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## Basic Model Posing tips to look professional.

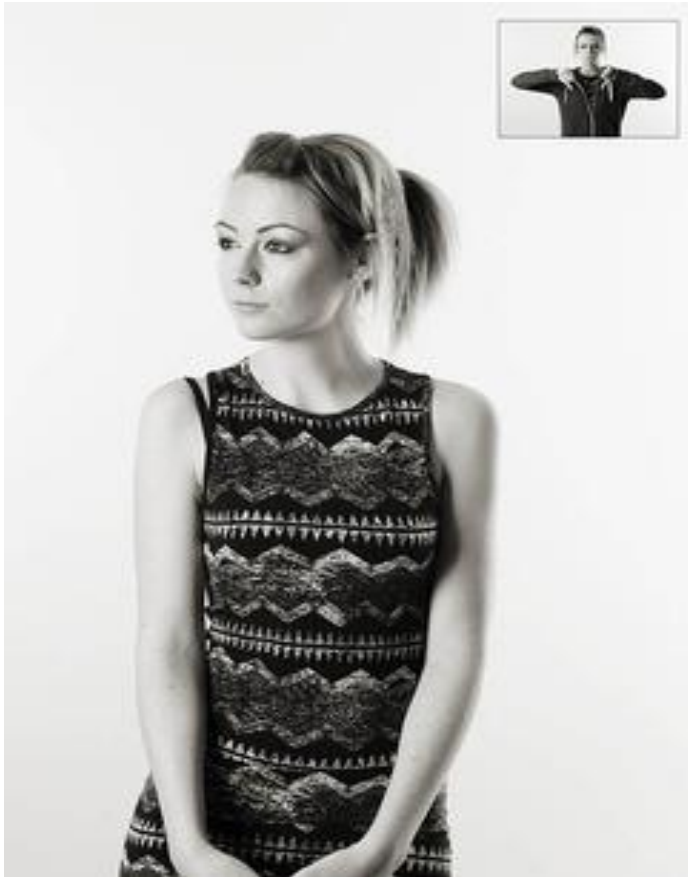
All of these points will be valid for you as posing varies in each genre. Just take what you can and ignore the rest. If only one suggestion helps your future career, then your time has been well spent...

- Rule one, the mirror is your best friend
- Stand there, perfect your poses and learn how your body shapes. The mirror is a perfect tool to show you what the camera can see - try to imagine it behind your photographers head when shooting and always consider what can be seen from that angle. For example, if your foot is closest to the lens, it is worth remembering that your foot is going to be the largest thing in the picture....and nobody wants to be remembered as Bigfoot...
- Create separation between your limbs from your body. Not only does it prevent the arm/leg from being squashed against you spreading out any fat, it is also an optical illusion for a slimmer appearance in terms of overall width. A basic cheat that makes a massive difference.

*Fat arm to thin arm:*



*Body width shrunk by optical illusion:*



- Have a basic understanding of light. For example, if you raise an arm to the light, it could be a whole F-stop brighter in camera than your face (being the object closest to the source of light according to the inverse square law). It will also cast a shadow across you. You can counteract this by using your other arm (!)...or, move your arm a fraction backwards, away from the direct beam of light. Learning how lighting falls is invaluable. Ask which is your key light and then work towards it.



- Be aware of ‘mothing’. If the light has been metered to an exact spot, try to stick to it. Stay in an ‘imaginary box’ around you, or at least notice when you’ve crept closer to the light so you can rectify it if required.
- Not always but occasionally this rule applies, depends on the look going for and can be a fine line before overdoing it.
- Recognise when your eyes are over-rotating. It is sometimes advisable to follow the line of your nose to keep your sight central. This stops you from looking bog eyed from too much white of the eye showing. Some slide is good, but need to see both pupils. Dont over do it.



- Know how far you can turn your head before your nose ‘breaks your cheek’. Go back to the mirror to see what angle becomes too far. This is perhaps a dying rule, but one that many competition judges still take into account so worth being aware of.
- Elongate your neck to simulate height and poise. Possibly one of the hardest things to remember because it genuinely feels unnatural. Stand in front of the mirror and look at yourself...stand normally, then roll your shoulders back allowing your face to come forward...notice the difference in the width of your neck? An instant slimming trick.

