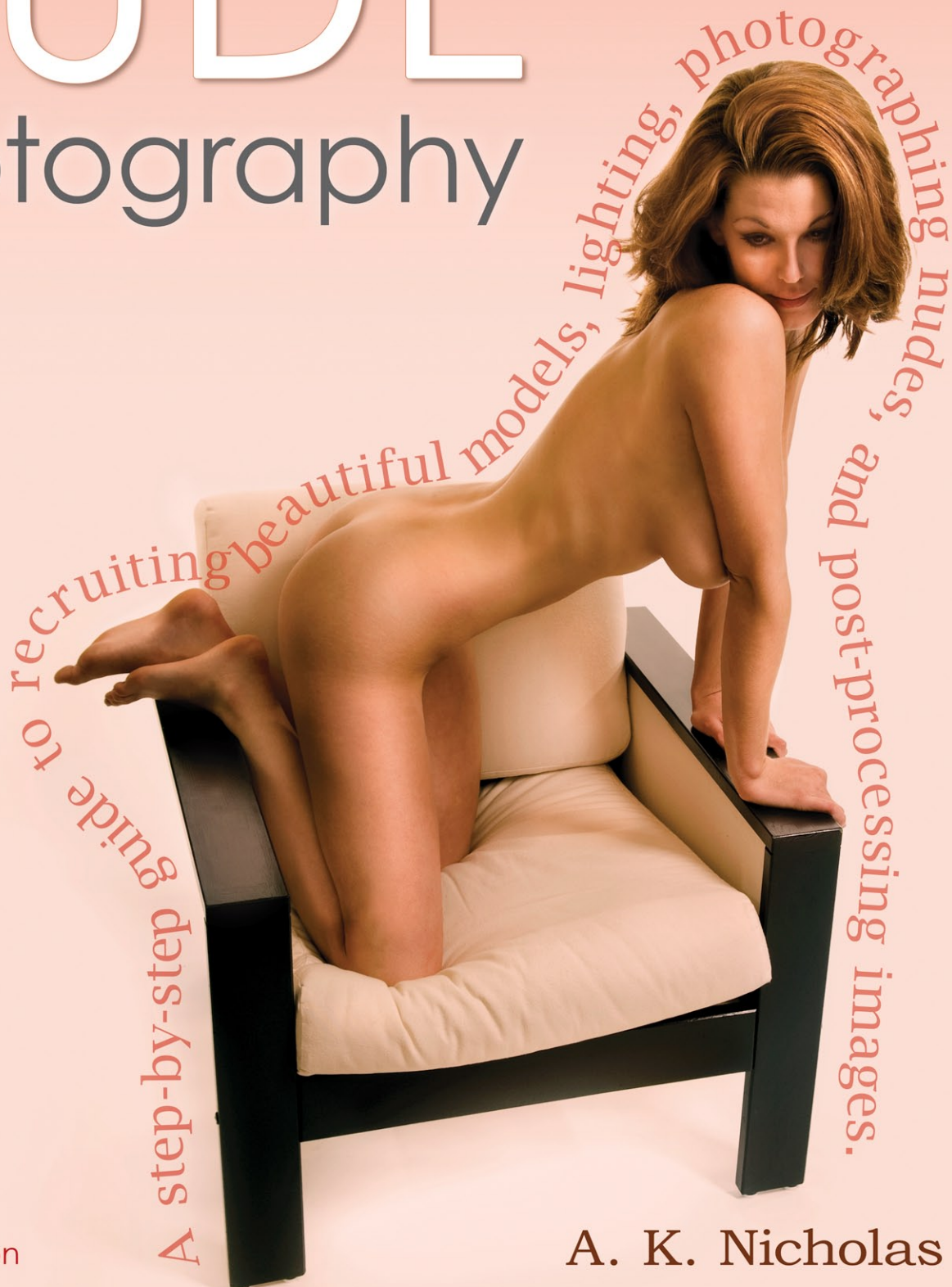


Step-by-Step Finding Models Figure Lighting 150 Nude Poses Photoshop Sell Your Work

True Confessions of NUDE Photography



Second Edition

A. K. Nicholas

True Confessions of Nude Photography

**A Step-by-Step Guide to Recruiting Beautiful Models,
Lighting, Photographing Nudes, Post-Processing
Images, and Maybe Even Getting Paid to Do It**

A. K. Nicholas

True Confessions of Nude Photography

A Step-by-Step Guide To Recruiting Beautiful Models, Lighting, Photographing Nudes, Post-Processing Images, and Maybe Even Getting Paid to Do It

Second Edition

Developmental Editors: Jillian Schoff and George Nicola, Ph.D.

Proofreader: JoSelle Vanderhooft

Consulting Psychologist: Tia Sukin, Ph.D.

Interns: Benjamin Jackson, Kera Linn

All images by the author unless otherwise noted.

Copyright © 2012 by A. K. Nicholas

All rights reserved.

Double Ink International

www.nudephotoguides.com

Ebook edition

Special thanks to the models who appear in this guide: Narza C, Nikki Dubose, Tawny C, Sarah Hyder, Tess Irah, Mallory Stiles, Ann Stokes, Lauren M, Kaitlyn P, Michelle W, Sara Right, Bonnie Rose, Meg S, Lauren K, Christi K, Gracie Jiles, Lexi Wilson, Elizabeth Winters

No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, information storage and retrieval systems—without written permission of the publisher. Unauthorized duplication or distribution is prohibited. If you downloaded this document, you may not physically or electronically copy or redistribute it other than for personal use.

Limit of liability/disclaimer of warranty: The publisher and the author make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation warranties of fitness for a particular purpose. The techniques and equipment described in this book include inherent dangers. Failure to take adequate precautions can cause injury or death. Attempt the techniques herein at your own risk. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom.

