

## LIFE MODELLING TIPS

***Your job as a life model, is to inspire, excite and challenge the artist.***

The expectation is that a professional model has a varied and well-rehearsed repertoire of poses which they can execute and that they are fully aware of how each pose will appear to all members in the group. Look at each session as a performance. You also need to be aware of the time limits of each pose in relation to the degree of difficulty. It is fine if you wish to try out a new pose and obtain feedback. It is not fine if you waste time getting into poses or being too needing of reassurance. A fun inner and outer confidence is the impression you need to give the group.

Some groups are composed of artists who take their practice extremely seriously and use their work for portfolios, exhibition purposes and references for their general practice. Many are students trying to improve their skills or desperately trying to build a folio of work for assessment. Some draw for the artistic interaction with like-minded beings. For others it may be just a one off event such as a Hen's Night where the focus is on humour and laughter. As a consequence models need to be sensitive to the needs of the group they are working with.

Artists are drawing for the benefit of their personal practice and because life drawing is a very revered and respected practice. There is absolutely no room for sexual references or innuendos. We live in a world that is now overly suspicious and very aware of personal space. Careful discretion needs to be exercised at all time.

Some artists are happy to share and discuss their work whilst others wish to keep their work to themselves. Sensitivity needs to be exercised in this area.

### **What to do**

Always arrive at a job at least 10 minutes early. This is common courtesy. This will give you time to change and discuss the session with the teacher/group leader. The groups really appreciate and you'll make a good impression not only for yourself, but also for the agency.

In terms of personal consideration, you should at all time use the change rooms for

undressing and dressing and not do either of these in full view of the drawing group. It is advisable that models wear a suitable gown and thongs when walking around the room during breaks and engaging with artists. There is a need to be very aware of not overstepping the boundaries of personal space. And of course personal hygiene is of utmost importance, so if you tend to perspire, make sure you're come prepared to reapply in the breaks.

Invest in a timer. It helps if you can keep track of the time and also makes you seem more professional and prepared (some groups have their own timers others do not) I highly recommend taking control of the time whenever possible. Artists have been known to forget to turn the timer on. Let them know that you don't mind looking after the time, as it will take the worry out of it for them.

As much as life modelling can be exhilarating and rewarding, it can at times, be strenuous and arduous. Therefore, it's important to make your job as comfortable as possible. Here are some ideas to help with this.

A yoga mat or sheepskin rug is helpful to stand or lie on. Sheepskin rugs can be thrown over chairs to make them more comfy. A few pillows or squares of foam to place under those pressure points are very useful too.

Take along a sheet, sarong or cloth to throw over chairs and the floor (not a towel as towels will leave spotty marks on your skin, unless it's a very soft fluffy one) Hygiene is very important, so by bringing your own, you know they are clean. (Some groups will supply you with a clean sheet, but others will not.)

Think about the sort of pose you are putting yourself in. Will you be able to sustain it for the length of time required? It is important to keep as still as possible. Fidgeting and wriggling can be quite distracting & off putting to the artists. If you have put yourself in a position which you're finding intolerable to hold, quietly get the attention of the teacher and ask if you can have a small break and then resume back into it if they'd like you to. Sometimes you may just have to put up with the pain, as this, within reason, is also part of the job.

You can introduce props if you like. An umbrella, sporting equipment, instruments, a hat, scarf or a broom stick to lean on or even a sword, can work well. Some groups love props and some are more pure in their approach and prefer to just draw the figure. If you think something might be inspiring, take it along and they may or may not use it. Always ask the group if you can use the prop beforehand.

There are several types of modelling you may be asked to perform; Gesture, Portrait, Foreshortening, Negative Spaces and a Contra pose.

GESTURE POSES are dynamic, energetic and expressive. Lots of stretching, bending twisting is what's required or if you know dance, yoga, martial arts movements etc, this is the time to showcase them.

Many sessions will start with the first half hour being gesture poses. These poses may last from 30 seconds to 5 minutes each. This is a good warm up time for you and the class.

NEGATIVE SPACE'S is when you create spaces with your arms and legs within and around your body, example: place a hand on a hip and you create a triangle shape space, between your arm and your side etc. This helps students learn proportion.

FORESHORTENING is when a part of your body is coming out toward the viewer, such as an elbow, hand, knee or even your head. Foreshortened parts of the body are always a challenge to draw, some artists love it and others groan at the thought so try to vary your posing so the viewers are getting a different perspective each time.

CONTRAPOSE: This is when your weight is on one leg, so there is a tilt in your pelvic hip area and a nice shift in the spin. One shoulder would be high than the other. You will often be asked to take that sort of pose in tutored classes

PORTRAIT is when you will be required to be in the same pose for the whole session and you will be clothed. Some groups love exciting costumes, so if you have anything like that, take it along. Sometimes a hat or a small prop will be sufficient. Remember you're there to inspire, so anything you can come up with to help excite the group, is much appreciated and will show your individuality.

There are times when long poses, lasting the whole session, will be required for life (nude) modelling sessions too.

When you are doing a LONG POSE, if at all possible, give yourself something interesting to look at, even if it's just the class.

Put a slight twist in your torso, or a slight turn with your head. This will give a nice rhythm to the pose. Do something different with each hand and foot.

One foot back and one foot forward, or even one foot up.

Hands can create interesting gestures and shapes. But don't do anything too strenuous, as you may be holding this pose for up to 3 hours (including breaks)

The longest you should pose is a Maximum of 30 minutes, before a minimum five minute break. But if you are doing a long pose, that's a bit more challenging, like a standing one, break after 20 minutes or less. It's a good idea to set your timer for the five minute break so you can resume on time.

Before you get up, wriggle your toes and make sure your feet have not gone to sleep. Walk around to get your blood circulating again.

It is MOST IMPORTANT that you remember how to get back into a pose.

So you may need to ask someone to come forward, BEFORE you move for the first time and mark where everything is.

This can be done with a chalk outline, or chalk marks,(just like in the murder mysteries) or pieces of tape, on valuable material etc.

Also remember how your hands and feet were placed etc. You must re-create the folds, and fall of the material (the group will help too)

The hardest thing to keep still is your head, so when you get into a pose, especially a long one, pick a spot on the wall/window/ light fitting/ door or whatever it is you are facing. Create points of references for when you need to resume the pose.

Most groups are very friendly and welcoming before and after drawing commences and during the half time break. Once drawing commences however many of the artists need to be quiet and not be distracted by the model in order for them to slip into their 'zone' or personal creative/working space. This 'zone' is highly valued by artists and it can be very irritating to have this destroyed. When you answer yes or no, do not nod or shake your head.

**NO photography or video should ever occur in the studio while you are modelling, without your prior consent.**

Some slow painters may ask if they can take a photo from their view point, to finish their work later. This is your decision to agree or not? On one hand we get paid more for photography, on the other hand it's good PR to give a bit providing they don't take advantage. A maximum of 2 photos is all they should require.

For this reason it's a good idea to always carry a swim suite with you. If you're uncomfortable with them taking a photo of you nude, you can suggest wearing the swimmers instead. Or, there may be times when you will be asked to wear one in case there is a young or religious student in the class or where a class room can be overlooked by the general public etc.

At the end of the session, it is good to see everyone's work. It's like a mini gallery, with you as the centre of attention.

Think positive thoughts, write that book you've always wanted to, or even that song. Solve your problems. You've got plenty of time to think.

***The main thing is that you enjoy the experience each time,  
And you come away feeling appreciated.***