

Dear Jill

Learning Your Model ABCs

Dear Jill,

Recently I went to an agency and was given a take-home test to complete with the permission to look anywhere to find the answers. I have gone into chatrooms, e-mailed people, looked in magazines, phoned people, browsed the internet... and I still can't find the answers. Please help me to define the following: trunk show, informal modeling, and fragrance modeling. Also, what's the usual procedure at a casting?

—linda, internet

Dear Linda,

You'll be relieved to know that generally the only "test" questions asked in this business are: Can you move back a bit? a little closer? a couple steps to your left? a few inches to your right? Once in a while you'll get a tough one like: Can you smile?

Actually, testing models isn't a bad idea. The business is extremely over-populated; as long as you're lean, lanky, and either really pretty or really alien looking, you're in. Add an entrance exam, and maybe some of those stunning teenie-boppers who come to the big city and steal all the bookings and 30-something bachelors would stay home. Question #1: Do you know what cellulite is? Question #2: Have you ever seen it on the back of your thighs? If you have answered "No" to either question, please exit the agency, go directly home, and do not return until you can answer "Yes" to both.

Okay, enough of the over-the-hill model fantasies. Here's the crash-course Cliff Notes. Hope this helps you and many readers like you who are trying to get a clue in the land of the clueless!

Agency: The middle man between the client and the model. They charge the client a fee (usually 20%) and the model a fee (generally about 20%), but having an agency (or agencies, if you're working in various markets or various areas—commercial, print, runway) is essential. Generally models won't go it alone unless they've been in the business for many years and have built up a rapport with clients who will book them directly (saving both parties money, but leaving the model responsible for booking details, billing, and collecting).

Booking: A confirmed job (as opposed

to an *option*, which means a client has put a hold [first option] on a model, and that client will be given the first choice of booking the model should a second option or booking come in from another client).

Bookings may be arranged weeks ahead of time, or, more commonly, days or even hours before the call-time. Neither the client nor the model should cancel a booking, and cancellation fees may be due from the guilty party (though such fees frequently go uncollected).

Casting: This is an "audition" for a specific job. The general procedure is simple: sign in if there's a list (a casting characterized by a mass of waiting models is referred to as a *cattle call*), wait for your turn, greet the client, show your *book* (your portfolio), leave a comp card, take a polaroid if requested, and be pleasant but not over-anxious. Some clients may request that you try on clothing or wear something specific to the casting—a bikini under your clothes, for example.

Day Rate: A model's usual rate for a full day of catalog work. This rate may vary slightly with different catalog clients and will be significantly less for editorial and can be significantly more for advertisements, campaigns, and commercials. A new face may get \$1,200 per day, while a supermodel rakes in \$10,000.

Editorial: Work which will appear in a magazine. *Editorial* pays much less than *catalog*, but good quality editorial is essential to building your book. You can't put a value on great editorial which will bring you more work, bigger clients, better rates, and the exposure necessary to climb the supermodel ladder. *Editorial* can also refer to the style of a shoot. *Editorial* gives the model more freedom to move and experiment, whereas *catalog* focuses on showing the clothes using more common poses. Likewise, an *editorial model* usually has an unusual or extreme look, unlike the conventionally good-looking *catalog model*. Certainly some cross-over is common, and the slant your book takes will vary depend-



ing on the market and your versatility.

Fragrance Modeling: You've seen these people milling around department stores trying to push perfume samples on annoyed shoppers. A fragrance model must be pleasant, outgoing, and able to wear a perma-smile despite the high heels, hard floor, brain-numbing repetition, and relatively low pay. Fragrance modeling isn't to be confused with landing a fragrance campaign—which is like winning the lottery.

Go-see: An appointment to *go* and *see* a client or photographer in order to get your face out there. Similar to casting procedure, but usually less or no waiting time. A go-see is not arranged for a specific job but may lead to jobs in the future. You'll have many go-sees when you're pounding the pavement as a newcomer to a market.

Hairstylist: Usually an essential member of a team for any shoot/show/commercial. Occasionally you'll be required to do your own hair. Always carry a small kit of products and accessories just in case!

Informal Modeling: Usually involves strolling around a store or mall for a few hours, changing outfits every twenty minutes or so. You must be pleasant, answer shopper's questions about your outfit (designer, price, where to find it), and, ideally, encourage serious shoppers to buy! Rates vary from \$40 per hour in smaller markets to \$150 per hour in New York City.

Jet Lag: A successful working model won't have time for it. Be ready to step off an eight-hour flight looking fresh and feeling energetic—or at least be able to fake it! Drink lots of water and skip the liquor.

Krispy Kreme: An extraordinarily delicious donut. Depending on your metabolism, you may have to choose between it and your modeling career (the camera adds 10 pounds remember)—an extraordinarily difficult choice.

Lingerie Modeling: Modest Americans are usually the only ones who turn down lingerie jobs. Your European agencies will probably chuckle about your bikini-top tan lines and reluctance to bare your body in a bra. The choice to take advantage of lingerie rates—often time-and-a-half or double-time, at least in the U.S.—is totally up to you (that is as long as you have the bod worthy of baring: curvy, toned, and usually a 34B).