- Go one step further by popping your jaw towards camera if you want a strong line created by the shadow.



- If the photographer is at a 12 o'clock angle, then standing angled at 1:30 rather than 3 o'clock will lose inches to your overall width. When you do, make sure it is shadow you are turning into and not the light. Always one rule: *hide what you don't want seen in shadow*. it's all about tactical posing!
- If you want to appear slimmer you can create a 'false waist'. You can do this by positioning yourself to camera, then creating the waist you want seen with the positioning of your hands on your 'hip'.



- If you don't have natural curves, then fake them! As shown above, learning how to pop your hip is not something everyone can do but can be a big advantage if you can for great shape. Allowing your knees to cross slightly will emphasise that 'S' figure with it.
- Keep your hands loose and fluid. The term 'ballet hands' is often thrown around...but if you're like me and the only dancing you do well is the truffle shuffle, then keep your index finger higher than the others whilst relaxing the rest with a slight curve. Don't clump your fingers together and avoid showing the back of your hand. Why? Because backs of hands are big and plain... sides of hands are small and dainty.

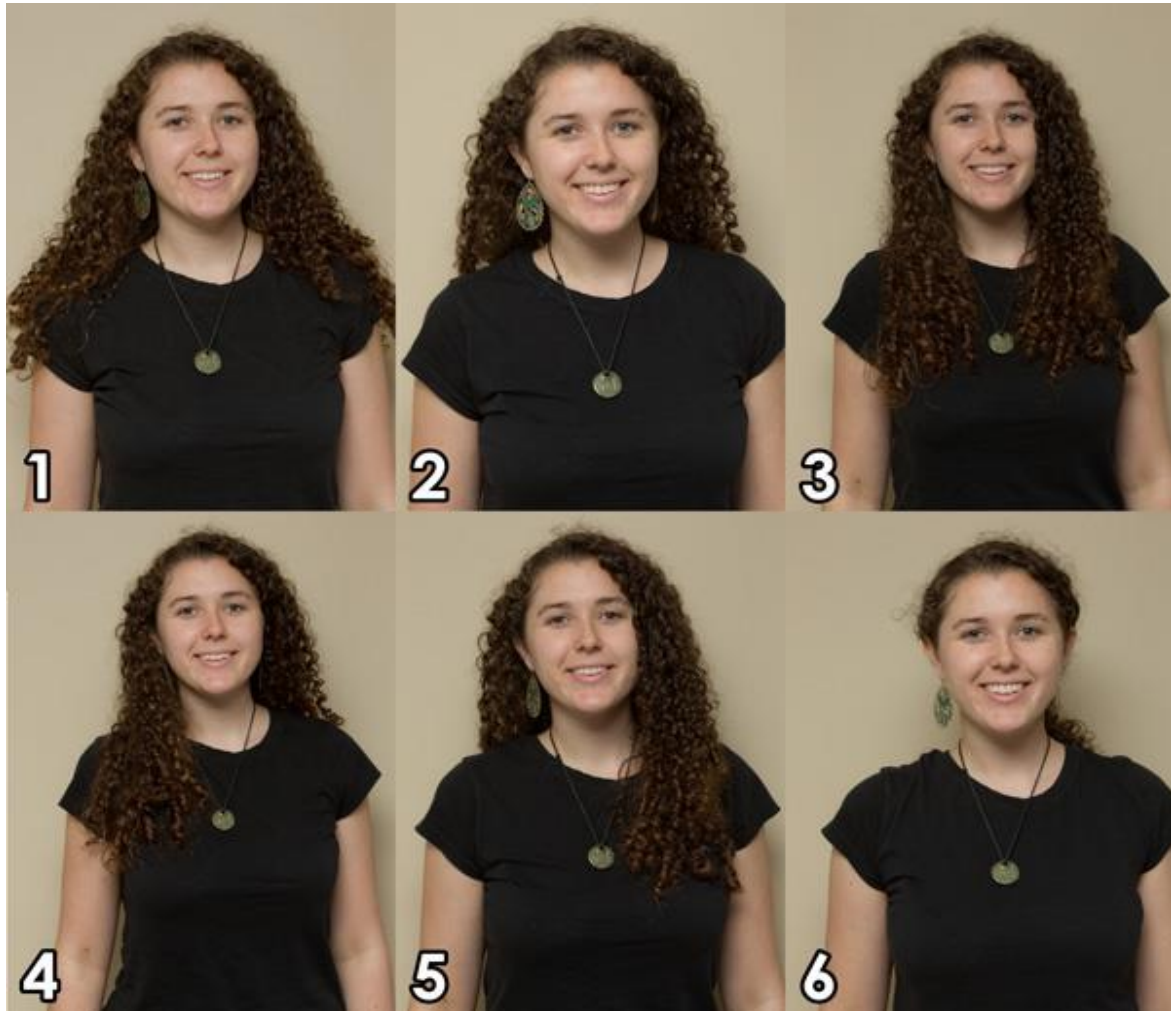
*See how much longer and larger my hands look when left straight:*



