

PICTURE PERFECT POSING

Practicing the Art of Posing for Photographers and Models

ROBERTO VALENZUELA

AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLING BOOK *PICTURE PERFECT PRACTICE*

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VOICES THAT MATTER™

Picture Perfect Posing: Practicing the Art of Posing for Photographers and Models

Roberto Valenzuela

New Riders

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I want to dedicate this book to my mom. *To me you are the most amazing and inspiring woman in my life. I thank God every day for giving me a mother like you.*

To my wife Kim—my life partner and my best friend. *I am who I am thanks to your unconditional love. You make me want to be a better person. I know I am not easy, but you love me and accept me just the way I am. Regardless of where we are in the world, it always feels like home when we are together. I love you!*

To our dog Chochos. *You have been around my life before I was even a photographer. You have blessed our family with your company and love when we needed it the most. You have enriched our lives, Chochos. We love you and will always carry you in our hearts.*

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Lastly, I want to send a sincere thank-you to all my readers worldwide. Thank you so much for your support. I hope your photography careers forever prosper! Remember that learning never ends and skill is nothing but the result of deliberate practice.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Roberto Valenzuela is a photographer based in Beverly Hills, CA. He developed his unique teaching style by following the same practice regimen he developed as a professional concert classical guitarist and educator. Roberto believes that it is not talent but deliberate practice that is at the core of skill and achievement. He has traveled to every corner of the world, motivating photographers to practice and break down the various elements of photography in order to master them through goal setting, self-training, and constant dedication.

Roberto serves as a judge for photographic print competitions in Europe, Mexico, South America, and the most prestigious international photography competitions held in the United States through Wedding and Portrait Photographers International (WPPI) in Las Vegas, NV.

Roberto teaches private workshops, seminars, and platform classes at the largest photography conventions in the world. He has been an international first-place winner three times and has been nominated by his peers as one of the ten most influential photographers and educators in the world. His first book, *Picture Perfect Practice*, became a bestselling photography training book, and it is sold worldwide.

Aside from the world of photography, Roberto is a high-performance remote-control helicopter pilot, a (not so good anymore) classical guitarist, and a table tennis fanatic. He is also a major foodie and is still searching for the most amazing red wine and the most pungent cheeses. His search for the perfect steak is over; he found it in the Japanese Wagyu.

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FOREWORD

BY DAVID EDMONSON

I absolutely love Roberto Valenzuela like an adopted son, and I am so proud of him! He has challenged me and my way of thinking about photography. He has loved me and my family in times of need. Getting to know Roberto on a personal level has shown me that practice has been his life story. I wasn't sure myself of what I valued more as an artist—practice or talent. Growing up, my talent alone had taken me to great heights and provided well for my family. It wasn't until I had a stroke and had to relearn some of my skills that I realized the two most important things to me now are passion and practice.

If you want to be truly great at something you have to practice your craft. Life is full of many failures, mistakes, and plateaus that you have grown through in order to reach great heights. It takes discipline, a compass for knowing where you want to go, and wisdom to know what to do once you get there. We all know photographers who break out their camera only for paying gigs, and they will go only as far as their talent takes them. When you look at great artists, athletes, and musicians who have achieved a high level of success, one thing is a common thread: They have spent and continue to spend countless hours perfecting their craft. They learn and have applied the discipline of practice.

Just think of Vincent van Gogh, one of the most influential artists of the nineteenth century. He spent a year drawing and redrawing *The Sower* just to get the feeling that was in his head expressed correctly to match his vision. As soon as he finished, he then decided to take something as simple as a sunflower to study how to best visually communicate it in its simplicity. In his future paintings, he would incorporate whole parts and portions of the lessons he had learned. Near the end of his life, his passion and discipline led him to produce 60 paintings in 60 days. A painting a day! By comparison, Paul Gauguin would take up to five years to finish his works, and he happened to be van Gogh's mentor!

Roberto lives a disciplined and passionate life that extends far beyond his love for photography. He learned how to play classical guitar well enough to not only teach but also perform concerts. He pursued his wife with persistence, asking her out over 500 times before she ever agreed to their first date! He saw a need among photographers looking for the “quick fix” and sat down and wrote his first book, *Picture Perfect Practice*. Can you start to see the pattern here?