Contents

Introduction

Getting Started in Nude Photography	2
Camera Equipment	2
Achieve Sharp Images.....	4
Build Your First Nude Portfolio.....	4

Studio or Shooting Environment

Setting Up Your Studio	5
Beyond the Shooting Area	6
Out of the Studio	6
The Borrowed Studio	7
Outdoors	7

Finding and Recruiting Models

Putting Your Portfolio Online	9
Where and How to Find Models	11
Advertising for Models.....	11
Social Networking.....	12
Get a Stranger to Model for You	14
Vetting Models	17
Interviews	17
The Portfolio Review	18
Attitude and Work Ethic.....	18
Offer the Job and Set Up the Shoot	20
Setting Expectations	21
Negotiating Compensation	23

Photographing Nudes

Getting the Model Ready	25
Talking to the Model	26
Starting the Shoot	26
How to Give Verbal Direction	27
The First Nudes of a Session	27
Success with First-Time Models	28
Shoot a Variety of Looks	30
Final Poses	31
Closing the Shoot	31
Understanding Model Releases	32
After the Shoot	34

Lighting

Four Light Kits for Every Budget	38
Getting the Light Right	40
Quality of Light.....	40
Direction (Angle) of Light.....	43
A Word about Exposure	43
Lighting Examples	45

Posing

Curves and Lines	63
Head to Toe.....	63
150 Nude Poses	66
Standing	66
Posing with Furniture	72
Floor Poses	76
Posing with Props	85
Multiple Models.....	87

Composition

The Power of Lines	92
Balance and Unity	94
Emphasis.....	94
The Rule of Thirds	96
The Golden Mean	97
Visual Pathway	98
Perspective and Camera Angle	98
Focus and Depth of Field	99

Post-Processing Images

Organizing Your Work	101
Skin Tone	102
Zone System	102
Contrast	104
Cropping	106
Isolating	106
Retouching Flaws	107

Marketing Your Work

Art Galleries	109
Online Prints	110
Self Publishing	110
Make and Sell 3D Reference Photos	111
Microstock	111

Conclusion

Readers' Links	113
----------------------	-----

Reference

Glossary	114
Bibliography	116
Index	117
Appendix A: Suggested Topics of Study	118
Appendix B: Sample Nude Model Release	118
Appendix C: Model's Survival Kit	120

List of Photographs

(Does not include posing guide)

Photo 1. Image by Eugene Durieu, 1855.	1	Photo 28. A large umbrella box (86 inches).	42
Photo: Dreamstime.....	3	Photo 29. In addition to lighting the front of the model, lights behind the model help separate and define the figure.	43
Photo 2. Choose portfolio images that may attract models.....	4	Photo 30. One light.	44
Photo 3. You can shoot in an ordinary room.	5	Photo 31. Four lights.	44
Photo 4. Shot in a borrowed studio, two thousand miles from home. All I had to bring was a camera.	6	Photo 32. A background reflecting on the subject.	45
Photo 5. Although we met other people on this narrow spit of beach, there was limited access and we saw them coming from miles away. (Lighting info on page 46). .	7	Photo 33. A color-corrected version of the previous image.....	45
Photo 6. This abandoned trolley car provided captivating textures in a secluded locale.....	8	Photo 34. Available light.	46
Photo 7. This dilapidated building on an abandoned military base provided ample opportunity for compositional experimentation.	8	Photo 35. Overcast day with fill light.	48
Photo 8. Nature offers an almost limitless supply of scenery.	8	Photo 36. Using one light.....	50
Photo 9. Models at their initial interviews and their first sessions.	9	Photo 37. Low-key lighting.....	52
Photo 10. Mallory, a model I met when she was my waitress.	14	Photo 38. Confined location.....	54
Photo 11. For this shoot with a classic Jaguar, I wanted a retro-style look. I had the model show up at the stylist's location with a clean face and washed hair.	21	Photo 39. Light sculpting, 1951 Jaguar XK.....	56
Photo 12. Making a reference exposure at the start of the shoot.....	26	Photo 40. Silhouette.....	58
Photo 13. A back shot is a good warm-up; it is less intimidating.	28	Photo 41. Isolation on white.....	60
Photo 14. Side shots make good warm-ups, especially for first-timers, such as the model above.	28	Photo 42. Main lights only.....	62
Photo 15. The undress from underneath technique, demonstrated by a first-time model who started off timid.....	29	Photo 43. Background lights only.....	62
Photo 16. Body paint helps define this look.....	30	Photo 44. Nude in a river.....	91
Photo 17. A shot list helps you show the model your agenda for the shoot.....	30	Photo 45. Lines of the figure relate to the boundaries of the image.	92
Photo 18. Signing a model release.	32	Photo 46. Lines at work in a composition.	93
Photo 19. Photograph the model's identification.	34	Photo 47. Contrasting color, interlocking lines, and gesture.....	94
Photo 20. A seasoned model, Sarah had many references.	35	Photo 48. Blue rectangle.....	95
Photo 21. Bare tube light.	40	Photo 49. Rule of thirds.....	96
Photo 22. Light with 7-inch, silver reflector.	41	Photo 50. Golden mean and Fibonacci spiral.	97
Photo 23. Light with shoot-through umbrella.....	41	Photo 51. Visual pathway.	98
Photo 24. Light with bounce umbrella.	41	Photo 52. Not foreshortened.	99
Photo 25. Light modified with a 17"x54" softbox.	41	Photo 53. Foreshortened.....	99
Photo 26. Light with a beauty dish and grid.	42	Photo 54. In this example, an off-center subject, an out-of- focus background, and three types of contrast (color, tonality, and texture) all emphasize the figure.	100
Photo 27. A small umbrella (20 inches).....	42	Photo 55. Using the zone system.	103
		Photo 56. Cropping the image.	106
		Photo 57. The cropped image.....	106
		Photo 58. A gallery opening.	109
		Photo 59. A print sold at a gallery.....	109
		Photo 60. An image sold online as a poster.....	110
		Photo 61. A set of 3d reference photos.	111
		Photo 62. An image that has sold as microstock.	112

Figures and Lighting Diagrams

Figure 1: Mark the model zone with tape on the floor.	5	Figure 19: The Zones.	103
Figure 2: Small classified ads are cost-effective recruiting tools. .	11	Figure 20: Parametric Tone Curve in Adobe Camera RAW.	104
Figure 2: TFP and paid shoots.	23	Figure 21: Adjustment Brush in Adobe Camera RAW.	104
Figure 3: A tattoo to be covered.	26	Figure 22: HSL/Grayscale adjustment in Adobe Camera RAW. .	104
Figure 4: Dermablend appears lighter straight out of the tube than it will when dry.	26	Figure 23: If your files are not RAW format, you can use the Shadows/Highlight adjustment in Photoshop to adjust them.	105
Figure 5: This attempt is too dark. If you cannot match by mixing Dermablend, consider using a top coat of skin powder.	26	Figure 24: Levels Adjustment Layers and Layer Masks in Photoshop, used to selectively lighten and darken areas of an image.	105
Figure 6: Light Kit #1	38	Figure 25: Isolating with the pen tool.	107
Figure 7: Light Kit #2	39	Figure 26: Using a Levels Adjustment Layer to detect off-white areas.	108
Figure 8: Light Kit #3	39		
Figure 9: Light Kit #4	40		
Figure 10: Histogram.	43		
Figure 11: Example of studio wall colors.	45		
Lighting Diagram 1. Available Light	47		
Lighting Diagram 2. Overcast Day with Fill Light	49		
Lighting Diagram 3. Using One Light	51		
Lighting Diagram 4. Low-Key Light	53		
Lighting Diagram 5. Confined Location	55		
Lighting Diagram 6. Sculpt with Light	57		
Lighting Diagram 7. Silhouette	59		
Lighting Diagram 8. Isolation on White	61		
Figure 12: Static pose.	63		
Figure 13: Weight shift.	63		
Figure 14: Leading lines converge on the figure.	93		
Figure 15: Horizontal and vertical lines relate to the picture frame.	93		
Figure 16: Lines form repeated triangle shapes.	93		
Figure 17: Golden mean and Fibonacci spiral.	97		
Figure 18: File organization.	101		



