

How to Achieve the Best Poses from Your Photographed Subjects

Photography As An Art

Photography becomes an art when one captures the true essence of a subject in its environment. Many individuals grasp photography's artistic composure when they encounter a photograph, whereby the subject influences an emotional or empathetic response. The elements for composing this type of art require the photographer to adhere to some rather basic and advanced concepts of posing the subject

How the Subject's Pose Influences the Quality of the Photograph

An artistic photograph invokes a sense of movement within the audience.

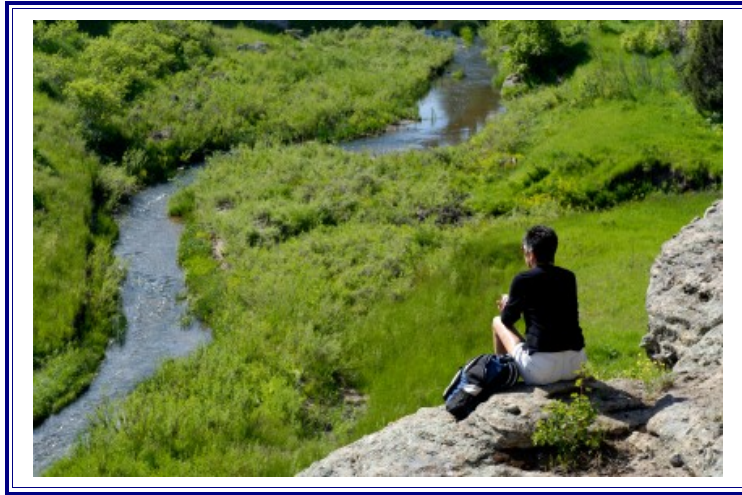


This movement comes in the form of an emotional response, such as passion, sympathy or happiness. The feeling, itself, constructs a relationship between the artist and the audience, which extends through nonverbal communication. Famous artist dedicate the foundation of this relationship as to how the subject's composure influences the audience's response.

Humans relate to each other through the form of pictographic, verbal nonverbal and written communication. In some instances, the subject of a photograph speaks to the audience through body language as form of nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions, poised movement, gestures or position within the

surrounding environment. As an exercise, review the individual in the photographs below:

Can you see how the subject's poise in the first photograph influences a sense of openness, welcoming and fulfillment towards the audience?



When first viewing the photograph, was it easy to put yourself in the subject's shoes and feel the enormity of the environment in comparison to a lone human being in the midst of it all?

The Importance of Learning How to Pose the Subject

The information included within the following paragraphs will detail how



the subject's pose communicates certain messages to the audience through kinesics behaviors, more commonly known as a form of nonverbal communication. The importance of bodily components detailed in this article doesn't merely form rudimentary arrangement guidelines. Rather, we discuss

the rules of logically ordering of the body in the process of posing a subject.

Adhering to the rules detailed in any art form can seem restrictive at first but remember, a solid foundation paves way for personalized creativity to be appreciated by your peers, the general public and you.

How the Body Affects Composition

Start with the actual body of the subject, as this will be the most viewed and dominant element of the photograph. Positioning the body towards the front will produce a sense of ordinary posture, possibly strength and affirmation of the subject's beliefs.

Positioning the body in a profile may project the subject has become pre-occupied with their environment or faces away from your audience in a less than welcoming sense. The body's position acts as the foundation of which to build the rest of the subject's message to the audience through nonverbal communication.

How the Legs Affect Composition

After configuring a posing position for the body, consider the position of the legs. The position of the legs should reinforce the meaning expressed by the body. Crossed legs often convey a message of insecurity, secrecy or proper posture for lady. Dangling legs project a sense of freedom or helplessness. Use the position of the legs to affirm the viewer's belief about the photograph as seen from the body's configured pose.