Photography was originally known as a scientific art that didn't have the flexibility of other media, where one can, for example, rework paint and clay to refine subtle details like posing until the artist is completely content. Once it filled that void, it allowed painters and sculptors to evolve beyond the formal styles of the day, leading to more freedom and expression first seen in impressionism. Suddenly, you had to pose your subject as a photographer with all the refinement done in camera. With this book, Roberto has taken his systematic approach to studying the various aesthetic ways you can refine your posing, applying it to body parts such as heads and hands in order to visually problem solve any shooting situation. It's not posing that's bad—it's bad posing that's bad.

Here's where your practice and the lessons in this book will pay huge dividends. When someone is in front of your lens, you have all of their personal and external issues going on inside of them. Knowing what to do in any given posing scenario will give you the confidence to quickly rework a scene through posing and use the power of your voice to connect, disarm, and direct your clients. If your insecurity comes out because you haven't learned the art of posing, and you are relying only on your talent as I did, you will not always serve your clients or yourself well.

What I love about Roberto's work is how he handles some of the toughest challenges in posing while leaving room for serendipity. In the end, whatever the pose is, it only serves to reinforce and not distract from the emotion and believability of the impact of your image.

I encourage you to devour this book and apply what you learn by putting it into practice. That's the only way you will grow beyond your talent and elevate your work to a new and higher level. Credit goes to my friends Roberto Valenzuela and Jerry Ghionis, who reminded me that if you want to be a better photographer, it starts with being a better person. Passion and discipline are the fruits of a person moving in the right direction!

PICTURE PERFECT POSING SYSTEM (P3S) DECISION POINTS

SPINE

WEIGHT
DISTRIBUTION

90-DEGREE ANGLES

THREE-POINT
CHECK

GAPS

ARMS/HANDS HCS

STYLING
HANDS & FINGERS

ORIGIN OF
HANDS & FINGERS

MIRRORING

INTERACTION &
PLACEMENT OF SUBJECTS

POINT OF CONTACT
CHECK

BALANCING
THE SUBJECT RATIO

NOSE X-FACTOR

SUBJECT EMPHASIS

POISING WITH MOVEMENT,
FEELING, & EXPRESSION

READ THIS FIRST

THE PICTURE PERFECT POSING SYSTEM (P3S)

POSING IS ENERGY. There's more to a pose than how it looks. Posing is a form of body language, and therefore, it emits a certain energy to the viewer. Just as words can be inviting or defensive, so can the energy produced by any pose.

I designed the P3S method to clear out the guessing and the madness that has dominated many photographers' approaches to posing. Photographers, including myself, have posed our subjects by shouting out numerous directions to them, without really knowing the *why* behind our posing commands. We have tried to remedy the situation by browsing through fashion magazine ads and dispatching as many poses into our brain as possible, in the hope that we can recall them perfectly during a photo session. We also often expect the people we are photographing to move and pose as experienced models. It's like shooting darts in the dark, hoping that one in a hundred will score a success. This is no way to manage a career or a business. Even if you are a hobbyist, you will find it very frustrating that you must rely on luck to achieve a good pose. This book proposes a different approach, an approach with which you can make conscious decisions and be in complete control of every aspect of the posing process. Here's how the P3S method works.

Each square in the illustration on page xiv represents a decision point you must make when posing people. The chart includes a total of 15 points, representing each of the chapters in this book. Three of the squares are pink, because they denote decision points that only relate to posing couples or groups. In other words, when posing individuals, you have only 12 points to consider. When posing couples or groups, you have to consider all 15 points. Implementing the P3S method, you start your decision-making process with the spine, mainly ensuring that the spine is not hunched. The spine is the foundation of all poses, so making sure that your subjects have great posture is paramount. At the end of the decision process is posing with movement, feeling, and expression. I recommend saving this decision for last—hence their positions on the P3S diagram. Other than the first and last posing points, the 13 points in the middle can be decided in any order you wish. In the illustration, the decision squares are placed in the order that the chapters appear in the book, but you can shift them around as you see fit while posing individuals or groups. As you read and understand the photographic issues, oversights, and styling options in each of the chapters, you will learn the look and energy of the poses, and you will become well equipped to go through each of these points and make decisions based on your own vision for a particular photograph.