Introduction

The female body is a marvel of natural beauty and has inspired artists for thousands of years prior to the invention of photography. Although nudity has been both in and out of vogue in various periods and cultures, it has persevered as a subject for various artistic undertakings. The earliest nude photos were, predictably, produced not long after the refinement of photographic technique with nude **daguerreotypes** becoming prominent in the 1800s.

Tip:

Words written in red can be found in the glossary.

To benefit from this guide you need no prior experience with nude models. This book is aimed at novice to intermediate photographers. Although it covers the basics of nude photography, it is assumed that you have a digital camera that is more advanced than a point-and-shoot, and that you already understand the basic operation of the camera. Proper technique is an important fundamental, though nude photography entails more than knowledge of equipment. There is a huge interpersonal element—much more so than in any other kind of people photography. The advice people most often ask me for is how to find quality nude models. Most guides on photographic technique assume you have already found a willing model. I assume that you are having trouble—or at least are not finding models that you feel take your work to the next level. I will give you the system that I have developed for finding and recruiting models. My system shows you how to initially connect with models, ask them about nude shoots, what to say to them in the studio, and work with them long term. Each model who has stepped in front of my camera came to me through one of the techniques that I share in this book. I also assume that you do not automatically know how to go about asking models about nude shoots or what to say to them once you have them in the studio.

I will also share what I know about lighting and posing, including over a hundred fifty examples of my favorite nude poses. Each lighting setup includes a diagram ranging from basic, low-budget lighting to a full studio system.

Finally, you will find some tips on what to do with your images after you shoot them, including post-processing suggestions and marketing ideas (if you are inclined to attempt a commercial venture with nude photography).

These pages are drawn from my twenty years of experiences with nude photography, some enlightening, and others humbling. I began working with nudes during my four years earning an art degree. Starting with those first shoots, I have learned something from each model. I will share insights gained through working with hundreds of models in the decades since then. I also draw on my career as a professional photographer, my stint as a photography instructor, and as a freelance artist to round out the instruction. You will learn from my successes, and I will share the lessons I have learned from my mistakes. I hope to help you avoid making missteps that many photographers commonly repeat.

Do not expect to improve your photography by the simple act of reading this or any book. It is only by practicing that you will learn.

Only until you attempt and reattempt what is in this book, will you gain photographic skill. This guide contains the kind of knowledge I wish I had when I started shooting. I hope it speeds you on your quest to capture the beauty of the body, increasing your technical skills and giving you a well-rounded comprehension of the interpersonal side of the art as well.



Photo 1. Image by Eugene Durieu, 1855.



Finding and Recruiting Models

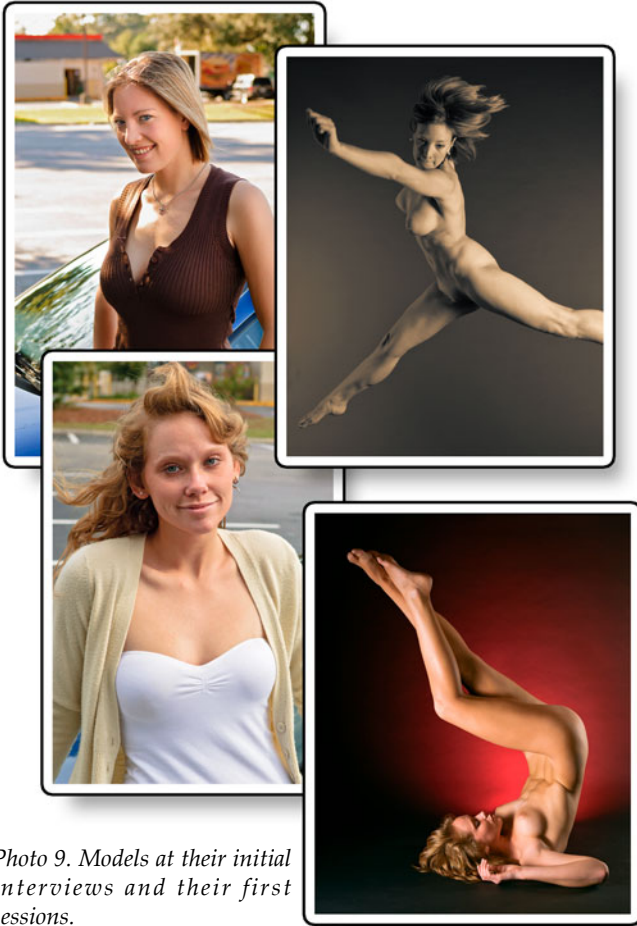


Photo 9. Models at their initial interviews and their first sessions.

Recruiting is everything that takes place prior to the shoot that will bring a model into

your studio well-prepared to perform. Recruiting is more than just finding a willing model and agreeing on a time to shoot. When a model first steps into my studio, I want to see her whole face smile as if she were greeting a longtime friend. She knows exactly what to expect out of the entire session with me. She has with her everything she needs to be at her best, including the right attitude. When an enthusiastic model bounds into the studio ready to work, I know I have recruited correctly.

The process of finding a willing model, nude or otherwise, is daunting to some photographers who have yet to do it. To seasoned photographers, it seems quite simple to find attractive and enthusiastic models. With practice, you will bridge the gap between these two positions and eventually cross it.

Recruiting the right models can mean the difference between astounding results and mediocre ones. A highly talented photographer may be able to eke out better results from an average model than an average photographer could. A skilled photographer maximizes his subject's beauty with lighting, choice of pose, and camera angle. However, it is easier for a competent

photographer to create a great photograph simply by choosing the right model and taking some care in the execution of the work. I like to think about it like this: the photographer does 50 percent of the work, but the model provides 90 percent of the beauty.