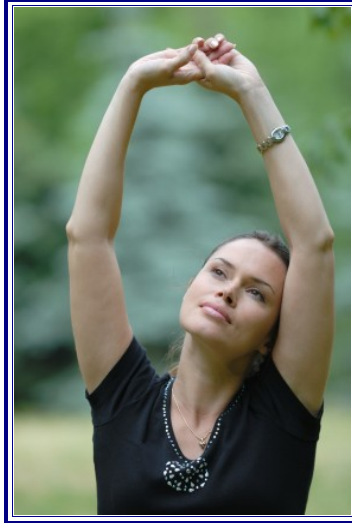
It is important to reaffirm nonverbal communication messages with the legs in order to avoid sending mixed signals to the audience. If your subject's body faces towards the camera in a head on view, make sure the legs strengthen a message of confidence, openness or security of self by composing the subject without crossing of the legs as this can send a message of hostility or confrontation.

How the Arms Affect Composition

Next, focus on where you want your subject's arms to be. The arms will serve as an exaggerating component of the message being relayed through the body, head, and facial expressions.

Configuring the subject's hands to form a gesture of sorts should influence the overall message being conveyed through other body formations.

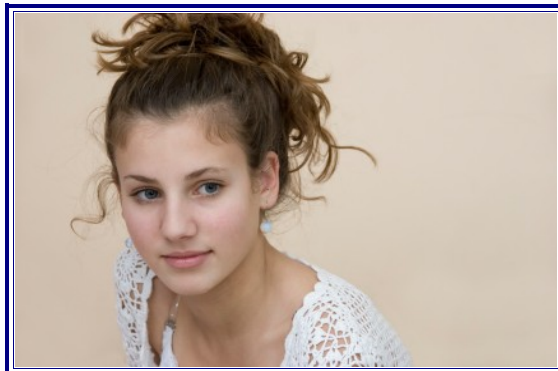
The position of the hands and fingers detail more about how the person is actually feeling than any other element of the body. Crossed arms relay a sense of hostility, thought or closed off mindset. Open and raised arms indicate a sense of freedom, confidence or empowerment. While a relaxed composition of the hands resting on the legs, another subject's shoulders or comfortably in someone's pockets indicates the subject is at ease with their surroundings.



How the Head Affects Composition

Positioning the head comes after all other body parts because it should encompass the entire body's message and only strengthen every other relayed sense of the subject.

Portrait photography often portrays the subject's head in a tilted stance. Tilting of the head relays a message to the audience of sympathy, honesty and earnest intentions.



Do not arrange the subject's head towards the ground unless you're trying to indicate the person has a rather shy demeanor or has become ashamed of their actions in the surrounding environment. Most of your audience will not combine a strong posture, open stance of the legs, raised arms and a lower head as a positive composition.

The Number of Subjects in a Photograph

Once you've got a good idea of how each segment above should guide the final message of the photograph, you'll need to consider how many subject's will need to be guided in composition.

The number of people within a photograph will require you to adjust the camera's aperture to accommodate the desired depth of field. The depth of field encompasses the distance before and after the occurrence of the subject to compile focusing capabilities.

Get familiar with the camera's aperture and depth of field capabilities by practicing on a non-human subject. Take photographs at different distances, in different amounts of light and record the changed settings in your mind or on the photograph.

How to Pose An Individual

Portrait photo shoots allow the photographer to practice the rules of posing the body in a more relaxed environment. For one, you're only working with one subject, thus it becomes easier to guide the subject's posture and composition to achieve a desired nonverbal message in the final photograph.



Photographers often use the following guidelines for posing an individual:

1. Position the body at a 90-degree angle towards the camera. Positioning the body towards but slightly away from the front view of the camera relays a sense of modesty and openness of the subject. For some subject's it creates a slimming effect by putting proportions in a less than noticeable comparison.
2. Ask the subject to place one foot behind the other as a way to distribute the body's weight evenly. The subject should place most of their weight on the back foot and portray a sense of relaxation.
3. The hands should be positioned at a relaxing point below the waist level and should not be a dominant feature in individual photographs. Although, if the subject is sitting for the photograph, you may want to place the arms and hands above one another on a flat surface. The wrist should be slightly turned up and the hands in a relaxed state.
4. The individual's head should be place at a slight angle in order to emphasize the openness and casualty of the body being turned at 90 degrees towards the camera.

