

## Modelling Tips

Most modeling scams happen before you, the aspiring model, gets work. The scams involve upfront fees, which do not lead to modeling jobs. These include payments for registration, modeling photos, modeling schools, and modeling conventions.

### How to spot a scam

- **Be cautious of anyone who approaches you directly**, especially if they ask for your home phone number or address. Legit agents will typically pass along their business card and ask that your parents get in touch. As well, no legitimate, respected, and significant company would search for models on their own. They would seek a legitimate, respected, and significant modeling agency.
- **Ask yourself if you are getting an honest appraisal of your potential as a model.** Do not let flattery take control. How many others got the same offer from the modeling agency? The competition will be steep and the company might be telling everyone they have "potential." Think carefully and critically about how you were approached: if it was in a crowded mall, think how many others also may have been approached. Anyone can tell anyone they have "the look". Ask yourself, "Was I chosen by the agency because they believe I can make money for them, or just because I can afford to pay money to them?" Be skeptical of ads that encourage people of all shapes, sizes, and ages to apply for commercial modeling work that involves the sale of a product. Remember, modeling opportunities are limited even in large cities. Opportunities do exist for "real people" models, but they are rare.
- **Know that a modeling agency is different from a modeling school.** Be wary of any agency that also serves as a school and requires you to pay several hundred dollars for classes that in the end may lead to no job assistance, job leads or modeling employment from the agency.
- **Be suspicious if a company requires an up-front fee to serve as your agent.** A reputable agent will not ask you for money until you are making money. The time and money invested in promotional expenses, photos etc to make a model composite in the agency's book/website should ideally be deducted from future paychecks. Also a legitimate agent does not ask for expense money to cover phone calls or mailing expenses on your behalf.
- **Be wary of modeling companies that require you to use a specific photographer for a fee.** Chances are the photographer is working with the modeling agency and splitting the fee. A legitimate modeling agency may recommend that you work with a certain photographer, but be skeptical if they are insistent. Compare fees and the quality of work of several photographers. Often a model's portfolio is put together with photographs from more than one photographer in separate sessions, each using different clothes, makeup, and hairstyles. Never sign up for photos by a photographer who's work you have not reviewed first.
- **Be leery of companies that only accept payment in cash or by money order.** Read it as a strong signal that the company is more interested in your money than your career.
- **Be skeptical of claims about high salaries you can earn.** Successful models in small markets can earn \$75 to \$150 an hour, but the work is irregular. Also be skeptical of claims that you will have the flexibility to choose your own hours. The hours of a model are uneven and sporadic.
- **Avoid high-pressure sales tactics.** If you have the potential for modeling today, you'll have potential a week from now. There's no need to sign anything immediately. Never sign a document without reading and understanding it first. Ask for a blank copy of the contract to take home and review with someone you trust. If the company refuses, walk away.
- **Get everything in writing**, including any promises that have been made orally. Keep copies of important papers, such as your contract and company literature, in a safe place.

- **Watch out for inappropriate suggestions**, such as photo shoots of teens in bathing suits and lingerie. Legit agents will not suggest activity that's not age appropriate.
- **Never met up with a potential modeling agent or photographer in a non-public place such as hotel/motel room or private residence.** Always bring an adult with you when meeting a potential modeling agent or photographer.
- **Listen to your gut feelings.** If you have a gut feeling that something isn't right, don't do it! Don't do something that will come back to haunt you. Don't have a picture taken that you wouldn't want to show your mom and dad or, eventually, your children. From a moral standpoint, if you find yourself in a situation that is not right for you, get out of it. Be strong and do what your conscience tells you is right, no matter what anybody else says or does.

Once again, this is a highly competitive field, and only a small percentage of people make it in the major markets. Problems or complaints about an agent or agency may be referred to the Better Business Bureau. Also if you answered a newspaper ad, contact the advertising manager of the newspaper that ran the ad you answered. For ethical and practical reasons, the advertising manager may be interested to learn about any problems you have had with the agency.

### **How to find a legitimate modeling or acting agent**

Finding a legitimate agent to represent you just involves having the knowledge and a heads-up attitude, plus doing a little research. You can easily learn how to avoid frauds and find a great agent.

- **Contact a local advertising association** to get the names of advertising agencies in your area. Then ask the art and creative directors which agents they use when hiring models.
- **Call local photographers** and find out which agents they use when hiring models.
- **Schedule your appointment during working hours** and meet the agent at his or her office. Avoid meeting with an unfamiliar agent anywhere else.
- **Look around the office.** Do you see pictures of ads the agent has booked for his or her models? Are the phones ringing? You want to see a busy office.
- **Ask to see the composite sheets and headshots of the models the agent represents.** Do they look good? Keep in mind that unscrupulous agents have been known to display ads showing models that they do not represent. An agent representing a model should have the model's composite sheet on hand, so ask to see it.
- **Determine whether you feel comfortable with the agent.**
- **Do a Company background check.** If an agency says it has placed models in specific jobs, call those companies to verify it. Ask for names, addresses and phone numbers of models and actors who have used the company's services successfully and recently. Also try asking your local Better Business Bureau if there are any unresolved consumer complaints on file about the company.