

Up to my eyeballs in Nude WOMEN



TECHNIQUES TO RECRUIT AND
DIRECT MODELS AND
BUILD WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

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Written by A. K. Nicholas

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Techniques to Recruit and Direct Models and Build Working Relationships.

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Foreword

One of the hardest things about shooting nude models is...finding them Here in Los Angeles, where I live and work, I'm very lucky, there are modeling agencies that specialize in handling nude models. But this luxury is not afforded to most of the other cities around the world. For all of those other cities, you are holding in your hands the next best thing.



I have had the very unique privilege of shooting nude models for men's magazines for years. Some of these models were experienced professionals... but many of them were new to modeling and had little to no experience. Had this book been available years ago, when I first got started shooting nude models, it would have saved me hundreds of hours of frustration and headaches.

Even though I mostly use nude modeling agencies these days to hire the models I photograph, I always keep my eyes peeled for opportunities to introduce new models to the business. Shooting nude models can be fun and rewarding, but discovering a new model, introducing her to nude modeling, and



helping her to launch her career is an even more rewarding experience. Make no mistake about it though: It takes skill and experience not only to find models, but also to effectively communicate with them.



This book you are holding is full of golden nuggets of information—tips, tricks and techniques that it takes years of experience to learn and master. A. K. Nicholas

has done a wonderful job of explaining the ins and outs of what it takes to find, recruit, communicate, and direct models.



Finding models who will pose nude for you doesn't have to be an exhausting, negative, and drama-filled experience. With only a few simple techniques, you'll be off and running. Everything you need is in this book.



Dean Capture

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Capture".

Model: Kim C.

Introduction

One day, upon entering my studio to find me, my girlfriend remarked about the fact that there were always multiple models around me, partaking in one activity or another. Usually, a nude woman was in front of my lens as flashes popped around her. One or more additional beauties could be waiting in the wings, trying on various accessories, playing with props, or chatting with each other. Seemingly everywhere one looked, there were young women in the buff, or at least the story goes. One of my friends used to joke that women's clothes must miraculously fly off in all directions when they walk through my studio door. Even my closest friends who have known me for many years still seem puzzled by how easy it is to attract and photograph models. I'm not sure who first said I was "up to my eyeballs in nude women," but it perfectly describes the situation people most ask me about. When they say, "I wish I could find models like that," I ask, "Have you tried?" Usually the answer is, "No." This guide is all about finding models and building long-term working relationships. I assume you're reading this largely because you want to photograph more suitable models more often. The task is more manageable than it seems at first glance, and I'll provide you the unromanticized version, even if I have to explain a couple of uncomfortable topics along the journey.

Working with nudes *can* be easy. That is the central idea to this book. It can't be made paint-by-numbers easy; you can't just read a book and become a master, but it is not the insurmountable task some people imagine. It is a common misconception that those of us who recruit women for nude modeling possess some kind of secret power. On the contrary, we're ordinary people. The more quickly you can visualize yourself recruiting nude models, the sooner you can start doing it.

I'm not around models just for the thrill of the moment. Fanatical effort goes into creating the photographs. I agonize over details. I'm consumed by a dedication to the end product. Even a deceptively whimsical image can take considerable effort. It's not by salivating over *Anna F. in the ocean*



Model: Sarah H. For a brief video interview with this model, see "Reader's Links" on Page 102.



your subject that you find yourself photographing pinup models. You need to approach your craft seriously if you expect to advance. If you place more emphasis on the nudity aspect than on the photography aspect, you'll have much more difficulty recruiting models and maintaining working relationships.

About this Guide

Discovering new models is a constant challenge, as well as a source of inspiration. Figure photography entails more than just photographic technique; this guide is about the interpersonal and psychological elements that play a larger role here than in any other kind of people photography. It can be discouraging to read guides that assume you've already found a willing model. This guide is for those who are having trouble finding the special models who will take your work to the next level creating beautiful figure work. I also do not assume that you automatically know how to bring up the subject of nude shoots or what to say to models when you have them in the studio. The purpose of this guide is to fill in those gaps with precise, in-depth advice. As you read through this guide, remember that the focus is on recruiting and working with models. I won't dwell on equipment or posing other than how they relate to the model/photographer relationship. All the equipment in the world will do no good if you don't have the right model and know how to work with her.

Some authors give you the subject of recruiting nude models through rose-colored sunglasses, avoiding controversial topics altogether. Glossing over some of the more awkward aspects of interfacing with models, such as difficult personalities, leaves the reader confused and unprepared. I've opted to give you the clear, unfiltered story by addressing contentious aspects and advising you of potential pitfalls. Things usually go smoothly, but that is not by chance. Sometimes you need to know how to prevent problems before they occur. A cardinal component to success is building a solid working relationship with your models. I've learned from experience that no two models are identical, but many have the same goals. I'll help you avoid disappointing yourself and your photo shoot collaborators. When you know what a model wants, your working relationship can lead to many productive sessions.

These pages are born from my twenty years of experiences, both enlightening and humbling, in photographing nudes. I began learning photography during my four-year pursuit of an art degree, and I also draw on my master's



Tawny C., with her welding gloves and rebar.