Do not allow the subject to complete a straight pose, as this will negate the relaxed message being portrayed in the rest of the body's composure. Make sure the subject's eyes face towards the camera and get the person to make a meaningful giggle for capturing a natural smile, as opposed to a forced smile, which may throw the rest of the natural feel of the portrait off balance.

How to Pose a Couple

Once you've familiarized yourself with the rules of posing the subject through demonstration on an individual subject, you may begin exploring photographing a couple.



The more subjects involved in a photograph the more instances of body composition you will need to address. However, you'll find the rules

becoming almost a second nature once you've had adequate practice on an individual. Thus, we won't focus so much on the fundamental rules for composing the body, as we will combine two single interactions for one final message in the photograph.

1. Consider the nature of the couple. Are they family members, close friends or lovers?

The 90 degree angled formation may be used with the body's here, as well, but with two subject's instead of one, you might want to single file each person in a common direction.

Opposing the bodies will relay a final nonverbal message of the two as "standing off" from one another. Instead, single file portrays a sense of similar movement, ideals and influences their bond through this common direction.

2. A couple's legs should be positioned in the same manner of their body's direction. The legs should be uncrossed and tightly composed to display a sense of modesty. Often times, the final photograph will only include the subject's formation above the waist, so merely affirm their legs are uncrossed and are facing similar directions to avoid an uneven balancing of the body's weight in the final photograph.
3. A coupled photograph makes more of the arm's position in the final photograph than an individual's guideline. Here, the arms have the opportunity to influence the sense of closeness between the coupled pair. If the subject's are stacked in a familial photo shoot, you may rest the higher subject's open palm on the lower subject's shoulder. This will influence a sense of compassion in the final photograph.

A paired couple of a friendship nature may have their arms and hands placed in front of their body, on an equal parallel to one another. This will indicate a sense of common ground between the two and reaffirm the belief of common direction between the individuals.

4. The couple's placement of the head should be much the same as their body's composition. A friendly photograph may require the couple's heads be turned the same direction and focused on a point not directly in the camera's focus field. A coupled family portrait should focus the heads in much a similar demeanor.

How to Pose 3-5 Subjects

You should've worked on solidifying your understanding of the body's position in a photograph while working with the coupled pairs. The rules and guidelines thereof should almost be applied subconsciously before tackling a group pose for 3-5 subjects.

We will omit the discussion of composing body parts throughout our guideline encompassing group photos. Instead, we will focus more on variability, atmospheric conditions and guiding the group's attention.



Most group-related portraits require the photographer to capture a profound image of the individuals combined as one. Some jobs require allow the subjects to be displayed a bit more candidly than others. Either way, the environment surrounding a group photo becomes more important because you must encompass part of this background with the group of people.

You'll want to make sure the surrounding environment isn't too dark or lighted to affect the final outcome of the photograph. Also, you'll want to place the group's angled position towards the source of incoming light to portray natural highlight and undertone capabilities.

With a group of people, you can construct their composition of body's in more ways than with an individual or couple. For instance, you may have one person standing behind 3 others and enclosing the group of people with his or her arms. Another instance, you may have one subject in a lying position in front of the rest of the people from the group. You'll want to change the position of the subject's to locate the finest point of symmetry among the group's members.

How to Pose 5-10 Subjects

Posing 5-10 subjects relates to posing 3-5 subject's guidelines in much the same way, only you're dealing with larger amounts of people. You may not be able to change the position of the individual's quite as much as with a smaller group. Instead, you'll want to try and move the group as a whole. For instance, changing their body formation to a more obtuse portrayal in order to display each individual's personal figures.



Also, you as an individual capturing the group in a photograph should do some moving instead of the group. See if you can't include the group of people in the photograph from multiple angles, such as below eye level, above eye level, 30-degree angles to the left or right and other various positions.

Be aware of the natural source of light when changing positions as any sense of glare can wash out the final appearance of the photograph. You'll want to take quite a few more photographs with a large group of people as opposed to individuals, couples and smaller groups of people to find the right one to depict the group's preferred demeanor.

When you put this into practice, play with your settings too. If you enjoyed learning these techniques, you can learn extra related posing pointers [here](#). It's not essential unless you're focussed on improving your Posing knowledge and techniques.

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