colleges and universities use the most models, but jobs vary with the class schedule, being few during summer and winter breaks. The economy plays a part also. During low peaks, there are more models in the model pool while at the same time fewer jobs are available due to lower class enrollment. When the economy is good, the model pool diminishes while modeling jobs increase.

As much as or more than a model's talents and merits, it takes salesmanship to get a lot of jobs. Begin by finding all the places that hire models, meeting the model coordinators and learning what their schedules are. Then above all, make the phone calls at the right time. But it takes a good reputation and diligent efforts to get the jobs and be recommended to others.

The majority of models are men over the age of 50 and women under the age of 40. If you are outside of these categories (i.e., a young man or an older woman), you can use your age-gender combination as an additional promotion tool. And if you have exceptional capabilities, such as the stamina to do long standing poses, market that too. In short, find out what is unique and interesting about you, and use those characteristics to promote yourself.

For photographic modeling jobs, the website *modelmayhem.com* is the best online source to promote yourself. You will need at least four photographs to start with, though.

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Modeling is one of the most interesting and unique professions. You have an opportunity to be expressive, to get to know artists and be appreciated by them, and to see yourself as a work of art. Its rewards, like those of creating art, lie as much in self fulfillment as in monetary gain (perhaps more).

Modeling can help you see yourself in a way that most people never experience — as an inspiration to creative people, and an object of fascination and beauty.

Good luck, and have fun!