In this section, I will explain each of the recruiting steps in chronological order. Do not get ahead of yourself in this process. This is a maxim I will expand upon later. Assemble an impressive portfolio in advance of introducing yourself to prospective models. Have a few projects in mind so you can explain what themes you are contemplating. When you are making introductions, do not rush into acquainting the model with your work until you have completed the first step. It is certainly ill-advised to propose a booking before you and the model know enough about each other to make an informed arrangement.

Putting Your Portfolio Online

Having a website for your photography is essential for building credibility. If you are familiar with website-building tools and web hosting then you have a technical advantage. There are also a few out-of-the-box products if you want a trouble-free solution but are on a budget. Whether you do it yourself or entrust someone else, make sure you get your own domain name (that is, www.yoursitename.com) and not something that is tacked onto some other company's website address. Get an e-mail address based on the domain name. Hosting packages that include a domain name and e-mail are very affordable and one of the most cost-effective first steps in distinguishing yourself as a serious photographer.

Eight Elements Your Site Should Include

1. Portfolio (Samples of Your Images)
2. Description of How the Photos Are Used
3. What Kind of Model You Are Looking For
4. A Mention of Compensation
5. An FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) Section
6. Your Location
7. A Method for Models to Contact You
8. Links to Your Other Sites or Blog

Portfolio (Samples of Your Images)

Your portfolio contains samples of your work with the express goal of attracting models. Between eight and twenty photos is ideal. Include only recent work. Organize, sort through your images, and pare down to only the better ones. An optimal selection contains an assortment of images that represents the styles you expect to shoot with future models. Nude images

Photographing Nudes

Two days before the shoot, I get in touch with the model to confirm. You should hear back from the model at least 24 hours before the shoot time. On the day of the shoot, I make sure my studio is set up, and might take a self-portrait to make sure the lights are all on and positioned correctly. I tidy away any distracting clutter. See “Setting Up Your Studio” on page 5.

Getting the Model Ready

When the model arrives, I greet her and ask if she needs help bringing anything into the studio. If I cannot see her car, I ask if she had any trouble finding convenient parking. She will usually



tell me where she parked, which also lets me know if I need to advise her to move her car. Once in the studio, I show the model to the area that I have prepared for her to unload her belongings. I will have some kind of lively music playing at a reasonably low volume. This makes the studio more comfortable than dead quiet. If she has a robe, warm-up outfit, coat, or other garments, I show her where they can be hung up. I will offer her water or anything else that I may have on hand as long as it will not stain teeth. If she has brought any props or accessories, we look through them together. If she has her own music, I may plug it into my sound system.

Do not be nervous; it is contagious. The more natural you are, the better everything will go. Act as if you have done it a thousand times—even if you have not. Do not be overly chatty or bold; just keep working.

Before you shoot, take a good look at the model's face, hands, arms, legs, and feet. Any minor blemishes will need touching-up and you may want modifications to her face. Do not be shy about asking for a change to any part of her look. Make sure she

is not chewing gum and that her teeth are clean. Fingernails are easily overlooked, but you should check for any imperfections such as cracked polish, unsuitable designs, or debris.

If I have selected a stylist, I let the stylist apply the cosmetics and do any other touch-ups. I usually allow about ninety minutes for him/her to style the model, including some touch up after the first minutes of shooting. The model should bring a bikini to wear during touch-up of blemishes over the body. If she was supposed to arrive with makeup and hair ready to shoot, I check to make sure both are as we had discussed.

Some photographers prefer a natural look for nudes, in which case hair styling and makeup application should both be natural and minimal. If you desire a more glamorous look, a stylist adds a lot of value. Regardless of what look you desire, either natural or glamorous, make sure the stylist, model, or whoever is doing the makeup uses as little makeup as is needed to enhance or conceal. Excessive makeup seldom looks as good as real skin.

Use a smoothing serum to keep stray hairs from sticking up on the model's head. Stray hairs can be particularly distracting with solid backgrounds and in certain lighting conditions that highlight the edges of the hair.

Many models are accustomed to doing their own makeup before the shoot or having a trusted colleague do it. If you arrange for the model to do her own hair and makeup, agree on a style in advance of the shoot date. If you have seen a style you like in a model's portfolio, ask her to duplicate the look. Styling ideas can come from your portfolio or images you have found elsewhere.

To cover tattoos, birthmarks, and scars I recommend Dermablend™ brand cover-up makeup, which is available online and at Dillard's. I recommend going to the store with your model and using a tester to make sure it matches. Dermablend™ dries darker than it appears when wet, and the setting powder changes the color slightly. I stock a selection of Dermablend™ colors, and will apply two or three half-inch diameter areas before I decide the best match. I sometimes have to mix the colors.

This tattoo cover is not inexpensive and it is difficult to master. To conceal dark tattoos or other large imperfections, a second application is often needed. An exact skin tone match and blending into the surrounding skin are essential. You will likely need a makeup artist, or a model who is competent at applying her own Dermablend™ if you intend to cover tattoos and the like.

The larger the area to be covered, the more difficult it will be. When matched and blended properly, the Dermablend™ is almost indistinguishable from real skin and is waterproof and smudge-proof.

Refine your technique for covering tattoos before you attempt it for an important photo shoot. The results of poorly applied makeup can be worse than no makeup at all. Tan lines make blending makeup more challenging as well. It is better to find a

Lighting

Before you jump in and start taking a bunch of nude photographs, take some time to set up your studio lighting; to stack the odds in your favor. Lighting is my top consideration once I have found the right model. Studio lighting allows the ultimate control over illumination, and with most figure photography taking place in the studio, the majority of the examples are indoor lighting.

Location lighting refers to a shoot that is not in a studio or other familiar environment. It usually requires improvisation and compromise based on the surroundings. Location lighting is more challenging than being in the studio, but not as difficult as lighting outdoors.

If you intend to use wardrobe and props with your nude, you may also want to develop fashion and still life lighting skills.

In this section, I will explain some of the concepts used in the lighting diagrams that appear throughout the book. This is not an exhaustive explanation of all lighting concepts, and topics for further study appear at the end of the book.

Here are some illustrated examples of the studio equipment I will discuss throughout this guide.