Mia T. demonstrates how a model's first shoot can be a breeze.

degree in business, my experience as a professional photographer, and my time as a freelance artist. I began learning photography during my four-year pursuit of an art degree, and I also draw on my master's degree in business, my experience as a professional photographer, and my time as a freelance artist. You'll learn from my successes, and I will share the lessons I've learned from my mistakes. Nobody photographs hundreds of nude models without learning something, even if by accident. Hopefully, I will help you avoid making missteps that many photographers commonly repeat. Each model who has stepped in front of my camera came to me through one of the techniques described in this book. I'll give you the kind of knowledge I wish I had many years ago when I first started recruiting and photographing nudes. I hope it speeds you in your quest to capture the beauty of the female body, not only by enhancing your recruiting skills, but also by providing you with a well-rounded comprehension of the model's process of choosing which photographers to work with. With some training, work, and commitment, you can launch a new chapter in your nude photography career by recruiting attractive and dedicated models.

Let there be no confusion: a model is someone I hire to be my subject. The model is not a customer but a form of employee. Technically she can be called an independent contractor, but even more so, she is a collaborator. A customer can commission the photographer prior to the shoot or can be found later by marketing the images to publishers. Photographers engage models for a variety of reasons, some commercial and some artistic. I discuss these pursuits as well. Since my experience is chiefly with female models, I write from that perspective.

Beginning on the next page is a discussion of four keys for recruiting and collaborating with models. I will teach you what these fundamentals are and explain each one. In the rest of the book, I will show you how to put these principles into action to recruit and work with models.

FUNDAMENTALS

Four Keys to Working with Nude Models

1. **You don't have to convince anyone to pose nude.** Willing models are out there who have already made the decision to pose nude.
2. **It's not all about the money.** Offering more than a fair wage is not a significant enticement. Models are working for more than just money. It's a matter of pride and a feeling of personal achievement. You'll only recruit models as good as your current work. If you want to work with a higher caliber model, you need to show her that you can produce photographs she can be proud of. Improve your technique and learn to select the best portfolio images.
3. **Don't give up.** The availability of models can be seasonal. Depending on where you are, your population of models may ebb and flow based on college exams, spring break, seasonal jobs, and economic factors. A whole array of dynamic elements affect the supply of models. Some are obvious to predict, while others will be completely opaque to the photographer.
4. **Communicate clearly and fully.** Experienced models know the importance of communication. With less experienced models, you need to pick up the slack by helping them understand everything to expect before they book the photo session. A well-planned, well-executed portfolio is the cornerstone of your communication.

This section briefly introduces concepts that will reappear in various places throughout this book. Most of the concepts herein fall into one of these key areas.

You Don't Have to Convince Anyone to Pose Nude

I'm often asked how I've convinced so many women to pose nude. My answer? I don't. Why? Because there is no need to. The women I photograph are willing to pose nude before they even know I exist. The first nude shoot I did was a total surprise to me. The model just took her clothes off and stepped in front of my camera, ready to model. She simply assumed I wanted to photograph her nude.

The fact is, plenty of women *want* to pose nude for photographers, so you don't have to convince them. Not only have I photographed plenty of nude models, but they've also shared with me their reasons for choosing who they pose for.

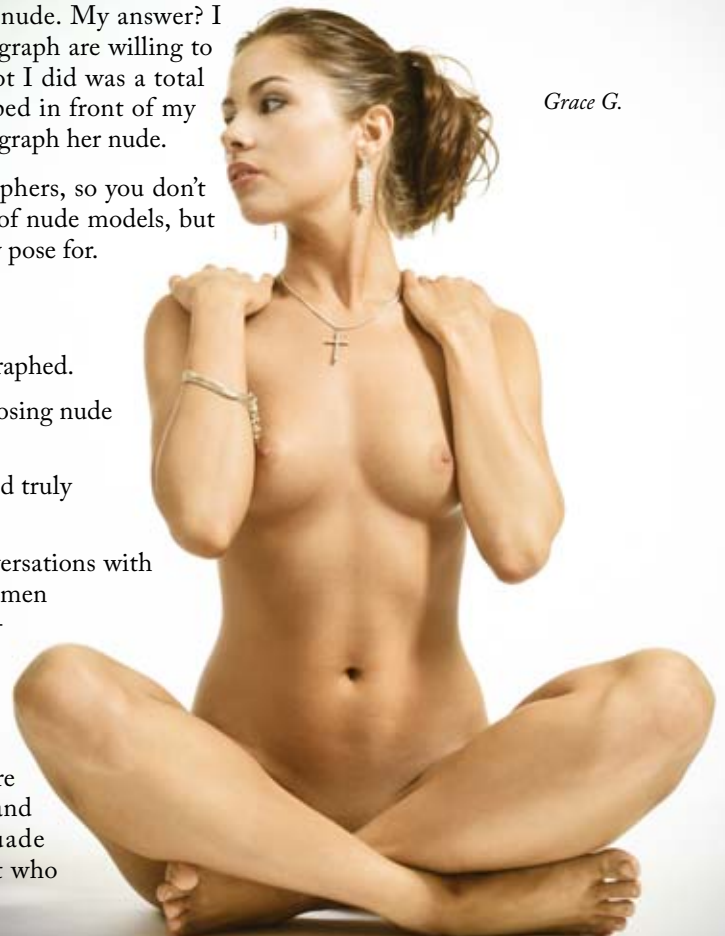
Some ideas to think about

- Almost all highly attractive, fit women enjoy being photographed.
- The majority of the above women would be interested in posing nude one or more times during their lifetime.
- Almost no woman would pose for something she considered truly embarrassing.