Mother Agency: Generally your first agency, possibly in your hometown. Ideally, they will help you get your start by developing your book and offering career advice. When they arrange for you to go to another agency in a different market, they are entitled to 5% of that agency's share of your earnings in the new market. However, the mother agency fee may or may not be honored depending on your contract and whether your mother agency is actually guiding you to new markets and keeping tabs on your work and whereabouts.

New Faces: A division in many agencies which guides young new models in building their books and setting up tests (these are photo shoots arranged with the purpose of getting photos for your book; usually the model will be charged several hundred dollars per test—plus the cost of prints, hair/makeup artist(s), and possibly a stylist—unless the photographer agrees to test for free because he wants shots of the model for his own book). When a new face has enough photos (even six or seven photos may be sufficient to start, as long as they're strong), he/she will be sent on go-sees and the appropriate castings.

Overtime: When—or if—overtime is charged depends on the job, client, agency, and model. Generally, any time beyond an 8-hour work day, or a 9-hour day including lunch, constitutes overtime, but there's a lot of gray area here. Many clients don't pay overtime and may even be insulted if you try to bill them for it. Ask your booker about overtime before the booking, call in before you fill out your voucher, or—if you must—ask the client politely. If necessary, let your agency do any haggling.

Plus/Petites: Plus models range from a misses size 10 to a women's size 20 (and the standard 5'9" to 6'). A petite fit model should be about 5'3" and a petite size 8. While plus modeling opportunities seem to be growing, both groups are still fairly

limited (finding an agency that even reps petites is a challenge).

Quarterly Taxes: The IRS considers models to be self-employed. Thus, models (as well as makeup artists, stylists, etc.) are *supposed* to pay quarterly estimated taxes. Many, out of ignorance or negligence, do not, and most get away with it. More models do seem to be getting audited lately, so look out!

RV: A location van which carries the team from the hotel (if the booking is a *trip*, meaning the team has traveled there to do the job and will be staying anywhere from a day or two to a week or two) or meeting point to the location(s) where the shoot takes place. The RV will usually be stocked with coffee, drinks, and snacks. Try to be neat—remember that the poor driver has to get up at the crack of dawn and clean up after pampered, over-paid models all day!

Stylist: This is the person responsible for the clothes on a photo shoot. The stylist must iron/steam all the clothes (often more than once), choose shoes and accessories, and pin and clip to create a perfect fit. The stylist is almost always present on set to make sure all cuffs, collars, sleeves, and details are photographed exactly as the client requests.

Trunk Show: This is when a department store or boutique features a designer's new line. Often the designer travels to the store and is present for a few hours, along with a model (or possibly models) to show off outfits selected by the designer and requested by interested shoppers. (Trunk show modeling and informal modeling are similar and pay about the same.)

Underwear: A model should always wear or carry a nude bra and thong to bookings. This is a good piece of advice for castings as well. It's not easy to hide a baggy pair of pocka-dotted cotton panties under that bikini that a hundred girls have already tried on, or that black bra under the tight white dress which the photographer must polaroid and send to the client. Show that you are professional and prepared!

Voucher: This is the form, provided by your agency, that you and the client must fill out at the end of every booking. One copy goes to the client, one or two to the agency, and one to you. Be sure to: fill in the correct

total due, get the client's signature, send/fax/take the agency a copy A.S.A.P. (to facilitate billing and, in turn, your payment), and hold on to your copy (your proof if any payment problems arise).

Write-offs: Taxes aren't withheld from models' paychecks (except certain jobs, such as SAG bookings), so hold onto receipts, keep your old day-planners, and invest in a computer tax program if possible. You can write off: travel expenses (keep a detailed account of where you were going), tests, photos, lasers, comp cards, messenger and mailing costs, agency fees, business phone calls/faxes, 50% of business meals/entertainment, and some client/agency gifts. Very risky write-offs: wardrobe, makeup, hair care, gym memberships, and plastic surgery (consult a good accountant!).

Xenophobia: Get over it before entering the modeling world, because working with strangers and foreigners is a frequent and enlightening part of the job. You'll have it easy if you speak English—it's pretty much the international language of the industry—but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to learn other languages and appreciate different cultures. Don't let some pretty pictures be the only treasures of your travels!

Yardstick: Most agencies will check your height and measurements, so don't add too many inches to your height or subtract too many from your waist. Let your booker decide how much you should fudge when the client asks! Age is a different matter; the truth may never come out, unless the agency scrutinizes your passport (they're usually too busy to bother), or by the time it does—if your *chart* is full—no one will care (a chart is a monthly calendar where the booker records the model's options and bookings). Some jobs do require "older" models: the minimum age for cigarette and alcohol bookings is 25 in the U.S. and 30 in Europe.

Zed Card: An old term for a composite card. The *comp card*, the model's key selling tool, usually features a color headshot on the front and several shots on the back (maybe a sexy body shot, a sophisticated editorial shot, and a fun sporty shot). The agency mails out packages of comp cards to clients constantly and the model must always have comps to leave at castings and go-sees. Your booker will advise about which photos to choose, how many cards to order initially, and when to update and do a new card.

—jill johnson