Shoot-Through Umbrella



Reflective Umbrella



Strobe with Snoot



Beauty Dish with Grid



Monolight with Striplight Softbox



Monolight with Small Softbox



Pack and One Head



Boom Arm



Collapsible Reflector



Strobe Head with Sock Diffuser

Posing

Posing is a primary pillar of modeling photography. It is not only the position of the torso and limbs, but also posture and facial expression.

In nude photography, the pose is often the most powerful element to communicate context to the viewer. The pose is often linked to the genre of photography you are producing, such as fine art, glamour, pinup, or documentary (meaning unposed nudes). The pose tells the viewer what is going on in the model's mind and in the photographer's mind. The range of poses is virtually limitless. In this section, you will find some ideas and inspiration for coming up with your own poses. Some may argue that posing is part of composition, and they are correct. Any visual element that directs the movement of the viewer's eye through the image is an element of composition. Posing deserves special attention in nude photography for at least two reasons; the model is the primary subject, and often the only compositional element. The model is also a collaborator with the photographer, and posing is central to this partnership.

Beware when reading portraiture guides. Most of the techniques contained are intended to help non-nude, non-models hide problem areas. Assuming you are working with a qualified model, many portraiture-posing techniques will not be applicable. Many techniques state the model must always tip her head or shift her weight in a certain direction. Be aware that these methods are tied to the style of their time. For example, decades ago, a more passive look, with one shoulder turned away and the weight on the back foot, was considered feminine; today, a more aggressive stance is sometimes preferred to convey the individuality of a female model. Although exploring these techniques can be informative, I rather encourage you to depart from the formulaic approaches to achieve your own style. When you read some "special recipe" for posing, keep in mind that a little experimentation may be a better way to achieve the pose you want.

As a rule, a pose looks best when it appears natural. Too often, poses are blatantly staged. The result is a photo of someone obviously posing for a photo. Instead, try to pull the viewer in, make them see a story. Assuming you are not a documentary photographer, you must collaborate with the model to create a story. It can be more thought provoking to photograph your model while she is engaged in an interesting activity to make her appear unposed. Somewhere between the candid photograph and the stiffly posed one is the convincing pose.

Curves and Lines

The most basic (and boring) pose is to place the model with her shoulders parallel to the horizon, her torso straight, and hips square to the camera. Conversely, the first steps to making a pose more interesting is to turn or tilt the shoulders, tilt or curve the torso, and turn or shift the hips. As you photograph, keep your eye on these three areas: shoulder, torso, hips. Always

try to keep the shoulders, torso, and hips from squaring up like a guard at Buckingham Palace. Like all rules, these can sometimes be broken for a fascinating effect.

Diagonal lines are usually more interesting than vertical or horizontal ones. Curves are usually more interesting than straight lines. Right angles appear static, while other angles imply motion.

Each model is different, and each photographer has a personal vision of what she wants to achieve. A model with wide hips may look better turned so they appear slimmer, or you may want to emphasize her width by shifting but not turning them.

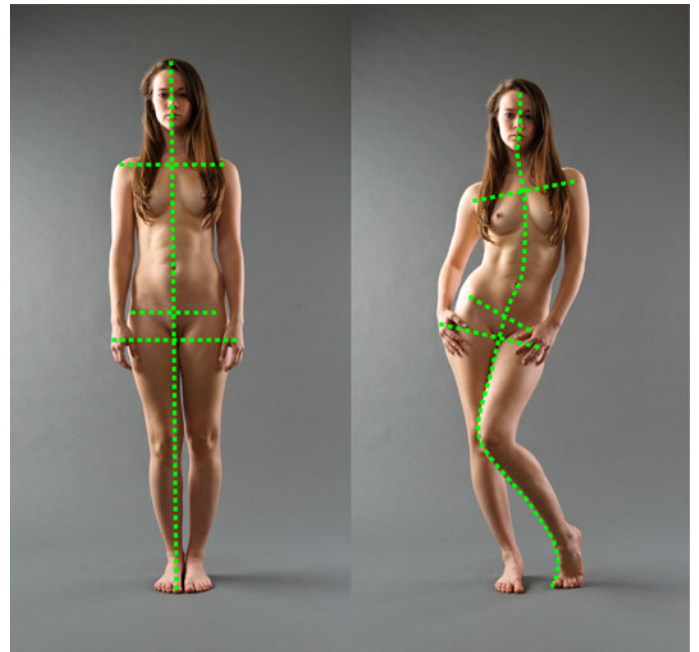


Figure 12: Static pose.

Figure 13: Weight shift.

In the two examples above, the model exhibits two very different poses. In the left image (figure 12), her back is almost vertical, legs are straight and equally angled from the center. Shoulders, hips, and hands are all square to the body. The image on the left is static. On the right (figure 13), the torso is curved and one leg is bent. The legs are at a wider angle, deviating from the center line of the body. The image on the right is more dynamic. To move the model from the pose on the left into the pose on the right, I had her lift her left foot and bend her leg, shift her weight onto her right leg, and shift her shoulders (which helped curve the spine.)

Head to Toe

The illustrations on the following two pages examine aspects of posing from top to bottom. There is a front view and a rear view, but most of the comments apply to any camera angle.

150 Nude Poses

The following 150 poses, organized into categories, will give you a jumping-off point for describing to models what poses you want, and will help you in coming up with your own poses. It may be helpful to show the model exactly which poses you want to try.

Standing

Standing poses are among the most basic and are a natural beginning for a discussion. They are the beginning of many modeling sessions, though not the best choice for engendering creativity and comfort in novice models. Poses without props or other clutter can be striking in their simplicity. Although they are simple to perform in most cases, they are difficult to perform well and tend to intimidate new models. The more interesting standing poses involve leaning, curving, and other shifts in weight or direction. Successful S-curve standing poses rely on at least two shifts of weight—one in the hips and one in the shoulders.



Composition

Visual elements of light, shadow, texture, color, pattern, lines, curves, and anything else that guides the eye, make up a photograph's composition. Mastering composition is one of the more difficult—and most powerful—aspects of producing meaningful nude photographs.

Photographers tend to put the spotlight on technique or the beauty of the subject, and to downplay the role of composition. But, you should consider the composition of every image you make. It is not enough to simply find an attractive model and reproduce her appearance through proper camera operation. Such an approach is devoid of imagination and character. Creating a compelling composition means capturing the model's personality, your personality, and telling a story. Whether you are weaving fiction or fact, when you tell a story with your photography, you are creating an engaging image.

Composition is the arrangement of elements into an appealing and coherent image. It is the language of the visual artist. Artists have passed down compositional methods throughout the ages. Light, shadow, line, color, and texture: these are your raw materials. You can choose which elements to emphasize, how the eye moves through an image, and create meaning. Every image has a composition, whether you develop it intentionally or allow it to happen by accident.