The observations above are based on my experiences and conversations with models. Think for a minute about the second point. Among women who are physically fit, highly attractive, and enjoy being photographed, you may be surprised to find that most would be confident enough and interested in posing nude one or more times in their life. The key concept is that they would do it at least once. So what are the circumstances under which they would enjoy posing nude? Consider that women who model are approached many times to pose nude; sometimes they will, and sometimes they won't. Although you don't have to persuade someone to pose nude, most models are discriminating about who

Availability of Models Can Fluctuate

During an actors' union strike, I experienced a huge upsurge in inquiries for modeling jobs. The suitability of the candidates was not as consistent as at other times, but it was a clear example of how market factors cause availability to fluctuate.



Grace G.

they pose for. You have to demonstrate that you are worthy of working with her and that her images will be admired.

Many women, many styles of nudes

Another reason a woman won't pose is if she doesn't feel attractive. Either she's never felt confident enough to pose nude, or she doesn't feel attractive because of some short-term reason. Some reasons come and go quickly, and others last a lifetime. For instance, if a would-be model is experiencing a problem with her complexion, she might temporarily avoid posing.

External factors, such as what others may think of them, come into play. This can include everything from the judgment of the community or family to the envy of friends. A person's faith or influence of religious contacts can dissuade her from modeling, especially if she finds your style lacking refinements that she deems artistic. Worrying about the opinions and judgments of others is based on her confidence about being attractive. Many models are confident enough not to care that others may be judgmental or envious of them. Sometimes models are relieved to discover that their family or friends are supportive of their aspirations to model nude. Other times, they just choose to follow the beat of their own drum. This transition is usually a one-time event; once a model comes into her own and decides to pose nude, she has come to terms with outside opinions. So finding someone willing to pose nude is easier if you can find a model with nude experience.

Sometimes a woman doesn't know she's ready to pose nude until she sees a fantastic image and is inspired to pose for a similar photo. Sometimes the image she sees is mine; other times, it may be yours. In that case it's likely she'll seek out the specific photographer in hopes of getting the results she wants. Maybe it's a sexy image, or maybe it's not sexy at all; maybe it's deeply artistic, or maybe it's downright shocking. Different women don't always agree on how they want to be photographed. A model's self image will not always fit with your assumptions of her, so you need to ask and listen. One woman may agree to pose for sexy pin-ups but refuse to pose for more modest, artistic nudes. The point is that your model imagines herself in the final image, and that's why she chooses to pose. However, if the model doesn't think you can create the image or listen closely enough to her to understand her point of view, then she won't pose for you. Hiring is a two-way street. Both employer and employee must have a common goal.

Having a varied portfolio can really help in this department. Stack the deck in your favor by showing a variety of your favorite nude styles in your portfolio. Remember that your portfolio is intended to showcase the kind of images you want to continue to create. This will help recruit models who are amenable to your style and genre.

It's Not All About Money

Models care about more than just money. Certainly, getting paid is important to any professional model. Like anyone else, she has bills to pay and various other needs for cash. First-time or occasional models are more easily enticed by monetary compen-



Jennifer F.

sation. Even part-time models rely on modeling for income. However, they want more out of a modeling career than just a steady stream of paying jobs.

Models want to be portrayed in a favorable light. They want a comfortable working environment and an amiable photographer. Models want to work with a photographer whom they perceive to be an echelon above whoever they've worked with previously. Novice models will want to fortify their portfolios with images that are superior to their current ones. Experienced models care about being included on projects that are higher profile than they have worked on before.

Certainly a few models seem to only care about money, but even the money-conscious model has more than one dimension. Although some models tell me they are willing to work with anyone who is willing pay, I'm willing to bet that they perform better when they admire the photographer.

Offering more money will often bring in more models, but anything significantly above a fair wage will yield diminishing returns. Offering outlandish pay can backfire, as models become suspicious of your legitimacy.

Don't Give Up

Don't give up if you have trouble finding models. The availability of models can be seasonal, rising and falling in sync with college schedules, weather, economic factors, and a whole array of dynamic elements. Staying motivated is the most important factor in early success.

New to nudes

Some photographers who are new to nudes may jump right in, and others are timid. If you are among the timid set, you need to work your way up by shooting other styles of photography. If your skills are rudimentary, you can learn the basics with landscape and still life to fill in the times you can't find a portraiture model. Start with friends and family if you don't feel comfortable recruiting a stranger. Start with fashion if you don't feel comfortable hiring a glamour model. Self-confidence is key. Work on a glamour portfolio if you don't yet feel up to photographing nudes or if you're having trouble convincing models that you can produce worthy images.

Keep shooting in order to keep sharpening your skills and making connections with potential models. Until you land your first nude shoot, stay busy with any kind of shooting that you can. If you've not found your first nude model, it might be because your work is not strong enough to convince the model that you'll make her look gorgeous.

At some point you'll start working with nudes. A certain degree of apprehension is normal. After hundreds of nude models, I still have concerns about making sure a shoot works to its best potential. It's not nervousness that I experience these days, but rather a heightened sense of attention that keeps me on my toes. If you're waiting until you have no uncertainties, you'll never shoot nudes. Somewhere between self-inflicted paralysis and utter calm lies the photographer who is ready for figure shoots.

