

MODEL ADVICE

The following advice is for those of you who are looking to get into modelling. Andy has compiled this information from his own personal research and experience - having worked with many leading model agencies and fashion magazines. Andy hopes you find the information useful and encourages anyone with a dream to get out there and take that initial step.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

While a career in modelling can provide you with the opportunity to travel to glamorous locations, attend exciting events and get paid an attractive income at the same time, it's not all about standing around and looking gorgeous. There is a certain amount of effort and skill involved in maintaining one's appearance, developing a good portfolio, cultivating the right attitude and finding the right agent who will represent you in the best possible way. Let's look at each of these topics in more detail.

YOUR APPEARANCE

It is important to maintain your fitness level and health in terms of a good diet and regular exercise. This will not only make you look better but also feel better as well. If you feel better you make others around you feel good. It has a way of coming back to you.



Andy Howsby
Photography

Your hair, skin and nails are things you must maintain each week. If an advertising agency is going to pay you thousands of pounds to be the face of their new campaign it is only natural that they will expect the best from you.

YOUR PORTFOLIO

Generally model portfolios can be divided into two categories. Commercial, which goes out to advertising agencies, clients and advertising photographers. The images in this portfolio will have mainstream appeal and usually look clean and polished. The second category is editorial, which is usually more cutting edge and alternative in style. This portfolio has more appeal to magazine editors and fashion photographers. If you are unsure which direction you should be marketing yourself towards a reputable model agency or fashion photographer should be able to give you free informative advice.

Aside from yourself, your portfolio is your other most important tool of the trade. If you're starting out, model agents, editors and photographers will not be expecting to see tear sheets (magazine pages) straight away, however they will want to see how well you respond to the camera.

Be very selective with the shots that you show them. Only select pictures that flatter you and show off your potential. It's better to show a portfolio with 7 great pictures, than 27 average pictures. Keep people wanting more. Take advantage of the fact that you are new to the industry and appear fresh. This can actually give you an advantage over models that have been around longer.

If you are doing a model portfolio shoot (known in the industry as a test) for the very first time, one of the most important things you'll want to show is a sense of confidence and

the ability to look natural in your pictures. On the day of your shoot, be sure to explain to the photographer that it's your first time in front of the camera. Choose to work with one that will be patient with you.

Be aware of your best features and wear outfits that reveal these features. Alternatively, if there are parts of your body that you don't feel confident about you can also choose to wear clothing that will cover these areas. A good fashion photographer will not only be able to give you advice in this area. They will also direct you into poses with that intention in mind.

Before arriving at your photography shoot, remember to remove your sunglasses well beforehand so as not to leave marks on the bridge of your nose. If you are shooting beauty or swimwear, avoid wearing tight underwear to your shoot as it will also leave marks on your skin.

Become aware of your best side and best angles. Finally, learn to project energy. This is something you must connect with within yourself. Once you harness it, learn to deliver it down the barrel of the lens. This doesn't mean your performance has to be big or you have to be an extrovert. In fact many of the world's top models and actors are introverts. Think of the way in which an actor like Nicole Kidman can deliver a subtle but powerful performance.

YOUR ATTITUDE

Having a good attitude and being someone who is easy to work with goes a long way in this industry. The more professional you are the more respect you will gain. Be aware that modelling is a highly competitive world and there will be rejection and let downs along the way. Learn to separate your personal feelings from your work. Welcome constructive criticism as an opportunity for self-improvement. With the right attitude and perspective you can gain a great sense of satisfaction and self-confidence.

If you are serious about a modelling career it may be helpful to start to acquire a few background skills - particularly skills that will help you develop good posture and body awareness such as yoga, acting and dance. A model's life is very spontaneous and each job will present new challenges. The more skills you have up your sleeve the more prepared and confident you will be.

GETTING AN AGENT

If you are completely new to modelling, you'll want to contact an agency to gain representation. They will want you to initially email them some photos of yourself. The photos you send to the agency don't have to be professional grade at this stage however you will create a better first impression if you can provide them with images that show you in the best light (so to speak). It's also advantageous if you can show a sense of presence and body awareness in your pictures. For this reason working with an experienced photographer who can provide you with some on-camera direction can be a huge benefit.

When approaching an agent, it is recommend getting the name of the head booker in the men's or women's division and emailing them with a selection of your best pictures. Make sure you have at least one headshot, one full length body shot and another shot that shows energy and personality. A lot of model agencies will also have open calls. This is a particular time they have set aside each week to look at new talent. If you have what they are looking for they may sign you up on the spot. Andy would recommend seeing a number of agencies before making a commitment. Contracts in the UK vary, generally though once you're signed you are exclusive to that agency for the period of the contract.

MODELLING CATEGORIES

There are different types of models that suit different markets. While some models may cross over and do several categories, there is a list of the basic ones below. It's important to also note that model agencies will tend to specialise in these categories. If you think you have potential then it comes down to finding the right type of agency for your look.

Editorial

Fashion & feature stories for magazines.

Catwalk

Runway shows for fashion designers.

Commercial

Advertising, TV commercials & fashion catalogues.

Swimwear

Fashion & lingerie catalogues, men's magazines.

Promotions

Events and trade shows.

Be aware that the direction of fashion and advertising changes every six months, so too does demand for different types of looks. What's 'in' will vary from city to city and country to country.

WHEN SHOULD YOU START MODELLING?

If you consider that clothing designers make clothing for children and adults of all ages (all of which require models for campaigns and catalogues), the answer is as soon as you can.

In the UK, most fashion models start to think seriously about their career from the age of 16. They will line up meetings with model agents and go out to casting on school holidays. In places like Milan it is not unusual to have girls as young as 14 on the cover of magazines like Vogue.