## Pose the Hair

We don't generally think of hair as a part of the body we can control, but you really can! If you are shooting a subject with long hair, then bad hair is going to be the first thing anyone notices about your photo. There are no rules as to what looks "best" across the board. Everyone will look different with their hair a different way.

Let's assume you're doing a basic portrait session without makeup artists and hair stylists. The first thing to remember is that hair sitting on the shoulders looks terrible. If the hair sits on their shoulders, then it looks wild and you need to do something with it. There are five different things that they can do with their hair.



1. Hair on the shoulders
2. Hair all behind the shoulders.
3. Hair all in front of the shoulders
4. Hair all on one side.
5. Hair all on the other side.
6. Hair up.

Hair on the shoulders (#1) should be avoided at all costs. All of the other hair positions have their place depending on your model and the look you are trying to achieve. The reason I shot the hair on both sides (#4 and #5) is because the natural part in a person's hair will lend to one side looking better than the other.

Generally, you want their part facing the camera so more of their face is included. For this tutorial, we will use hair up (#6) so we can more easily see the posing instructions without distraction. Many women see ponytails as the "day-off" hair style, but it actually lends itself very nicely in portraits and headshots since you have clean view of their face.

## Pull the Chin (or Ears) Forward

When someone stands in their normal relaxed stand, or even stands up straight to have nice posture, there is a little bit of flab right underneath their chin. No matter how skinny they are, you will see this. If you tell people to bring their chin forward, which sounds like the sensible thing to do, they will point their chin at you, which brings their face up and ends with you shooting up their nostrils. (Not attractive.) Instead, tell your model to bring their ears forward.



This demonstrates the before and after of bringing their ears forward.