Building your portfolio

You need samples of nude shots in order to book your models. Building credibility is an essential step toward recruiting models, and nothing builds credibility better than an astounding portfolio. But how do you get your first nudes? This may seem like a catch-22, but you can get there. You may have to add progressively unclothed shots to your portfolio until you have a portfolio of nudes. Shoot clothed models until your work is competent enough to convince someone to do glamorous bikini or lingerie shots with you. I've rarely met an attractive woman who wouldn't pose in lingerie and for implied nudes. Then you can move on to models who do implied nudes (nude from behind, for example) or topless shots. In many cases your first nude model can be one you've already photographed clothed. Each time you work with a model, the two of you will build trust and comfort.

There is a first time for everything, and I've employed my fair share of models who are posing nude for the first time. I don't recommend this for beginning photographers, since neither of you will have much experience with nude shoots. But bear in mind that every model who poses nude had a first time.

You will eventually find your first nude model, especially if you work repeatedly with the same model or enlist a model who has a lot of experience modeling nude. Finding your first nude model may seem difficult at first, but it's really not.

Once you've finished your portfolio, complete with everything you need to impress prospective models, know this: You're not done. You're never done building your portfolio. Periodically review your portfolio and relentlessly eliminate weak or old photos. Recognize what works and stick with it or update it. Your portfolio should contain only consistently strong, recent work.

Communicate Clearly and Fully

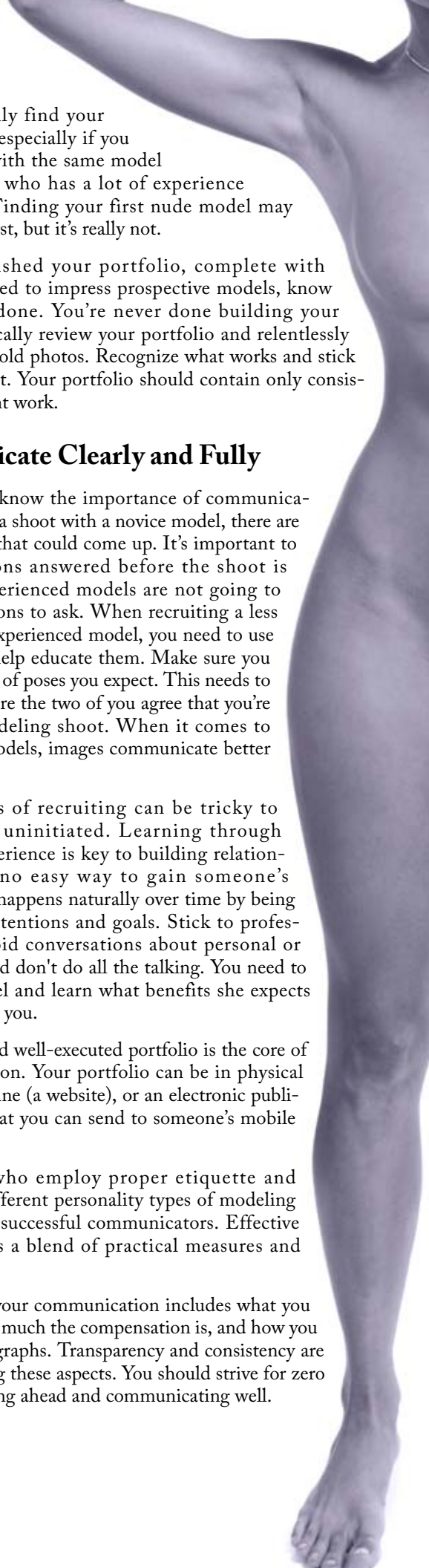
Seasoned models know the importance of communication. When doing a shoot with a novice model, there are a lot of questions that could come up. It's important to get these questions answered before the shoot is booked. Less experienced models are not going to know what questions to ask. When recruiting a less experienced or inexperienced model, you need to use your expertise to help educate them. Make sure you explain what kinds of poses you expect. This needs to be established before the two of you agree that you're going to do a modeling shoot. When it comes to recruiting nude models, images communicate better than words.

The ins and outs of recruiting can be tricky to navigate for the uninitiated. Learning through examples and experience is key to building relationships. There is no easy way to gain someone's confidence. Trust happens naturally over time by being clear with your intentions and goals. Stick to professional dialog, avoid conversations about personal or private matters, and don't do all the talking. You need to listen to the model and learn what benefits she expects from working with you.

A well-planned and well-executed portfolio is the core of your communication. Your portfolio can be in physical form (a book), online (a website), or an electronic publication (e-book) that you can send to someone's mobile device.

Photographers who employ proper etiquette and understand the different personality types of modeling applicants will be successful communicators. Effective communication is a blend of practical measures and learned insight.

The substance of your communication includes what you plan to shoot, how much the compensation is, and how you will use the photographs. Transparency and consistency are essential in relaying these aspects. You should strive for zero surprises by thinking ahead and communicating well.



