

Where can I find a Model for my Photography?

[Where can I find a Model for my Photography? \[1\]](#)

It's all very nice starting off practicing lighting and portraiture with a self-timer or shooting family; then perhaps progressing to shooting friends and buying them a beer as payment; but sooner or later you will probably want to get serious and find a model to work with.

Starting Hurdle: Lighting

We all start somewhere, and that's why there are a series of steps that most photographers go through as they learn how to deal with models. As a part time microstocker it's perfectly reasonable if you never progress to shooting people in your photos if that's what you are happy with in the limited time available.

As a beginner lighting is the main thing that you will realize you are short of when it comes to models, that's why it's wise to start by trying things on family or friends - even if that is just as a learning experience. Without decent lighting creating good photos is harder work if not impossible especially if subjects are moving or available light is not favorable. Using 'available light' is a skill you should learn, but for microstock with your [ISO](#) [2] locked on a low setting you are always struggling for light.

Unless you already have some basic lighting skills from working with table top subjects, a reflector is a nice thing to have from the very beginning (improvised is fine too, but will eventually start to annoy you), also beware that a reflector needs to be held by someone (that means you or the models hands) and leads to limited creative options unless a willing volunteer wants to reflect light to exactly where you want it.

Strobes: You probably don't want to drive straight into buying studio equipment, the next step in this progression is to use portable camera mounted strobes (speed lights or similar) These need NOT be expensive, provided that you are willing to do a little more work manually setting up exposures when getting cheap wireless triggers. A pair of second hand 5-10 year old flash units (SB-24/26/28 or similar models with the same or lower guide number) can give you some very creative lighting options on a shoe string (sub \$100 each). Newer flashes with fancy metering modes and wireless control from camera are needed if you need to grab at shots like a photojournalist but for a model in a fixed place then older speed lights give you a system similar to that of studio strobes where you need to set up the power on each strobe at the start of shooting (i.e. for the extra money all you gain are automatic modes and/or control from the camera).

There of course limitations to using speedlights, more than I will go into here, they have a limited recycle time and limited battery life (i.e. 100-200 or so full power discharges before those AA batteries either flatten or get too hot!) Speedlights are also great for shooting outdoors and traveling due to their portability while studio strobes require battery packs or power outlets to use on location. **Camera companies go to great lengths to show you the versatility of their speedlights and similar lengths to hide their limitations** (like needing 8 of them to get enough light outdoors in full sun), just don't pay through the nose for the latest flash unit until you are happy with what the older ones can and cannot achieve. I can only speak from Nikon experience and it's only personal opinion but the "Creative Lighting System" is just not worth the money no matter how much that Nikon advertising makes it look great. The same applies to remote triggers, I've had

excellent results with a cheap ebay set (trigger and two receivers for \$40), a far better starting point than \$100's on pocket wizards you don't 'need' just yet.

Time for Print / Trade for CD (TFP or TFCD)

Having had some practice with lighting it's time to put it to work on a real model. One commonly used stepping stone involves you giving your time to the model for free in return for the model giving you their time. Each benefit from this arrangement, the model gets high resolution ready to use images of themselves that they can use as self promotion material and you get their time and images you can sell as microstock (with their agreement, perhaps negotiate to leave out the microstock if needed). Models open to this type of offer are of course those who are also learning their trade and in need of portfolio images. In some cases expect a lack of experience from both parties - which may in fact put you both at ease as you and your model are in a similar 'new' situation.

One great feature about stock is that the models often look like (and should look like) ordinary people, they still need to know how to act in-front of a camera, but unlike fashion or advertising for most subjects do not need to pay high rates for someone with stunning good looks. This means that almost anyone can work as a microstock model of some kind, this is very noticeable with seniors and the middle aged who unless already possess a knowledge of the modeling industry expect themselves to be 'too old' to model. Conversely it's younger people with more time and less money who are more interested in having photos of themselves taken.

Advertise Your Own Casting Call



You'll likely want a local model, so a local classified or noticeboard is a good place to go looking - especially for very low cost / free models. You won't attract a professional model that way (although it may start some kind of dialog). Another option is to place a "models wanted" section on your blog or social network account, and either target this at "ever wanted to be a model?" or "I'm a professional looking for professional talent". As I've already written **working with the "I think I might like to try some modeling" brigade is a hit and miss affair**, but it's also a very cheap option to learn skills with, and works well for someone who is willing to exchange their time for your photography and some digital images or prints.

I've seen photographers advertising themselves as doing myspace (facebook, dating site etc.) profile shots, this I assume was partly in exchange for a mention on those profiles, and I assume also for some other reason either learning or to meet potential models for paid work. I'm not exactly sure how successful this would be, and for certain it's something you might consider as a networking/marketing sideline rather than a viable way to find models on demand. **Word of mouth is still a very powerful marketing tool, these days it just gets called social media.**

Part-time Model meet Part-time Photographer

Just as the microstock industry has changed photography the birth of the internet also changed the way models and model agencies work. At one time it would have been cost prohibitive to employ a professional model for microstock. Now there are several solutions to getting models either at a direct rate (without agency) or "on the cheap". Just like a learner microstocker there are always learner models who have little or moderate experience and are willing to work at a lower rate.

Each of these sites offer photographer listings, for a good reason, models (particularly those just starting) need some good photos for their portfolio. There's an important difference between microstock and fashion however so you'll need to understand that when sorting out an 'arrangement' i.e. you get some stock. Clearly if you have little experience in model photography then you will be looking to meet those on who are also amateur models. These sites grow with your experience and allow you to find professional models, makeup artists and other support crew if you progress to full time microstock.

modelmayhem.com [3]

lots of models to choose from

newfaces.com [4]

not quite so many models here, but plenty in major cities

onemodelplace.com [5]

limited results outside of the US

starnow.com.au [6]

Australian talent and auditions directory.

purestorm.com [7]

UK model directory / portfolio hosting site and forum

Does anyone know any other good sites that would be of interest to photographers looking for models around the world?

Tips for Getting Started

- Have [model releases](#) [8] ready before the shoot and signed at the start, good talent will know all about this, newbies will need some hand holding / explanation of what this is all about so make sure you know yourself before they arrive.
- Plan a shooting list with what photos you want/must get done, plus some 'options'.
- Have props ready and be ready to make alternative plans for issues like bad weather if shooting outside or a model fails to arrive.
- Pro-models may expect the hirer to arrange their makeup and provide wardrobe. Amateur models just need to know what your plans are and see if they can bring something suitable from their own wardrobe (watch those logos). Again microstock does not need cat-walk beauty unless that is the effect you are trying to achieve.
- Clothing should be 'classic' or 'timeless' with nothing too trendy which will date quickly. Bright and bold colours can work well in certain situations (outdoors) otherwise neutral colours are 'safe'. Wardrobe and model choice are something you need to match to the concept you are shooting.
- Shooting kids is fine just make sure the parents are there, they will need to sign releases. As they say "never work with children or animals" (learn with the adults first).

Related Guides:

[Property Model and Talent Releases](#) [8]

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