Depending on the style of shoot, you will make different decisions at each point. For example, if you were shooting a boudoir session, you might make a choice at each of the decision points that would result in a glamorous, elegant, and perhaps a seductive, feminine look. However, if you were shooting a fashion spread, the P3S decisions would change to provide you with higher energy angles and a more overall dynamic look. During a wedding, you could make decisions that yield a romantic pose that also says something about the couple. Each of these points not only helps you with your styling choices but also serves as a guide for spotting potential issues that will definitely come up during the posing process and could potentially ruin your photo. For example, imagine that you are working with a couple, and as you pose them, you notice the man's fingers are awkwardly peeking out from behind the female's waist. That topic is covered in Chapter 8, which is the eighth decision point in the illustration. Another example would be if you are on a shoot, and you see that your subject's hands and arms are creating a distraction rather than having a purpose. This is covered in Chapter 6, regarding the *Hand/Arm Context System (HCS)* decision point on the chart. To review, the P3S posing method serves two main purposes:

1. To create the style you envision through purposeful posing
2. To spot and fix posing oversights that are distracting and damaging to the pose

Think of the P3S method as 15 individual parts where choices must be made and which make up a single pose. *All decision points must be considered for every pose.*

This means that you make the call. It is up to you how and what you decide to do at every point, as long as you consider all of them.

Although it may seem complicated to think of 12 or 15 points during the posing process, you will be surprised how easy they are to remember. Eventually, the decision points will present themselves to you over and over during every pose you create. You can't help but memorize them. My recommendation is to read and follow along with the book the way it was intended. Try to re-create the posing lessons as you read them. Go back through your old work and analyze the photos using the P3S system. Combining different learning methods

in addition to just reading through the chapter will be the key to how much you get out of this book.

I am well aware that if people see a high school senior photo or a wedding photo in a book, they automatically jump to conclusions that this book is not for them, since they don't photograph seniors or weddings. Rest assured that this book is about posing human beings, regardless of the event or the style of their clothes. Although I am primarily a wedding photographer, I have spent years photographing for magazines, fashion editorials, commercial photography, high school seniors, and celebrities. My training is very diverse, but I do have an unexplainable passion for wedding photography, due to the unique location, posing, and psychological challenges that weddings present. Therefore, I purposely limited the number of wedding photos used as examples in this book and replaced them with photographs from a variety of genres. However, for Part 2 of the book (*Posing Couples with the Picture Perfect Posing System*), I did include, for the most part, photos of couples during their weddings or engagement sessions. As I said, couples are couples, regardless of what they are wearing, so focus on the posing lessons being taught.

WHY ARE SOME PHOTOS USED REPETITIVELY?

Throughout the book, you will notice some photos are shown over and over. The reason is simple: If I felt that a particular photo would help clarify a point, I used it. This book is divided into 15 sections that discuss various aspects of posing. Some of the photo examples contain teaching material from several points of view that correspond to more than one chapter. For example, in one chapter, I might be referring to a photo that focuses on the subject's expression, but in a different chapter, I could use that same photo to explain how the subject's arms are posed. I spent countless hours looking for the right photos to use for each point I was making.

WHY THE AMATEUR PHOTOS?

The purpose of this book is to give you the very best written educational experience on the topic of posing—not to use up valuable pages trying to impress you with my beautiful photos. To demonstrate many of the points in the P3S, I used several photos from the first couple of years of my career that do not represent my proudest moments as a photographer. But depending on the lesson, I also show more recent work that I love. Both types of photos are featured throughout the book. But, for the sake of education, I put my ego aside to help you and to make the material in this book more memorable. After all, if I only showed you my very best work, how are you supposed to learn what *not* to do? People learn so much more from studying their mistakes than their successes. Therefore, if it helps you, I want you to see my mistakes, learn from them, and grow as a photographer. If you are interested in seeing more of my recent work, flip to Chapter 15, where the majority of the photos are all recent work, or visit my website at www.robertovalenzuela.com.

A NOTE TO MODELS, BRIDES, AND ANYONE ELSE INTERESTED IN POSING

I wrote this book not only for photographers but also for models, brides, and anyone else who wishes to know how to pose themselves and others in a flattering manner. Understanding the principles of photography and their outcomes is both fascinating and not that difficult. For the sake of language clarity, I address photographers directly, but I wrote this book with all of you in mind. If you do not wish to read the entire book, I recommend skimming through the chapters and focusing on the Flash Cards that appear throughout the chapters. These Flash Cards give you a quick way to learn the essential principles and techniques from each chapter.