Page 6 not available in preview

1. RECRUITING

The Recruiting Timeline

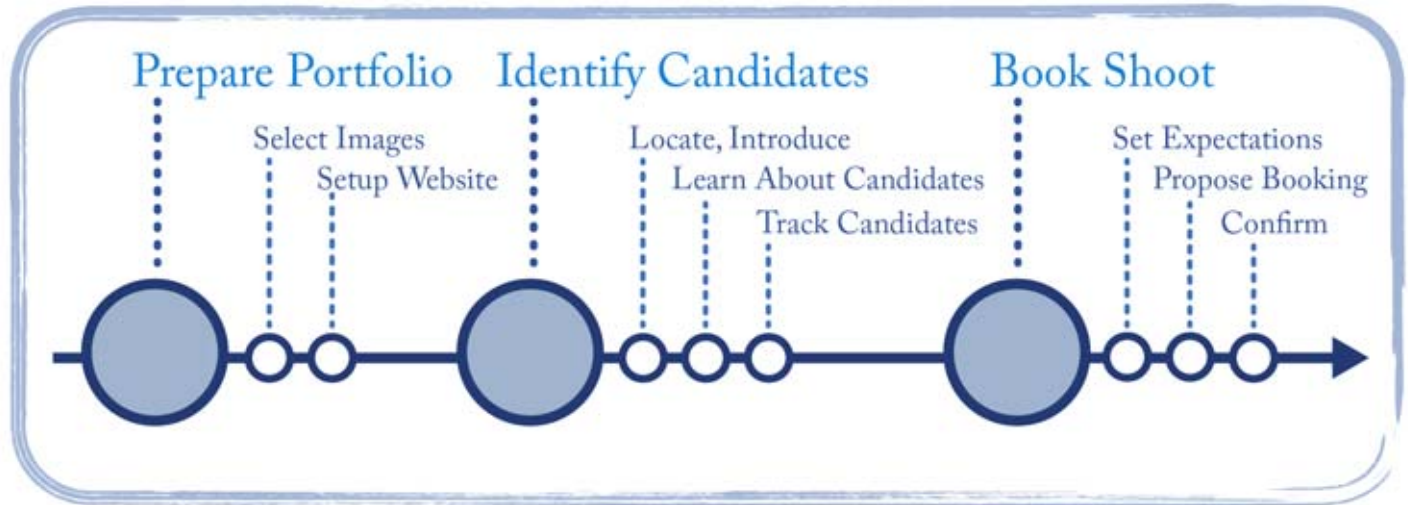


Figure 1: Recruiting Timeline

Recruiting is everything that takes place prior to the shoot that will bring a model into your studio well prepared to perform. Recruiting is more than just finding a willing model and agreeing on a time to shoot. When a model first steps into my studio, I want to see her whole face smile like she's greeting a longtime friend. She knows exactly what to expect out of the entire session with me. She has with her everything she needs to be at her best, including the right attitude. When an enthusiastic model bounds into the studio ready to work, I know I've recruited correctly.

The process of finding a willing model, nude or otherwise, is daunting to some photographers who have yet to do it. To seasoned photographers, it seems quite simple to find attractive and enthusiastic models. With practice, you will bridge the gap between these two positions and eventually cross it.

Recruiting the right models can mean the difference between astounding results and mediocre ones. A highly talented photographer may be able to eke out better results from an average model than an average photographer could. A skilled photographer maximizes his subject's beauty with lighting, choice of pose, and camera angle. However, it's easier for a competent photographer to create a great photograph simply by choosing the right model and taking some care in the execution of the work. I like to think about it like this: the photographer does 50 percent of the work, but the model provides 90 percent of the beauty.

In this section, I'll explain each of the recruiting steps in chronological order.

Don't get ahead of yourself in this process. This is a maxim I'll expand upon later. Assemble an impressive portfolio in advance of introducing yourself to prospective models. When you're

making introductions, don't rush into acquainting the model with your work until you've completed the first step. It is certainly ill-advised to propose a booking before you and the model know enough about each other to make a knowledgeable arrangement.



Opposite: Audrey R.

Tess I.

Pages 8-42 not available in preview

Recruiting Diaries

Examples of real models I have recruited, the methods used, and the story behind each.



Elena M. For a brief video interview with this model, see “Reader’s Links” on Page 102.

Although there are many commonalities among models, one thing I’ve learned is that there is no one stereotypical model when it comes to personality or lifestyle. To assume as much can be taken as inconsiderate, and it’s bound to be inaccurate. Models, like individuals in other careers, come from many different walks of life. I’ve photographed religious, non-religious, liberal, and conservative models (although admittedly mostly liberal). My models have included ballet dancers, bartenders, welders, students, financial analysts, real estate agents, waitresses, hostesses, and, yes, even professional models. Some have been college dropouts, military women, and medical doctors.

Certain stories stand out as good examples of how the recruitment process works. In each of the following accounts, I’ll tell you a little about how each model came to my attention and what I did to set up the shoot. In some instances, I’ll share the exact exchange of e-mail or phone messages with you. I’ve included interview photographs to give you an idea of what the unadulterated images of the models look like; this should give you some idea of the kinds of shots to do during an interview. Where it makes sense for the sake of continuity, I’ll tie the recruiting story into a few details of the subsequent shoots.

Opposite page: Vira P.

Each recruiting story is an example of one of the following methods of contact:

- Approach in public (warm)—introducing the topic of modeling after having a brief, unrelated interaction with someone.
- Approach in public (cold)—just walking up to someone the minute you see them.
- Answered online classified.
- Web traffic—people who find your website.
- Recruiter/third party—someone who approaches prospects for you, with the express intent of recruiting them.
- Word-of-mouth—when a model introduces you to a prospect by the way of casual conversation.
- Social networking site—through an online site that is for general social networking (not modeling specific).
- Online model listing—through a model specific site.