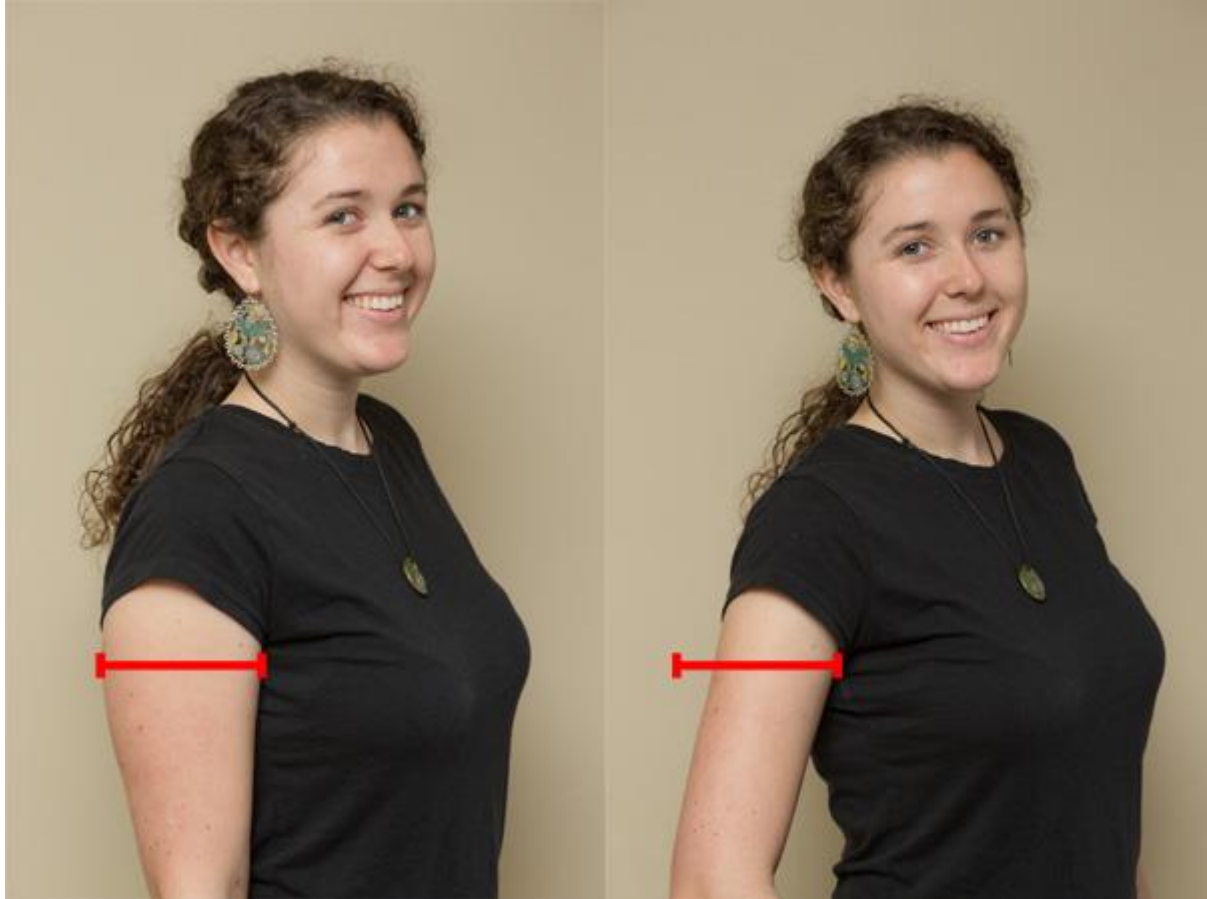
Same before and after from the side. Sometimes I call this "turtling," because they feel like a turtle coming out of their shell. It is a bit uncomfortable or unnatural, but the results are always worth it.



Same technique from a male subject. He was very fit and athletic, but our natural stance is not very photogenic.

## Again, Lift the Arm

When people stand naturally, another thing they do is stand with their arms flat at their sides. This causes several problems. First, it makes them look awkward and uncomfortable in the photo. Secondly, their arm presses against their torso. This squishes the arm out and makes it look larger than it actually is.



You can correct this by just lifting your arm an inch or two so it is "floating" and not pressed against your side. Alternatively, you can pose with hand on the hip to lift arm up & out.