FOR BRIDES

If you are a bride-to-be, this book will give you a head start for knowing how to pose yourself well and what to avoid doing. Naturally, you have probably hired a photographer and expect that person to be responsible for posing you well. But, trust me, judging from experience, you do not want to rely completely on your photographer. During weddings, photographers have to wear different hats and manage multiple challenges simultaneously; therefore, the posing aspect of a photographer's job could suffer. This is the reason it would be worthwhile to know the principles of how to pose yourself for the most flattering results. Even for what would seem a rudimentary task, such as putting on your wedding dress or walking, you should be aware of good posture, hand/arm placement, and the overall dynamics that yield the most beautiful photograph. A couple of years ago, I was asked by a prominent dress designer to teach a few classes on posing for future brides. The classes were packed, which indicated to me that there is a great need and desire for brides to learn the principles of posing so that they look their best and do not always have to depend on the photographer.

FOR MODELS

If you are a model, the concepts taught in this book will make you aware of the importance of how you move, what angles you choose, how to create a strong versus a passive pose, and much more. Not only will you be able to move with a purpose, you will also know the reasoning behind the way you pose for the camera. A knowledgeable model is aware of his or her movements and, thus, the energy he or she emits through posing. Learning and applying the skills taught in this book will result in an overall more positive shooting experience for the client, the photographer, and yourself, not to mention giving you an edge over your competition.

It is my hope that after reading this book, you will pose with the great confidence that can come only from knowledge, not guesswork.

INTRODUCTION

HANDS DOWN, posing people is one of the most daunting skills that photographers struggle with. At every convention or workshop around the world where I have taught, I always ask my students to share what the most difficult aspect of photography is for them. Nearly 80 percent of the time, the answer is posing! All aspects of posing have been pinpointed as the source of their headaches and/or panic attacks—how to pose women, men, groups, couples, and so forth. During my early career, I experienced similar difficulties with posing. After years of frustration and despite my best efforts, I was accomplishing merely a few good poses in an entire photo shoot. I decided to change my approach. A paradigm shift in the study of posing was necessary and long overdue.

Why is it that both novice and veteran photographers become stumped by posing? I believe the reason is the method we use to study this topic. We have relied mainly on two types of techniques to tackle this posing issue. The first is that we turn to our comfort zone poses. These are poses we always rely on when our brain betrays us, and we don't want to enter panic mode. Most photographers have five or so of these types of poses, and regardless of whom we are photographing, we just force our clients to fit into those five poses, so we don't lose face.

The second technique is simply to force ourselves to memorize poses. I would like to share with you an analogy from my classical guitar days. If a guitar instructor is trying to teach students how to play chords on a guitar, the instructor could download a chart of popular guitar chords that work well in most situations and ask the students to simply memorize the chart and practice their finger placement on the strings. Or, the instructor could teach the students the theory and structure behind chords, so that the students can build any chord their heart desires. Now, the students can jam right alongside any popular song by building the correct chords, instead of being limited to only the three or four chords they memorized. We must stop relying on memorization of poses. Instead, I suggest we begin to understand the structure of how a successful pose is built from scratch!

The purpose of this book is, therefore, to teach you how to correctly create a pose, instead of memorizing poses. I strongly believe you will feel a great relief when you no longer have to use a memory flash card system. Instead, we will build poses using the 15-point system called the Picture Perfect Posing System (P3S) that I have created to simplify the posing process.

WHAT THIS 15-POINT PICTURE PERFECT POSING SYSTEM (P3S) IS AND IS NOT

I would like to quickly highlight just a couple of points about this book and the P3S.

WHAT IT IS

Like all art, photography is subjective. It is part science and part art. Every photographer is entitled to his or her opinion. The challenge when writing a book on posing is that the topic of posing is one of the most subjective aspects of photography. The human body can be shaped, bent, and contoured in countless ways that can yield some pretty interesting visual results. Fine-art photographers such as Sylvie Blum have focused much of their work on contouring the human body in ways I never thought possible. Yet the end result is pretty amazing to see. So, if posing is so subjective, how is it possible to be able to wrap it up in a neat little package that I call a “system”? The reason is that there are some universal techniques that make the human body look more relaxed and pleasant. This book is not for the photographer trying to bend the human body in bizarre ways for the sake of art. This book is for the photographer posing normal people—men, women, family members, children, couples, high school seniors, and so on.