Pages 44-54 not available in preview

2. WORKING WITH MODELS

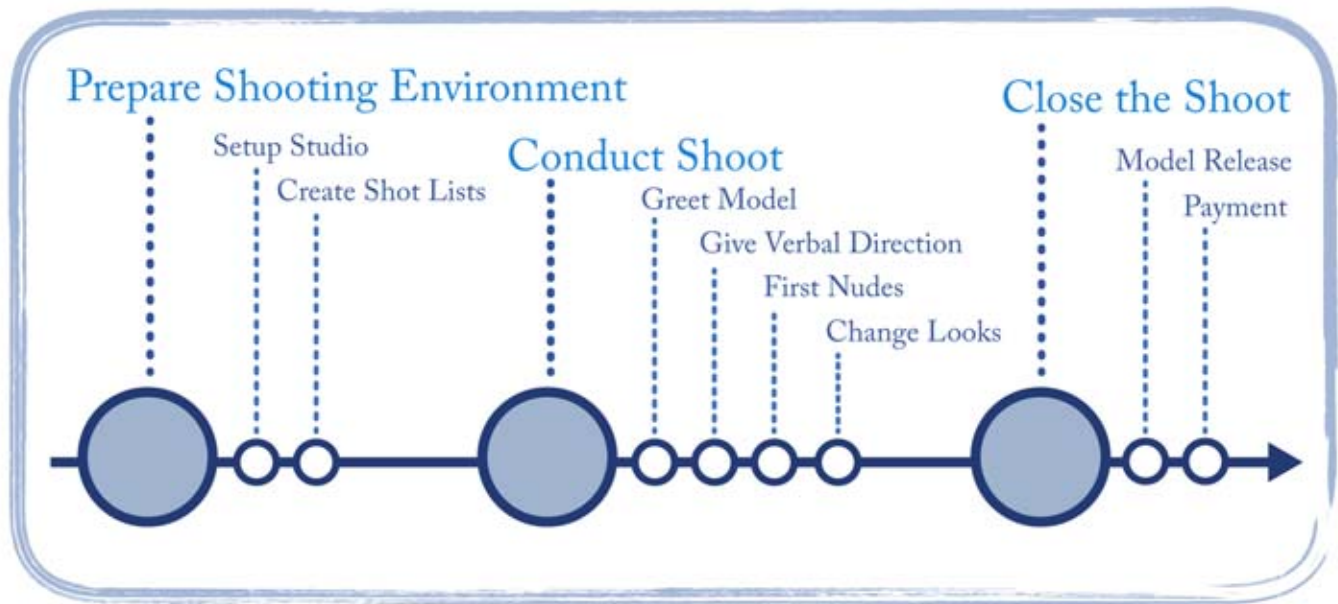


Figure 1: The next few sections follow this timeline.

Preparing the Shooting Environment

Substantial preparation goes into working with models, and this section deals with getting the studio ready for the model's arrival. It is written with the assumption that you're working in a studio. Although much of this advice can be helpful in location and outdoor shoots as well, the particulars of those shooting environments are covered in their own section.

A Model-Friendly Studio

Your studio should be organized and inviting. First impressions begin when the model parks her car. It's important to set the right tone so she is able to focus all of her energy on modeling from the second she walks in the door. Your studio should be lit well, temperature controlled, organized, uncluttered, and large enough to easily move around. It should look like a photography studio and not like the lair of some mad scientist. Analyze your studio, from outside to in, and try to have a skeptical new model's point of view.

Many photographers, as well as other professionals, work out of their homes. If you have a strong portfolio, most models will not be averse to shooting in a home studio. However, if you're just starting out and don't have many examples, some models may be hesitant to come to your home. Alternatively, you can rent studio space by the day. Whatever your location, it is important that the model be excited about doing the shoot. You want the model to be motivated by the knowledge that she's joining you in a top-notch photo shoot. If your verbal description and portfolio have not accomplished this, a large, well-equipped, professional-looking studio can give her this impression.

Safety and comfort

The legs of light stands and cords near the shooting area can be obstacles for anyone unfamiliar with your studio. Mark any hazardous areas with brightly colored tape or special reflective appliqués. Orange or yellow electrical tape will suffice. Route any cords along walls whenever possible to keep them out of pedestrian areas. Be sure to situate any heat sources away from combustibles like draped fabrics. Professional backgrounds and light modifiers should always be flame resistant. If the floor is slick, background paper should be securely taped down with low-tack painter's tape. The temperature should be warm enough for your model to be comfortable when she is undressed; be sure to arrive at the studio in ample time to adjust the temperature prior to the shoot. If you are too cold in a short-sleeved shirt, the temperature is far too low. Keep in mind that tall, lean people often prefer slightly warmer temperatures. Slim people vent heat through the greater relative surface area of their bodies and also because of reduced natural insulation. A clothed photographer may find it a little warm in the room while the model is comfortable.

Styling area, changing area, and restroom

Be sure you have a clean, well-equipped restroom for your models to use. Stock it with a few items your models may need, in case they forget to bring them along. Although most models don't desire a separate changing area, it is a nice touch to offer a private area for them to change into a dressing robe before and between sessions. Although you'll eventually see the model

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Shooting Diaries

This section is a follow-up of some of the model stories previously mentioned in the recruiting section and what it was like to work with them.

Sabrina A.

Sabrina had modeled for the nation's quintessential men's magazine as part of their annual college issue, before working with me, so she was very comfortable with the idea of creating images without her clothes. I shot a few frames of her to double-check the lighting settings, then chose our first outfit. Intending on a warm-up, I gave her a large piece of fabric to wrap herself in with nothing underneath. To my surprise, there wasn't much of a warm-up. After two frames, Sabrina dropped the fabric. Clearly she was anxious to get to the main event. This is exactly the way a shoot should go: as you edge towards nude poses, the model is looking forward to when you finally get there, so she is excited instead of nervous about posing without clothing.