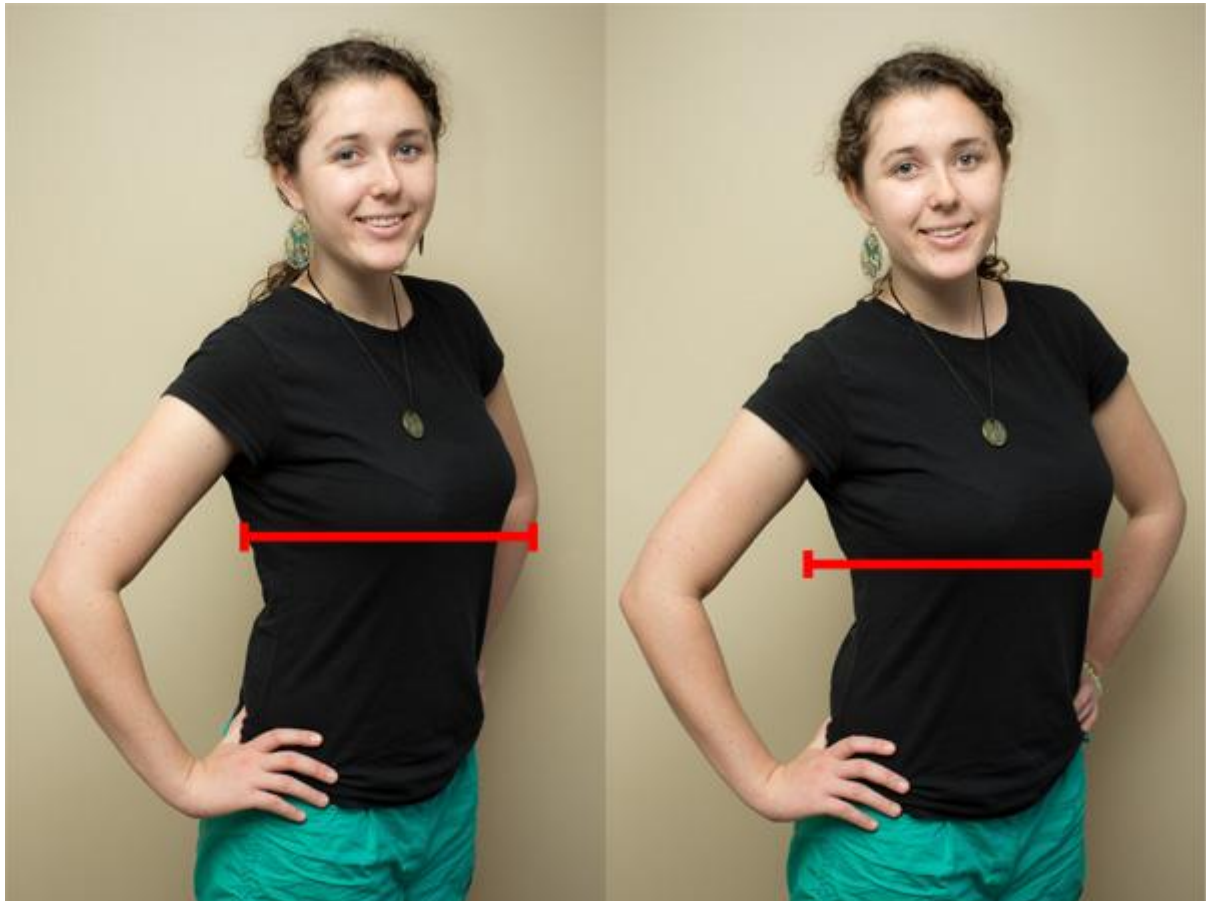
In the image above, the red line is the size of the arm when standing unposed. The exact same red line was moved over to the second photo so you can see how much smaller the arm becomes when not pressed against the body.

## Leave Visual Space by the Waist

Everyone loves looking thin. One of the things you can do to trim down promote a "natural" waist, without any additives.

By visually isolating the skinny part of the torso so they look as thin as naturally are.

The first photo shows 'hands on hips' with no further posing. The arm in the back has no space between it and the torso, so it visually extends the mid-section. By pulling the arm a little forward, you can see the space, so the waist doesn't have anything adding visual bulk.



The red line shows the visual width of the subject from the first photo. It is replicated in the second photo to show how much width the arm actually adds. This rule does not just apply to arms. Anything that will be in the background of your subject and make them look larger can be an offender. A few examples are other people, tree trunks, or light poles etc.

## Turn the Shoulders

This is a very simple tip, but important.

If a model stares at the camera head-on, they look bigger. This can be good when shooting a football player or CEO of a big company, but it is bad when shooting beauty or portraits.

By turning the shoulders, it shows a slimmer profile to the camera, looking naturally slimmer.



The red line shows the full width of the model when standing straight forward.

A small turn to the side gives a photo that is still the subject facing the camera, but in a slimmer profile.

## Bringing it All Together

Here's a checklist you can follow to look naturally confident in front of a camera:

- Hair is behind one shoulder, in front of the other
- Chin is forward to create a strong jawline
- Arm is lifted from the torso
- Waist doesn't have any visual extenders
- Shoulders are turned
- Iris is seen over the whites
- Nose doesn't break the sideline of the face/cheeks



Play with what is available. If you are wearing a flowing dress, play with it by tossing it into the air to work in some movement. If you are wearing trousers then do the same with your legs so don't appear clamped together etc. Take this newly learned confidence & express yourself!

Everyone appreciates a good photo of themselves.

By practicing all or just a few of the tips above may make the difference between being shy & not like having photo taken, (because of not knowing what to do) to being happy to see a camera s to show you have the confidence to look a million bucks!

For more tips or discuss an introductory portfolio shoot, email [paul@vitamincphotography.co.nz](mailto:paul@vitamincphotography.co.nz)