Developing a composition requires you to choose from a myriad of alternatives. It can be a daunting task, but the more you do it, the more of a knack you will gain. You will begin to take note of small details and make fewer assumptions.

In nude photography, we typically have a single figure as the subject. Devising original compositions from a lone figure can be challenging. After you try a few poses, you may feel you have tried them all. Props and background help to expand the compositional elements, but again the range is limited—you can only pose a model where you can physically put her (a couch, a chair, a tree, a river), and comfort and privacy concerns further limit your options. City streets, landscape and other natural phenomena, and other breathtaking “readymade” compositions are often off-limits to the nude photographer. However, with a strong command of composition, you can create powerful photographs in almost any situation.

You need to look carefully at your subject, and notice small nuances, to succeed in composition. When you peer through the lens, ask yourself what you notice first. Take note of anything that distinguishes this model from others. There will be certain poses and lighting situations that bring out the best in any given model. Use light to reveal, but also use shadow to conceal. Sometimes adding mystery, choosing what not to show, can be your most powerful design tool.

Learning composition begins with a discussion of the basic visual elements. They include lines, values, colors, mass, and the illusion of depth. These visual elements guide the eye through a photograph.

The arrangement of abstract forms such as line and shape are the basis for all composition. The contours and limbs of the model's body form lines and shapes, and they appear within the body as well. A design can connect points of interest to imply lines and shapes. Repetition of shapes forms a *pattern*.

When a shape or pattern attracts the eye, it creates *visual mass*. When examining your images, take note of which shapes dominate. A large or dark object may draw in your eye. But, it is not always the largest form or shape that has the greatest visual mass. Areas of high contrast due to texture, color, or value garner the viewer's attention.



Photo 44. Nude in a river.

The illusion of depth, through *shading* and *perspective*, gives rise to three-dimensional perception within our two-dimensional images. Examine the preceding image for examples of compositional building blocks. Think about what lines and patterns you see. The body creates a zig-zag of lines and the ripples in the water are repeated to form a pattern. How many masses do you identify? The main two are the figure and the water. But, there are subtle masses as well, the reflections on the water, the hair, and the rocks under the water all are subordinate elements. What about the illusion of three dimensionality? Although the image is two dimensional, perspective gives us a sense that the model's legs are farther from us than her head. Shading (the darker areas) tells us that parts of her are submerged.

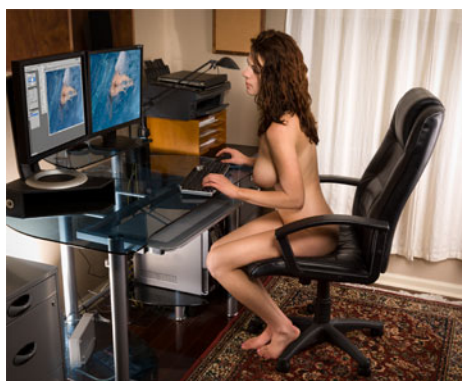
Ansel Adams famously said, “There are no rules for good photographs, there are only good photographs.” Although there is no right or wrong, there are successes and failures.

So if there is no such thing as correct or incorrect composition, why bother trying to learn it at all? Although innovation may not come from following rules, they are helpful to add structure when you are starting out. Later in your career, you can benefit by interpreting, bending, and even breaking the rules. Composition is one way you set your photographs apart from the work of other photographers. It is one of the things you never stop learning.

Post-Processing Images

If you take images straight from your camera and show them to someone, you are not showing your best work. Even very skilled shooters do not ignore post-processing, as it is a powerful tool to improve their work.

Post-processing improves your work in two major ways. The first benefit is obvious: to fine-tune each image, and to fix minor flaws. The second benefit is that in the course of post-processing an image, you will learn to see what makes a good image. It is an educational process that forces you to examine every detail. By working on each image, you learn how to shoot next time, and how to reduce flaws. This is why it is important to scrutinize every nuance of your images.



Make it a goal to learn to shoot in such a way that you have very few mistakes to fix later with software. As you gain more post-processing experience, you will start shooting images that are closer to what you want as an end product. Most images need at least some degree of color correction. Even color-balanced flash tubes can exhibit as much as a 75-degree Kelvin difference for every 1-stop change in output power. No studio is completely color neutral, and reflected light will impart color casts into portions of the image.

Before you post-process, set up your workspace. Your perception of the monitor image depends on the room lighting and colors in your peripheral vision. Neutral colored walls, dual monitors, and consistent light are important. Adjust your monitors for proper color, brightness and contrast.

Organizing Your Work

Working with nudes often means that you had better shoot plenty of frames, because a reshoot can be expensive and difficult. You need to organize the myriad of images so it is easier to find them when updating your portfolio or sending them to models. Of the hundreds of images I may shoot in a day, I will only use a couple dozen and I will spend three or more hours processing each. Your exact storage method is not as crucial as just having a method. Do not just dump all the images in one folder together. Consider organizing by year, month, project, theme, and/or model (see figure 18). Additionally, I store my RAW files separately from my JPEGs. There is a variety of software available to organize images. Look for programs that allow you to keyword, batch rename, and sort

thumbnails. You may use multiple packages depending on what tasks you perform most often. I use one program for everything except some occasional batch renaming.

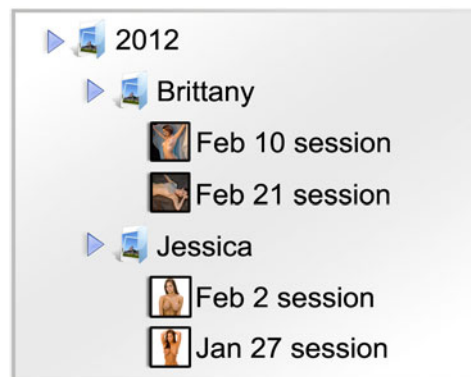


Figure 18: File organization.

I also avoid deleting any images, even if I deem them “bad.” Hard drives are inexpensive, and reexamining old images can be productive for self-critique. If you shoot a great deal, you may wish to get an additional hard drive every year. You can store older shoots on external hard drives in a fireproof safe.

If your camera lets you choose the first few letters of the file name, use this to your advantage to stay organized. I use the model’s initials and a number indicating how many times I will have photographed her. For example, for my fifth shoot with Tera Ashley Cole the files might be named TAC5_1001, TAC5_1002. I enter the TAC5 part, and the camera numbers the images beginning with 1001. A few seconds spent before the shoot saves time later trying to identify a specific file. I keep my photos on an external hard drive organized in folders named for the year, then model’s name, then shoot date.