Although she'd posed for a pin-up magazine, her range of poses went beyond that genre. Sabrina appeared very natural creating poses with single props and had no compunction about exploring variations on themes. While some models might worry about the shots that don't succeed, she was willing to risk looking silly in the hopes of creating that one memorable shot.

Models Respond:

Why and when did you first decide to pose nude?

- "When I discovered my mother had posed for [major men's magazine]."
- "It seems like I've always wanted to ever since I saw the work of [a particular photographer]."
- "I actually hadn't thought about it until you asked me, but I figured 'why not?'"
- "At some point, I realized that my favorite images were nudes. Didn't make sense to stay clothed after that."
- "I've never had any qualms with it."
- "I'm more comfortable nude than I am clothed, honestly."
- "Fashion and commercial work didn't offer me creative liberty. Nudity is awesome, and I have a fine art background. It just made sense."
- "I had the opportunity to work with an amazing artist."
- "I was at a point in my life [where] I decided to just take opportunities that came my way."
- "Afterwards I had a huge adrenaline rush and felt so much more confident, womanly and at one with nature."
- "Covering up makes me more insecure. nudity is honesty."
- "I had modeled a few times for a local photography school doing workshops in the summer. After a few workshops with clothes (portraits, weddings, etc), they called up and asked if I'd like to pose for a nude workshop. I said yes. That was that."
- "I just wanted to."
- "As an art student, I don't (and in fact can't) see nudity as a sexual thing."
- "Because I am more comfortable with my body than I ever have been."
- "Didn't really give it much thought. Shot with a few photographer/friends and I wanted to try a concept where nudity was required. I never thought 'Oh my God, I'm a nude model,' or thought it was weird at all."
- "It was fun, liberating and very natural. After a few minutes you "forget" you're naked."

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3. A SUCCESSFUL FOLLOWTHROUGH

Once you've had a successful shoot, the model/photographer relationship has just begun. You want to make sure you can use the photographs, improve your skills, and have repeated successful model shoots.

To make the most of the photos after the shoot, you will:

1. Get permission to publish
2. Maintain the relationship with the model
3. Update your portfolio
4. Repeat your top shoots

Permission to Publish

Publishing can mean uploading files to a portfolio website or having them printed in a book or magazine advertisement. Various laws prevent the publishing of some photographs, nude or otherwise, without the consent of persons appearing in the photos. In most cases, these laws pertain to privacy and celebrity. Permission comes in the form of a model release.

Model Releases for Nude Photography

Get professional legal advice

Many small business proprietors, photographers included, go through their careers without seeking the advice of an attorney. They view the lawyer's role only as part of a reaction to a problem after it occurs. To me this is kind of like not going to the dentist until you have tooth decay. The wise business person knows that prevention is often less painful than the cure. I don't want to give you the impression that publishing nude photographs is fraught with legal headaches. The drawback to not having a release is that you may not be able to find a publisher who wants to buy your images for use in advertisements, magazines, and the like. Depending on what you want to do with the photos, you may not need to worry about releases at all. There is nothing illegal about conducting a photo shoot provided you have a willing subject who is of legal age.

The main purpose of legal documents, such as model releases, is to make communication clearer and your work easier. There is a misperception that legal documents are to protect you in court; on the contrary, a well-constructed legal document helps you avoid a misunderstanding that necessitates going to court in the first place. If you prepare yourself with knowledge and a little paperwork, your life will be much simpler. Before you can publish photos for advertising or sale, you need to obtain permission. I obtain a signed model release for each shoot and model, so that I will have permission to use the photos. There are various actions that are prohibited by law without proper permission. The law protects against invasion of privacy, intrusion upon seclusion, portraying someone in a false light,

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Opposite page: Kim C.

and unauthorized commercial gain. The permission you seek comes in the form of a model release. The release explains that the photographs are not an intrusion on privacy, that there is no objection to the content, and that they may be used for commercial gain.

Although your models will likely never challenge your right to publish, if you are selling images to a publisher they almost always will want a copy of the model release. Publishers who would want to see a release can include stock and microstock agencies, magazines, books, and websites. Even an art gallery may want to see a model release, or at least have your assurance before they exhibit nudes or use even a portion of a photograph in an advertisement. Publishers want to protect their interests and not waste their time attempting to publish un-released photographs. No publisher of any importance will publish nudity without a valid release and a copy of identification documenting the model's age.

About model releases

The average model release is written as a contract between the model and the photographer. In some instances there may be a third party involved, such as a publisher or stock agency. The model release states, among other things, that the model has agreed to be photographed nude and has given permission for the photos to be published.

Contrary to popular belief, an agreement does not exist simply on paper, it is in the minds of those signing the paper. In other words, the mutual understanding between model and photographer constitutes the agreement. The written release merely documents it. This is called a meeting of the minds, and is a crucial element of a valid and enforceable perpetual release.

Some photographers have told me they worry that a model won't sign a release for them. I don't have trouble getting model releases signed because my models are not under any illusions about the content of the photos or how they will be used. It is all explained before we book the shoot.

