



# Posing for non-models

  
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# Posing for non-models



**Posing for a portrait** is difficult and the basics in one

YouTube video takes

over an hour and is aimed at professional models. On the other hand, every client who wants to have a portrait session would like the best photos possible.

That is why I have prepared this notebook to show the basic techniques of posing in the easiest way and explain how to make a photo session more attractive.

In the following pages I will try to explain as simply as possible how you can improve your posing during a session. Since posing is closely related to the type

of photography, framing and many technical aspects that usually the client does not need to know, I will also try to bring closer these technical issues to make it easier to understand how portrait photography works and how posing is related to the process of creating the photo.

As Anselm Adams said **“You don't take a photograph, you make it.”** It is a process not a short moment of pressing the shutter button and the model takes a great role in this process.

I also hope to show you some ideas of posing which may be helpful when you consider having your portrait taken.

# Headshot - examples

Below are two examples of a boring photo. (1) The model is looking straight towards the camera. Rather a documentary photo.



Let's see some more examples of a basic cropping:



And a little more interesting pose (2). Model turned 40 degrees from the camera, light from the left side, the photo has a deeper depth than with front light.

**Lighting and framing** play a big role in headshots. Unfortunately, these are two elements that the model has no influence on. However, it is worth being aware of what framing the photographer will choose to make it easier to pose.

**Headshot** is the most basic but not the only way to frame your photos. So, before we get into the description of the poses, let's see what are the basic poses and framing in these poses. Such a classification allows for the desirability of information and a better orientation in the large number of available poses.

## - headshot

- Portrait oriented - traditional
- Landscape oriented
- Tight crop

## - Head and shoulders

- Portrait oriented - traditional
- Landscape oriented

## - Medium shot

- Portrait oriented - traditional
- Landscape oriented

## - American shot

- Usually portrait oriented in photography
- Landscape oriented - traditional in film

- **Full shot- including sitting pose** - usually portrait, vertical orientation

## Other, less formal poses:

- Laying down ( on your back, on your stomach etc)
- Sitting on the floor.



Headshot - portrait oriented



Headshot - landscape oriented



Head and shoulders  
- traditional portrait oriented



Head and shoulders - landscape oriented



- Medium shot - portrait oriented - traditional



Medium shot - landscape oriented

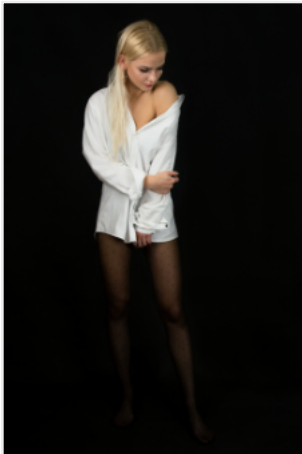




**American shot-**  
usually portrait oriented  
in photography



**American shot** - landscape oriented -  
traditional in film



**Full shot-** usually portrait, vertical  
orientation



**Full shot- sitting pose**



**Siting on the floor:**  
- portrait oriented



**Siting on the floor** - landscape oriented



## Head shot portrait oriented - examples



In the case of the head shot, the viewer's attention is strongly focused on the expression on the face, therefore the direction in which the model looks is extremely important. The easiest way to learn is to pose while looking into the lens. Such photography is very dependent on lighting and can in some cases be very dramatic. Stray light from the front is usually used when photographing women. In male portraits, you can get interesting effects with more advanced lighting. When posing, pay close attention to your facial expressions. Typically, the model's face is facing straight into the lens.



You can also get an interesting portrait when the model's face is turned at a certain angle to the lens. However, it should not be more than 45 degrees because then part of the face is no longer visible and the face here is the only object of interest.

Sometimes a good effect is achieved with a very narrow crop that cuts off parts of the hair or even the face. Such narrow cropping is possible in portrait orientation, but is more commonly used in landscape orientation. Also the photos from the top give a good and interesting effect.





## Headshot - landscape oriented

Traditionally, in portrait and photography it is believed that the portrait format and orientation should depend on the proportion of the content. In the case of a head shot, the framing should therefore be square. On the other hand, traditional portrait orientation is vertical. However, along with the growing popularity of television and the Internet, more and more often portraits are used in the horizontal orientation which is closer to the orientation of a computer or TV screen. Also, due to the fact that photos are placed in movies, this orientation is more convenient. In a typical headshot it doesn't have any special significance for the posing technique, but it opens up some new possibilities for composition. While in portrait orientation we usually place the model's face in the centre of the frame, in landscape orientation you can place it on the side, leaving more room for the background on one side. It is important in such a situation that the model looks straight into the lens or in the direction where there will be more background in the frame. Since the model cannot see the way of framing, it is worth trusting the photographer's instructions. Looking at an imaginary point is not very natural and may be difficult for some, but it brings interesting results. With narrow, cropped frames, it's best to look straight into the lens.