The 15-point P3S method came about after years of research, keen observation, and much frustration along the way. I wanted to know how it was possible to create poses that look effortless, pleasing to the eye, and comfortable for the client, whether that client is sitting, standing, or lying down. I wanted to know what to do with a person’s arms to focus attention on his or her face and not the arms, and what to do with a person’s legs so that the body looks more relaxed. These are just a couple of examples of what I was seeking. After much observation and trial and error, I slowly began to see patterns that seemed to work.

I began to study these patterns and to apply them to my clients. The results were pretty amazing! I was building a pose from scratch instead of just memorizing poses and copying them piecemeal.

One pattern after another began to emerge, and little by little the P3S approach was organically created. I use this system as a guide to remember when I pose my clients. The system has also helped me understand why a pose does not work or why it looks awkward. Most importantly, it has helped me understand how to keep visual emphasis on my subject's face, regardless of the pose. This is important because one of the main challenges we have as people photographers is to avoid letting the arms, waist, legs, knees, or shoulders take attention away from the subject's face. Even though these parts of the body can potentially draw attention away from the face, they can also be used to frame the face or create an inviting portrait instead of a defensive one. Careful positioning of the arms can also be a great help in slimming a subject's body.

WHAT IT IS NOT

By no means do I claim that that the P3S method is the be-all and end-all of posing techniques. It is very important to set expectations from the beginning. There is no right or wrong way in photography or posing. Both you and your clients have to like the photographs, and if you have achieved that much, then you have met your primary goal. This system is not meant to be a set of "must-follow" rules or the commandments of posing. Each point of the P3S approach can be broken, and you can still achieve a great image. One thing is for certain: This posing system has helped me tremendously throughout my career. Because I constantly practice the P3S method, I know all 15 points by heart; therefore, I know when it is best to break them, and how to get the most out of each point based on my vision. It all comes from situational experience and trial and error. For example, in certain high-fashion or fine-art photography, the poses can be avant garde; therefore, there are no rules or logic to any of it. But for the most part, in portrait and wedding photography, knowing the 15 points of the P3S method will definitely serve you well.

My goal for this book is to help dispel your fear of posing in a way that is practical and easy to implement, without hampering your creativity or personal style. I believe that a person's fear of posing is rooted in self-doubt. You doubt your posing skills, you doubt yourself, and you compare yourself to other photographers. Let's remove these doubts once and for all! Read on...



THREE-POINT CHECK COMBINATIONS

PHOTOGRAPHS CANNOT TALK, but they can still communicate. You experience various emotions depending on the energy the photograph casts on you. Some people can explain that energy, and others cannot. It is undeniable, however, that there's something we all feel when looking at a photograph of a person. Why does that happen?

The reason we feel a connection or a lack of one when looking at a photo of a person is because each of us has amassed an enormous database of human interactions since we were born. We have all observed the body language of people when they speak to us. We also have experienced that subtle gaze when someone is attracted to us, or the body language of someone interviewing us for a job. We learn to associate different feelings with different body languages.

As we grow up, we learn to differentiate a strong and confident body language from a flirtatious one. Photographers can create very distinct energies and looks in a photo by focusing specifically on the head and torso. They only need to use three parts of the body: *the collarbone*, *the chin*, and *the eyes*.

To simplify the charts I have put together on the following pages, we will consider only two options for posing these three parts of the body: facing you, or not facing you. By combining these three with the two posing options,

you will be able to create any feeling you desire. Later in this chapter, we will also introduce the option of moving your subject's chin up or down, and tilting the head toward the higher or lower shoulder.

As photographers, we must be conscious of the body language of our subjects. Yes, we could take hundreds of photos of our subject, until we find a particular result we like. But why not be conscious of what type of responses we want from our viewers and simply execute? In this chapter, we will explore every combination we can create using only the collarbone, the chin, and the eyes, along with whether they face the viewer.

3-POINT COMBINATION CHARTS

The charts that follow might appear a bit complicated, but they aren't. They simply represent the various posing combinations that you should be aware of. Don't force yourself to memorize these charts. It is far more effective to identify the combinations using your own work and become aware of the energy you feel with certain combinations. The process is similar to learning a language.