Shooting in RAW Mode

A worthy digital camera will allow you to capture in RAW mode, an image file format that contains 100 percent of the data your image sensor captures. RAW images are not associated with any particular white balance or color space and take up much more space than JPEG (JPG) compressed images. I always begin with the RAW image when editing a shot. When your digital camera creates a JPEG, some of the image details are lost in the process. A JPEG conversion includes tone and contrast adjustments based on a best guess of what image information is important. This results in lost detail in shadows or highlights, color shifts, and loss of color information. The camera’s conversion to JPEG also makes assumptions about sharpening and noise reduction, both of which alter fine details and cannot be undone. You may be satisfied with the JPEGs your camera produces, especially if it’s a high-end camera and you are careful to light and expose your shots correctly, but you will have more latitude to correct minor imperfections or otherwise improve on an image by shooting RAW.

Marketing Your Work

It is rare that a photographer is able to earn a living through figure photography alone. There is plenty of willing competition to serve the demand for such images. However, marketing your work can be one of the most gratifying aspects of your photography experience, but it can also be labor intensive. Marketing your work will provide you with the possibility of income, as well as exposure that can lead to more recruitment opportunities. Consider the following few ideas on how you can market your work. There are many more marketing ideas you can dream up or find in other resources.



Photo 58. A gallery opening.

Art Galleries

Exhibiting your work in a physical exhibition space is a wonderful way to show your work for (hopefully) appreciative viewers, and possibly to sell it. I have had the good fortune of having dozens of gallery exhibits ever since I was a student, but I typically only sell one or two photos per show. When you consider framing costs and travel expenses to get to the exhibits, it is fair to say that photographers rarely make a notable profit from gallery sales. However, regardless of the price, it is one of the most satisfying aspects of the entire experience when someone is willing to part with his or her hard-earned money in exchange for one of your prints. Being awarded a gallery exhibit requires a good bit of work, as does any form of marketing. You should seek publications that address the topic of approaching a gallery. Many galleries have their artist submission guidelines on their websites, along with their commission schedules. If a gallery's guidelines are not available, request a copy of their artist submission guidelines before sending your work. Some galleries will tell you to drop in any time, but do not cold call unless it is their preference.

In short, do your homework to find galleries that exhibit photography and learn how they operate. Most galleries that show photography will not have a problem with nudity, as long as it is

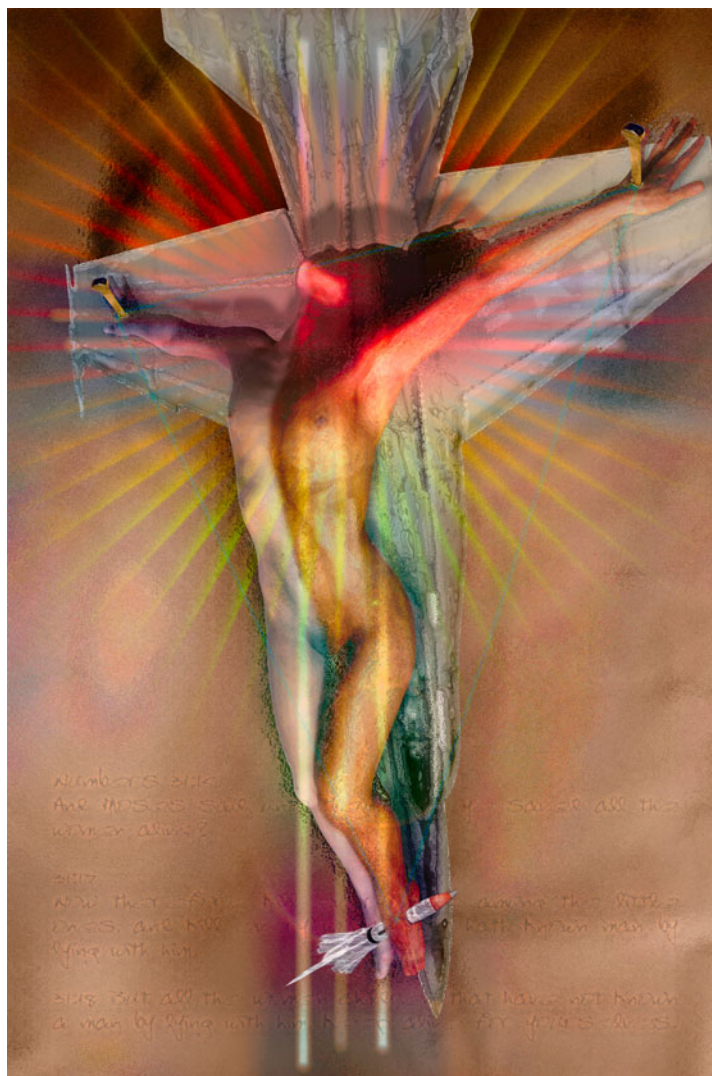


Photo 59. A print sold at a gallery.

quality work with artistic merit. Some galleries show new artists frequently (ten times a year for example), while others seldom accept new artists. There are always more artists than there are places to exhibit, so you will have to keep submitting, sometimes year after year, and broaden your geographic coverage as much as possible. Only submit recent work to galleries (none more than two years old) and be prepared to bring them some nicely framed prints for their immediate consideration should you get a callback after your initial inquiry. Have a price in mind for your work, and take into account that most galleries take a commission equal to roughly half of the selling price. In exchange for this commission, the gallery should be advertising your work and actively trying to get it into the hands of clientele whom they have cultivated. Never pay a gallery up-front for an exhibit.

If you are submitting to galleries you will need to use a printing process that is archival or as light fast as possible (meaning that the prints will last as long as possible without fading). Many

Reference

Glossary

ambient light

Indirect illumination caused by light bouncing off surfaces near the subject.

atmospheric perspective

The effect that causes distant objects to appear hazy; muted in color and contrast.

background Parts of an image that are behind the main subject and not considered additional subject. Also see *ground* and *negative space*.

backlight (a.k.a. hair light)

Typically above the subject, either directly behind or slightly to one side. Light colored hair can look great with backlighting.

backlit Subject illuminated from behind.

balance Equilibrium between compositional elements.

barn doors A lighting modifier consisting of two or four flaps that keep light from spilling out of the desired area.

bisect To divide into two equal or nearly equal parts.

bodyscape An abstraction of the body composed to resemble a landscape (typically faceless).