## Head and shoulders - portrait oriented

Traditional pictures in front of you may seem boring, but in this shot you can already try some posing techniques, such as tilting your head.

Turning the torso is even more interesting here. Typically a 45-degree rotation is used (4), but you can also take pictures with a torso rotation of 90 degrees or more (5) (6).

It is still easiest to pose while looking into the lens, but looking up or down also has interesting effects (3). With this framing, we can already use the camera position to change the mood.

Usually, photos are taken with the camera at eye level of the model (7), but photos from a lower perspective can also look interesting (8). It is worth remembering that the head position and the viewing direction are not the same. In photo (5), the model has her head facing straight and only her eyes are looking down towards the lens. The positioning of the arms also introduces many interesting changes in the mood of the photo.





## Head and shoulders - landscape oriented



Horizontal portrait is becoming more and more popular due to posting photos online. With this position it is nice to show the hands (3) but there is also more freedom when tilting the head (2).



The first photo shows an example of using empty space in the left side of the frame. The photo looks a bit more interesting in this framing, but usually there is a blank space when the model is facing or looking in that direction (3) (4).



(4) Here is an example of free space and tight framing. It is usually better for the model to look into the lens.



## Medium shot - portrait oriented



It works well especially when we want to photograph models with long hair. When posing, pay attention to the style of your hair. The frame gives endless possibilities of hair, face and body layout. Due to the fact that the model is visible more or less to the waist line, it is possible to better present the outfit. It is a classic portrait position traditionally used in painting and it is very interesting to pose in the style of the old masters. It is a perfect frame for showing the mood with not only the head but also the torso.

You have to remember that in this frame the hands are already quite visible and their positioning begins to have a big impact on the appearance of the photo.



It is also a very good and popular frame for business and official photos (3). Here is a sitting picture. Very clean frame but with a strong message.



You can pose for this frame while standing or sitting, and you have to remember that these two positions differ significantly in terms of freedom of movement and form, even though it is not clear whether the model is standing or sitting. Here is a standing photo (4).

Notice how the head position plays important role in forming the mood.





## Medium shot - landscape orientation

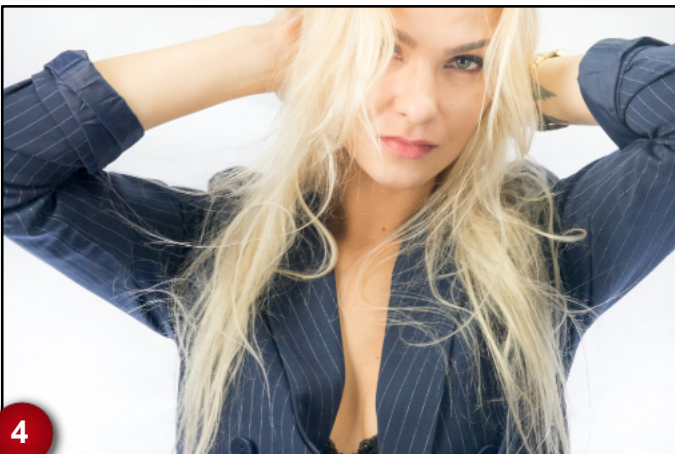
While vertical and horizontal framing gives very interesting effects in the case of head shot or head and shoulders, medium shot landscape orientation works for other purposes. One of the most interesting uses of such framing is to capture an interesting background, usually in a photo outdoors.



The examples shown here clearly show the problem with outdoor photography. Often times, to capture an interesting background, we have to take photos with the model facing the sun. It is very important that the session is as short as possible in such situations. The glaring sun interferes with posing and makes the model squint. It would be best to avoid such situations altogether, but if necessary, make sure that your eyes rest as often as possible by looking in the opposite direction of the sun.



Nice trick to avoid squinting is to wear a hat (3)



In the studio portrait, photos taken as a medium horizontal frame and then cropped very precisely to a narrow frame look very good. This is especially important when the posing involves hand gestures (4). Usually you have to take quite a lot of photos to select just a few that are suitable for this technique. Posing is rather tiring but gives a very interesting effect.



# American shot

At the outset, it should be noted that the American set was created as a film set, i.e. it should be horizontal, just like the film frame.

Photographers adopted the idea of such framing from filmmakers and also use it in a vertical orientation, but it is worth remembering that the original American frame was intended to film the action of the movie when it was necessary to show more details than in the full set and when filming a group of people, a smaller frame was impossible.

This method of framing has become fashionable in commercial photography precisely because it allows you to show some magnification and at the same time more details. As you can see, the legs are partially visible in this framing, so their position is important. The American plan also looks interesting when posing while sitting. In fact, all elements of the figure are already visible, which gives greater possibilities of differentiation of posing. This plan is often used in commercial photography or for self-promotion models. You can take both official and more intimate photos here.