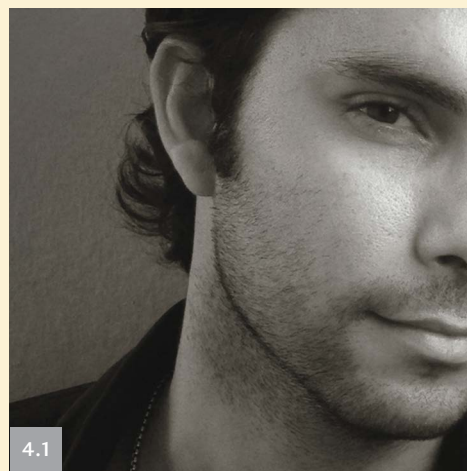
You can force yourself to learn French at home on your own, or you can move to France and immerse yourself in the language. Which approach do you think would be more effective at helping you become fluent in French? The goal is to be able to think in the language you are speaking so that the sentences flow smoothly and the language becomes second nature to you. The same principle applies to these charts.

FLASH CARD

Visual emphasis is always given to the point facing the camera. For example, if the collarbone and chin are not facing the camera but the eyes are, then greater emphasis is given to the eyes and less emphasis to the body and chin. This is a great combination for beauty or boudoir.

Depending on your angle, if you tilt your subject's chin to any direction you will expose the jawline. This should automatically cause you to adjust your lighting to chisel the jawline as much as possible. Do so by using lighting to create as much separation as possible of the jawline and the neck.

To help you visualize, look at **Figure 4.1**. There should be a distinct shadow line where the jawline meets the neck. This photo of me was taken by my great friend Jerry Ghionis at his house in Beverly Hills. Notice that by turning my chin to my left and turning my eyes toward the camera, greater emphasis was placed on my eyes, but it left my jawline exposed. Jerry then made adjustments to my position relative to the light to create that perfect shadow where the jawline meets the neck. The final result is a portrait where the eyes of the subject are emphasized and the jawline looks chiseled.



Another point to keep in mind is your subject's bone structure and whether he or she has a double chin. This is important because different combinations with the right lighting can drastically change, for the better, a person's appearance. Always notice the direction of light for all of these portrait combinations. With experience, you will develop a repertoire of combinations you will be proud of.

WORKING WITH THE 3-POINT CHARTS

This section shows how I use the charts. By attaching a certain feeling or energy to a specific combination, I begin to naturally memorize the results of each chart. First and foremost, I associate the collarbone, chin, or eyes facing the camera with forming a strong connection with the viewer. Those points not facing the camera form a weaker connection with the viewer.

I also think of posing the head perfectly straight as a tool to toughen character and a tilt of the head as a tool to soften it. So, if the body is facing you and the chin and eyes aren't, I consider that body as having a strong connection but the eyes and face a weak one. You probably will not find promotional photos of professional boxers tilting their heads. That subtle tilt will make them appear less tough.

The strongest and most personal combination is when all three points are facing you and the head is perfectly straight. These are quick reference words to help me memorize what would happen if, for instance, I tilt the head or if I turn the collarbone away from the camera. Assume for a second you would like to create a strong pose for your subject but you want to soften it a little or make it less aggressive. In that case, you would turn the collarbone, chin, and eyes toward the camera but ask the model to tilt her head to either side.

Let's go through some examples of how the charts work and how to best use them to maximize our understanding of posing.

Figure 4.2:

- Collarbone facing the camera (strong), chin facing the camera (strong), and eyes facing the camera (strong).
- Head is straight (tougher).
- Energy: All three points are facing the camera in this portrait. Because of this, the subject appears strong and very much in your face. She is connecting with you in a very direct way. Her body, her face, and her eyes are all on you, the viewer. It is fair to say that a pose like this would be normal if you were having a conversation with her. Therefore, positioning all three points toward the camera makes the feel of this portrait very personal. Children often pose themselves in a very symmetrical way, giving this pose a possibly innocent energy. Because of the high connection level, this could be a good choice for a senior portrait or for a fashion portrait.

FLASH CARD

Tilting the head:

- If the subject tilts the head toward his/her higher shoulder, it will appear more feminine.
- If the subject tilts the head toward the lower shoulder, it will appear more masculine.





Figure 4.3:

- Collarbone facing away from the camera (weak), chin facing away from the camera (weak), and eyes facing the camera (strong).
- Head is straight (tougher).
- Energy: Both her body and her chin/face are turned away from the camera, and only her eyes are connecting with you. Because there is nothing else competing for attention, her eyes dominate with a seductive undertone. Her chin is facing the same direction as her collarbone, indicating that she could have been having a conversation with someone else and she quickly turned to look at you. This pose is a good choice for boudoir photography or when the subject wants to appear sexy and seductive, yet elegant and classy.

