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Fashion Modeling

People want to see what clothes, accessories and beauty products look like on actual people. But this involves a lot more than just any person wearing them. It involves communicating an ideal, a feeling, an attitude and even a standard. Fashion models are the professionals called upon to demonstrate these brand ideals and standards. They are viewed as the ideal man or woman, the ideal “models” for how these products can be used to enhance beauty and confidence. Fashion models must exhibit characteristics of beauty and confidence.

Editorial Fashion Modeling

Editorial fashion is what you see on the pages of *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Harpers Bazaar*, *Allure*, *Vogue*, and on. It is the most visible form of modeling. It is what most people think of when you mention the word “model.” When you see a fashion model and you know her name or recognize her face, she is an editorial fashion model. These are the models little girls dream about becoming. These high-end or high fashion models appear in all the big name magazines and are contracted by the top designers and companies.

New York City is primarily where editorial fashion models work in the US because it is the prominent city where such work is booked. However, as of late Los Angeles and Las Vegas have burst onto the fashion modeling scene. Some work is done in Chicago and an exception is Miami in the winter which uses New York models anyway. Outside the US there are more opportunities in cities such as Rome, Paris, Milan, London, Sydney, Berlin, Madrid and Tokyo.

If you are a woman and you want to start a career as a fashion model and maybe even become a supermodel featured on the cover of a national fashion magazine with a lucrative ad contract for a major designer or design company, you will need the following characteristics and skills to start:

1. You need to be 14 to 19 years old. Some start even as young as 13 years old.
2. You should have long slender legs and be 5’9” to 6’0” tall.
3. You need to be very, very thin, in the neighborhood of 105-115 pounds except for plus models who can be dress sizes 10-20 considering the target market.

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4. You should not have any tattoos or body piercings, not a lot of stretch marks, and you should not have highly tanned skin. Normal dark skin is fine, just not highly tanned (with few exceptions).
5. Your breasts should not be too large. The preferred size is around 34B with 34C being at the upper limits of acceptable.
6. A fashion model is beautiful, not necessarily pretty, glamorous, or sexy, but simply beautiful. You should have a wholesome, interesting and beautiful face ideal for a fashion model.
7. You need to be a very self-confident person with a strong personality highly committed to modeling. You need to have the ability to take rejection, something many beautiful girls are not good at.
8. Get rid of modesty. You cannot be too modest or worried about what others think and see, there is a show to put on or a shoot to finish and you need to get to it.
9. Relocation is a must, so you need to be ready and willing to move to New York, the strongly preferred US market, or another major market, to initiate your career.
10. Be willing to travel with the understanding that you may find yourself in strange or remote locations with little money and without the help and support of friends; but there will be plenty of opportunity.

If you are that very rare person who has all ten of these qualities and skills, then you have a chance of making it all the way to being an editorial fashion model. It is a highly competitive field. If you do not have all ten of these qualities and skills, then you should choose another type of modeling.

If you are a man the requirements are less stringent and have been changing in recent years. You should find out what your market requires. Generally, men can start anywhere between the ages of 18-25. The preferred height in most markets is 6'0" but ranges from 5'11" to 6'3" depending on the city where the market functions. Traditionally, a size 40 regular suit jacket with a 32 inch waist and 34 inch inseam is expected, however, in recent years some cities, including New York, have begun to require slimmer men with a size 36 to 38 jacket and 30 inch waist. You can give or take an inch for men, but the personality requirements and availability characteristics are the same as for females.

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Models may need to start out with some other part-time evening or side job, but successful fashion modeling is a full time commitment. As soon as you begin to achieve some success, the side job has to go and full time dedication must be given to modeling. This is required by the modeling agencies and the way they work you will not have time for any other job.

High fashion modeling is similar to and often overlaps editorial fashion modeling. The main difference is that high fashion models are dedicated to a famous fashion house or designer whereas editorial fashion models are more dedicated to a publication. As noted earlier, these are the most visible fashion models in the fashion process. However, the fashion process or production cycle starts long before editorial fashion models are needed. Let's take a look now at the entire fashion production cycle and see some of the other models that are needed.

The Fashion Production Cycle

Models are needed in the entire fashion design and marketing process. Modeling actually begins long before the runway show and long before editorial fashion spreads appear in sleek magazines. There is a mix of fashion models and commercial models needed throughout the entire process. Some of the early stages rely more on commercial models than on fashion models. Commercial agencies supply many of these models, but there are some models that neither editorial agencies nor commercial agencies supply. So let's take a look at all the different models needed in the process.

Fit Models

Fabric is important in the beginning stages of design, but fabric cannot hang in thin air. After a designer draws concepts and patterns and chooses fabrics, the designer will want to drape these fabrics on a fit model for inspiration and to work their ideas and concepts. Fit models help the designer by wearing the different draft samples along the way from the original conception all the way to the finely tuned finished product.

Fit models are an important part of the design team, making suggestions on fit and feel through the development process. They often have advanced training or education in fashion design and marketing and exhibit strong but stable personalities. They are older than runway models but usually have similar dimensions.