## American shot - landscape orientation



A typical American plan. It allows to show the background, it works well in free poses, mainly outdoors. In principle, the photo should be cropped above the knees, but in the case of sitting photos, the frame goes below the knees, otherwise it looks unnatural.



In this framing, posing works well in which the model does not look into the lens but somewhere to the side. A certain surprise for the model may be the fact that despite the wide frame the photos are taken from a fairly close distance. This is due to the need to use a wider lens angle in order to obtain a sharp background, i.e. a large depth of field.





## Full shot- usually in portrait orientation



The full body shot works well for outdoor photography, but can also be used in the studio. It gives a lot of freedom in posing but pays more attention to the entire figure than to the expression on the face.

**In this kind of posing, you may express yourself in a most prominent way but the endless freedom of movement comes with a cost.**

It is worth remembering that a full shot will show a frozen image of your body so any dynamic movement which may feel like being interesting may end up as a rather unbalanced photo.



The safe approach here is to strike a pose and wait until you see that photographer took a picture. Try to be relaxed but at the same time be aware of what you want to achieve.

Here are some great examples of non models who were able to strike interesting and nice looking poses with no advice from the photographer.

I personally believe that the key to success in this kind of posing comes straight from the knowledge of how you would like to look and just being yourself.



The most common mistake here is that sometimes models forget about their facial expressions. Remember that it is still a portrait and it is important to control your smile.





## Full shot - sitting

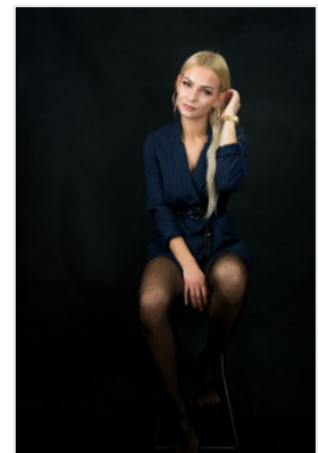
A very interesting position. It gives many interesting possibilities of posing. Shooting from the bottom is a common approach. The chair is an interesting prop with which you can pose in an interesting way in various types of photography, including boudoir photography, but also professional commercial photography.



**Sitting position is also usually more comfortable which means that it helps to relax and make you look more natural.** It presents a great opportunity to try some more interesting poses including different head and shoulders positions.

**Notice also that it is a very good position to present legs in many different variations.**

Because it is still a full-body position it gives a chance to present different clothing in the most efficient way.





## Sitting on the floor - portrait oriented



In the previous pages, I have outlined all the common poses commonly used in the studio or outdoors. Posing sitting on the floor is much less popular as it is usually only used for less formal photography. However, it is often used in commercial photography.

Such a position is not comfortable for everyone, so it often may not give good results. However, for people who feel comfortable in such a position, it provides many interesting solutions and introduces extremely interesting, new possibilities.



Depending on the position of your whole body in relation to the camera, we can use either horizontal or vertical framing. In most cases, tight framing works best, i.e. adjusting the camera position to a particular pose. **The uniqueness of this position is that you can easily photograph the model from above.** This has an interesting effect and allows you to pose differently and show different moods.







## Sitting on the floor - landscape oriented



Also interesting posing. Requires a lot of space in the frame. **It allows for an interesting position of the head and thus pleasant hair styling.** Notice that the head position gives a lot of opportunities for different poses and moods.





## Laying - various poses

Rather an informal posing giving interesting results.

**It is easy to pose**, gives many different options for hair styling. **Beautifully presents hair and face.** Also gives a chance for very interesting close-ups.



**In conclusion**, when posing, it is worth knowing what frame will be registered in order to focus more on the elements visible in a given frame. It is good to remember to control **all body parts** that will be visible in the frame. In fact, in every variant, **facial expression and head position** are very important. **The different positioning of the shoulders and arms** also gives an interesting effect. When framing wider, such as the American frame, it is worth remembering about the position of **the legs and the whole torso**.



A common mistake when posing when seated is to slouch too much. Remember that even when the back position is invisible, as in the case of a head shot, an **upright posture** always has a positive effect on the position of the head and the rest of the body.



Always give the photographer some time to take a few shots before changing the position. Changing the pose too quickly causes that we lose quality in photography. On the other hand, there is nothing wrong with the model wondering what pose to take. It's not worth the rush and a thoughtful pose always looks better.





I hope you've enjoyed my short writing and learned something useful. Posing may be a lot of fun and still something which gives you the great benefit of expressing yourself. Remember that good preparation for a photo shoot may give you better pictures and be more valuable.

If you have any questions please contact me at:

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Don't forget to check my website for more inspiration.

<https://www.seraferphoto.com/>

# Thanks for reading

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