Bokeh (or Boke)

The aesthetic quality of the out-of-focus areas of a photograph. Bokeh may be described as attractive or unattractive for a particular lens. (der. from Japanese).

boom An arm that extends from a light stand to hold a light above the model or above the camera. *Illustration on page 37.*

bounced light

Indirect light that is reflected off a surface and onto the subject.

chroma key A specifically colored background (e.g. green screen, blue screen) intended to aid in isolation of an image. Especially used in 3-d reference photography.

chroma See *saturation*.

chromatic aberration

The amount by which the red- and blue-channel components of the image are displaced from their "correct" position due to lens characteristics; results in color fringes where light and dark areas of an image meet.

closure The phenomenon by which the mind completes the missing pieces implied by a design.

color halo Residual color around the edge of the subject when isolating an image.

color scheme

A set of colors combined for a purpose.

color space Color spaces help output devices such as printers and monitors to display colors accurately. The color space of most computer monitors is sRGB.

composition The arrangement of elements (line, shape, pattern) within a visual presentation.

contour A defined edge (line) between two distinct colors or tones.

daguerreotype

An obsolete photographic process, invented in 1839.

depth of field

The area in front and behind the main subject that is in focus.

dichotomy A division into two halves, especially contrasting halves.

differential focus

See *selective focus*.

diffuser A translucent material placed in front of a light to soften and reduce its intensity.

direct light See *hard light*.

DSLR Digital Single-Lens Reflex, see *SLR*.

EXIF data Exposure information and other data that a camera attaches to an image file.

figure The nude body.

Figure/ground relationship: the subject of a composition.

flag An object designed to block light, usually an opaque panel.

flare Non-image forming light entering the lens.

frame Noun: The outer borders of an image.

Verb: The act of deciding what elements are included and omitted in the field of view.

GIMP Free alternative to Photoshop photo-editing and retouching software.

gobo Short for "go between" because it goes between the light and lens—a dark material for shielding a lens from excess light.

gobo projector

A device for projecting patterns of light and shadow.

grayscale An image composed of shades of gray.

grid A honeycomb pattern grid that directs light in one direction. Usually more effective than barn doors. Each grid controls light to a specified angle (e.g. 20° or 40°).

Index

A

advertising 11
 alcohol 21, 22
 art gallery 21, 109
 available light 8, 44, 46

B

backdrops 5
 background 95, 107
 white 60, 108
 backlight 43, 46, 50, 55, 62
 balance 94
 bartering 23
 blog 10
 Bokeh 95, 99
 illustration 100
 business cards 11

C

camera shake 100
 collaboration 35, 63
 color harmony 94, 95
 comfort 12, 15, 16, 19, 21, 91, 113
 communication 10, 14, 18, 19, 21
 compensation 10, 11, 15, 23, 24, 33
 bonus 23
 cosmetic surgery 17
 cosmetics, *See makeup*

D

daguerreotype 1
 depth of field 8
 Dermablend 25
 digital sensor 2, 43

E

e-commerce 110, 111
 e-mail 9, 10, 15, 19, 22
 exposing to the right 43
 eye contact 94, 106
 eyes 94

F

face 18, 25, 27, 30, 64
 feet 94
 Fibonacci spiral 97
 fill 51, 60
 fill light 7, 8, 38, 40, 41, 48
 flag 61
 flash duration 4
 foreshortening 99
 forums 10
 freezing motion 4
 furniture 28, 72

G

golden mean 97
 group shoots 13

H

hair 22, 25, 30, 108
 backlighting 43
 hands 63, 64, 72, 94
 head 65
 heels 64, 65
 hips 65
 histogram
 illustration 43

I

identification 34
 inexperienced models 28, 30

K

knees 64, 72

L

legs 63, 65
 lenses 3–4
 Also see wide angle, zoom
 long 8
 light meter 43
 location 5, 6, 54
 low-key 52, 56, 58

M

makeup 18, 21, 22, 30, 31
 microstock 60, 111
 model release 11, 32–33, 111, 118
 model zone 5, 43
 model's gaze 64, 94
 modeling agency 11
 monolight 38, 54
 illustration 37
 motion blur 4, 47, 48

N

negative space 94
 nervousness 22, 25
 nose 52, 64

O

outdoor shooting 5, 7, 46, 48

P

perspective 98, 99
 Photoshop 34, 61, 102, 104–107
 pinup 21, 32, 110
 point of interest 94
 portfolio 4, 9, 18
 posing 63
 exertive 31
 posters 110
 proof images 34
 props 3, 6, 21, 85, 91

R

RAW format 101, 104
 references 19
 reflected light
 See spill, fill
 rule of thirds 96

S

safety 6, 39
 shadows 103
 shot list 30
 silhouette 58
 single light source 44, 50
 example 59
 skin quality 17
 skin tone 43, 45, 102, 104, 106, 108
 social networking 12–14
 softbox 38, 39, 40, 41, 44
 illustration 37
 spill 8, 40–42, 45, 52, 55
 spine 63, 65
 static pose 63
 studio 5, 7, 25
 styling 25

T

tan lines 17, 22, 25, 54
 tattoos 17, 18, 21, 24, 25, 108
 teeth 22
 TFP/TFCD 23
 toes 65
 tone of voice 35
 tripod 4, 8, 45, 46, 54, 100

U

umbrella 37, 41
 umbrella box 40, 42
 undress from underneath 29

V

visual pathway 98, 106

W

waist 64
 website 9
 white background 60, 106, 108
 wide angle 46, 99

Z

zone system 102
 zoom lens 3, 46

Learn and Master the Techniques
of Nude Photography

Spark Your Creativity with 150
Inspiring Poses

Composition and Visual Pathway

Control Light to Sculpt the Figure

A System to Recruit and Interact
with Models

Market Your Work

The female body has been an inspiration for artists since before the invention of photography. Naturally, nudes were one of the first subjects of photography as well.

This illustrated how-to guide can be enjoyed by anyone, but is written for two main audiences: the accomplished photographer who wants insight from a peer into the genre of nude photography, and the serious amateur who wants a guided introduction to the field.

The processes are arranged step-by-step. You will find more than just a selection of photos and a dissection of each. You will see full lighting diagrams as well as a frank discussion of the techniques and pitfalls in the days and weeks leading up to making a nude image. From finding your first nude model to selling your first nude photo, the guide will take you through lighting, posing, and post-processing with Photoshop.

You will learn from the author's twenty years of experience photographing hundreds of nude models.