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Fit models can make very good money and work with the same designer or fashion house for many years. Fit models must remain at a steady dimension through the design process. Even a half inch change in waist or hips could throw a design pattern off. Once a prototype is finished, fit models of varying sizes may be required to help modify the garment so it can be made to fit the many sizes and shapes of people.

Showroom Models

The new lines and samples are finished but who will demonstrate and model them for potential buyers? The showroom models will. Designers and fashion houses need showroom models to market their finished designs to the fashion industry. They organize fashion shows and formal presentations in hotel ballrooms or large club rooms and invite the press and fashion retailers. Some buyers arrange for personal showings where they can have closer interaction with the models and designs. Showroom modeling is more informal than runway modeling and has a personal quality to it.

Showroom models need to have similar dimensions and characteristics to runway models with a little more leniency in the requirements. Showroom models are not the models used in formal runway shows and print advertising. Some of these models are hired as part-time or hourly models by the designers if they do not have any in-house models for the purpose. Some of these part-time models work at editorial agencies and do showroom modeling to gain experience. But most of them are hired through ads that appear in professional trade publications. Pictures of showroom models may be used in designer look books before the more formal ad campaigns are completed.

Road Shows

Road shows or “trunk shows” take the fashion designers’ collections to local markets. Designers show their collections in local fashion shows or in personal presentations to retailers. These road show models are usually the same showroom models the designer normally hires, but they can sometimes be hired locally.

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Runway Models

A runway model needs to bring the clothes to life and show the important features of the garments. That is why the requirements are very strict for runway models. These models are usually young, tall, slender, and move very well in clothes. It is worth it for a designer to have the most ideal models showing off their collections, so these models are paid very well. Designers traditionally show their new collections at runway shows twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring.

Editorial and Campaign Models

This is where the editorial fashion modeling and print campaigns fit in the fashion production cycle. The designers and fashion houses seek broad exposure for their fashion lines by engaging in this sort of high end marketing. This is what gives these fashion models the highest visibility and exposure and turns the really good ones into supermodels. High fashion models and supermodels are paid very well and are in high demand.

Retail Models

Once the new fashion lines hit the shelves and racks in stores, the retailers may individually or in cooperation with other retailers organize local fashion shows and presentations. Local models are hired for these shows. The local models need to look good and be able to positively present the fashion line, but do not necessarily have to fit the specifications of editorial and runway models.

Catalog/Fashion Print Models

Models are needed by fashion retailers to produce catalogs as well as magazine and newspaper ads. Catalog and fashion print models are expected to have what the industry refers to as a good commercial appearance. They are not expected to be as thin as editorial and runway models, but they will be slim, somewhat tall, 5'8" and up, and have an upscale, attractive appearance often called in the US the "All-American" look.

Although regular retailers still primarily use catalog and fashion print models, higher end retailers and designer houses that sell their own lines often pay for and use the higher end fashion and editorial models in their catalogs. They also run ad campaigns with high fashion models that represent their brands for years to come.

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Other Types of Models

Plus models are a type of commercial fashion model that are highly misunderstood. Many people think that they are merely women who are heavier than standard models. But in the fashion industry this is not so. Plus models have the same physical appearance requirements as other fashion models. They need to be tall, 5'9" or better, beautiful, with long legs. They need to have a 10 inch difference between their waist and hips, so they are well proportioned with hips between 40-46 inches. Their dress size is 10 to 20. "Plus model" is a term originally coined for use exclusively in the fashion industry.

Beauty models are the head and shoulder models. When it comes to cosmetic and hair products, the face and hair are the most important features. You might even think that the body doesn't matter at all as long as the face and hair are beautiful. But this is not necessarily true. A face alone does not always qualify someone to be a beauty model. While a tall, slender girl with a beautiful, chiseled face may be picked up by an editorial agency, the same face on a short girl may get no offers from any agency.

Even though some beauty models are not regular fashion models, and some may even be chosen from commercial agencies, the industry tendency is still to seek editorial fashion models with high cheek bones and chiseled features unlike the girl-next-door look. Therefore, editorial modeling agencies often seek out and recruit models that have such beautiful, chiseled faces for their cosmetic and beauty work as well as for their fashion campaigns. Commercial agencies tend to go for the more mainstream face and the girl-next-door look for their print ads. In fact, a chiseled face may actually disqualify a model from being picked up by a commercial agency.

Body part modeling is a specialty type modeling that has elements of both fashion and commercial modeling in it. Body part modeling is the use of just a part of the body in a photograph. Some models who look great on the runway or in full body shots may not have parts of their body that look good close up. A person who may never be able to be a runway model might have the most perfectly shaped arm or hand. Sometimes these parts are needed in specialty ads, sometimes the face and body of another model will be used but the hand or foot of a parts model will be inserted and it looks like one model.

Body parts models can specialize in many different body parts like neck, ears, hands, feet, legs or arms. The ones that seem to be in highest demand are hand models. They have soft, slender, graceful hands and fingers with great skin and very good nails. Parts models can go to great lengths to preserve, protect and care for their specialty parts, after all, it is their money maker.