If a model release is signed based on a misrepresentation, it may not be valid. For example, if you tell a model that her image is going to be used for a breast cancer exam pamphlet and instead sell the images as pin-up posters, the release would probably be invalid. There is no reason to misrepresent yourself, but you may accidentally be misunderstood. A misunderstood model release may also be unenforceable. This is why it's important to be as clear as possible both in discussing the release with the model and in writing the release form. If a release is filled with complex legal language, it may actually be less enforceable because it gives a plausible reason why the model might have misunderstood the agreement.

If you rush or otherwise coerce the model into signing the release, it may not be enforceable. It would be difficult for the model to prove you rushed her into signing a release, but technically it could invalidate the release—so don't do it. Requiring that the model sign before you pay her is not coercive, but

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Closing Remarks

I earnestly hope you gained from reading this book and will continue to gain as you revisit parts of it. Although recruiting and working with models takes a lot of work, with perseverance I'm confident that almost anyone can do it. It would be disingenuous to say that this book contains everything there is to be said on the topic. I encourage you to use the book as more than mere reference. There are many themes to recruiting and directing models and some are not immediately apparent.



There are ample resources for you to keep researching and growing your techniques—not just my books, and not just the books of other photographers, but in examining your own experiences. As photographers, we are all perpetual students. When it comes to the interpersonal aspects of working with models, we all continue to learn, even after decades of applying our trade. Confidence matters. If you expect to fail, you will. Unfortunately the converse is not true, but you must believe in yourself if you are to succeed. Never fall into the habit of shooting on autopilot. You should be thinking about what you're doing and why. When you're not shooting you should be contemplating what you might do next time. Be quick to observe but not hasty to jump to conclusions.

I hope in some small way I can take credit in inspiring you to succeed, but in the end it is you who deserves the credit for what you make. Bear in mind that at one point I was right where you are, holding a book, reading it, and just dreaming about photography. Then I picked up my first camera and headed to my next college class, wondered what I could say to encourage one of my classmates to pose for me.

Maybe you're picking up a camera later in life and content to proceed methodically, or maybe you're young, precocious, and destined for prominence sometime soon. Whatever your path, wherever you're starting from, and whatever speed you choose to travel, I firmly believe you can blend what you learned here with what you already know to create a working style that is genuinely your own.



A.K. Nicholas

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Glossary

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|----------------|--|
| bodyscape | A photograph of the body that is composed to resemble a landscape. Typically faceless. | nude | (adjective) The state of a being unclothed. (noun) A representation of a nude figure. |
| booking | (noun) An agreement to shoot that includes the time, place, choice of model(s), compensation, shoot theme, and other details. (verb) The process of arranging a shoot. | portfolio | A selection of recent photographs that represents what to expect from a model or photographer's future work. |
| candidate | One who expresses interest in being a model, who has not yet been selected for or eliminated from a potential shoot. | pin-up nude | A style of photography, which may include nudity, associated with calendars, magazines, and other printed materials sold for entertainment value. |
| clone | A photo retouching software tool that paints one part of an image over another part of the image. | RAW | An unaltered image file preserving all captured data from the camera. (Higher quality than a JPEG image.) |
| comp card | Abbreviation for "composite card." A single page of samples of a model's images and information; printed or electronic. | recruiting | Every activity the photographer performs before the shoot necessary to bring a model into the studio well prepared to perform. |
| escort | A chaperone invited by a model with the intention of increasing her comfort. | reference shot | A photograph made with for purpose of remembering what a model looks like. |
| figure modeling | Nude modeling. | set | The location, props, and other elements used to create the scene for a photo shoot. |
| gig | A single modeling engagement (job) usually a couple or a few hours in duration. | shot-gunning | The act of responding to many ads or casting calls without reading them. |
| glamour | See <i>pin-up</i> . | shoot | (noun) A photo shoot. (verb) To take a photograph. |
| heal | A photo retouching software tool that corrects imperfections, blending into the surrounding image. | stock | Images that are photographed on speculation for sale as royalty-free or licensed distribution. |
| implied nude | A style of photography where the model is nude, but no genitalia, buttocks, or nipples are visible due to view angle, shadow, props, etc. Shows approximately as much as a bikini. | strobe | A studio flash (light source). |
| JPEG (or JPG) | A common file type for photographs, employs a compression technique that sacrifices a degree of quality to achieve smaller file sizes. The smaller the file, the lower the quality. | stylist | An individual whose job it is to make the model look a specific way (beautiful, sophisticated, etc.). |
| location shoot | A shoot that is not in a studio or other familiar environment. Usually requires quick adaptation to surroundings. | style | (noun) 1. A style of photography (art nude, bodyscape, pin-up, glamour, etc.). (noun) 2. A style of look (of the model) achieved through hair, makeup (or lack thereof) and other grooming. (verb) The act of styling. |
| microstock | Stock photography based on a larger number of less-exclusive contributors. Also see <i>stock</i> . | styling | The process of making the model look a specific way; hair, makeup and accessories. |
| model release | A permission form signed by the model to grant the photographer the right to publish photographs. | subject | The subject of your photos; the model. |
| model zone | The shooting area where the model is expected to remain for the desired results. | retouch | To improve the details of an image with editing software. |
| morgue | A visual collection of shot ideas. Used to show your model or refresh your memory. | TFCD | Trade For photo CD. Bartering a photo CD as payment for a model's time |
| novice | One who is inexperienced. Can apply to an amateur or a professional. | TFP | Trade For Photos, or Trade For Prints. Bartering photos as payment for a model's time. Sometimes generically TF*. |

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