Figure 4.4:

- Collarbone facing the camera (strong), chin facing away from the camera (weak), and eyes facing away from the camera (weak).
- Head is straight (tougher).
- Energy: With only her collarbone facing you, the attention is directed to what she is wearing. There is not a great deal of personal connection here. But, compared to other combinations, this one is much more dynamic and high energy because this combination poses the collarbone and chin in opposing directions. If the collarbone and chin had been facing the same direction, the energy would be much calmer and harmonious, because she could easily have turned her eyes toward you and acknowledged your presence. But she didn't, so she appears illusive or aloof. Therefore, this combination is great for a fashion shoot, where the connection with the clothes is more important than with the person wearing them.



Figure 4.5:

- Collarbone facing away from the camera (weak), chin facing away from the camera (weak), and eyes facing away from the camera (weak).
- Head is straight (tougher).
- Energy: All three of the key points are turned away from you. This pose does not feel personal at all, and there is no connection with the viewer. It does, however, provide you with a quick glance of who she is and what she looks like, but her personality is subject to interpretation. The lack of connection with the viewer makes this combination a great choice to depict a powerful person or a leader. When the collarbone is facing one way and the chin the other way, it creates a highly dynamic pose. The pose feels energetic instead of passive. It resembles movement instead of rest. This combination also elongates the neck, making the person tall and elegant. Because of the impersonal nature of this combination, many ancient Roman sculptors used this combination to sculpt the busts of their leaders.

Figure 4.6:

- Collarbone facing the camera (strong), chin facing the camera (strong), and eyes facing the camera (strong).
- Head is tilted toward lower shoulder (softer, but with a more masculine feel).
- Energy: This is an example where all three points have a strong connection with the viewer, but the simple act of tilting the head automatically softens the image. However, this tilt is toward the lower shoulder, giving the photo a more masculine and confrontational energy. Compare Figure 4.6 with the following photograph, where the tilt is toward the higher shoulder.



Figure 4.7:

- Collarbone facing the camera (strong), chin facing the camera (strong), and eyes facing the camera (strong).
- Head is tilted toward higher shoulder (softer and with a more feminine tender feel).
- Energy: Not only is the energy in this photo strong, but you also connect with her feminine side. The only change from Figure 4.6 was tilting the head toward the higher shoulder. This is why I believe it is so important that photographers be aware of what the results will be calling out posing directions to clients. You should know the answers to such questions as how the energy of the pose changes by tilting the head, turning the body to the side, and so forth. I know this is hard work, but it is worth every ounce of energy when you have a client in front of you and you are a master at what you do. That feeling is amazing!

COLLARBONE, CHIN, AND EYE COMBINATIONS

The chart combinations on the following page provides you with every possible combination of the three points: the collarbone, the chin, and the eyes. They are meant to be used as a reference guide/study guide. They do not include head tilts or raising the chin up or down; those optional tools can be used with the charts.

If, for example, light were coming from above, you would raise your subject's chin toward the light source. This would illuminate the face evenly, getting rid of unflattering shadows. Keep in mind that opposing directions create energy, whereas same directions create harmony. For example, if the collarbone is facing camera left, the chin is facing to the right, and the eyes are looking back to the left, this would be a high-energy combination. If all three points were facing the same direction, however, it would create a greater sense of harmony and calmness.

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin	X	
Eyes		X

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin	X	
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin		X
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin		X
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin		X
Eyes		X

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin		X
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin	X	
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin	X	
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin	X	
Eyes		X

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin		X
Eyes		X

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin	X	
Eyes		X

Become familiar with how the combinations affect the energy of the poses. Do it naturally and slowly so that you can remember each one. Once you have a good grasp of a few combinations, start adding chin direction, up or down, and tilting the head toward one of the shoulders. After becoming familiar with a few combinations, ask yourself what kind of energy you want, and what part of your subject you would like to feature. Then come up with a combination to give you exactly that. Remember to enjoy the process, and do not force yourself to memorize the charts in one sitting.



APPLYING THE 3-POINT COMBINATIONS

This chapter's previous photos were chosen to demonstrate various concepts. The following photos come from actual photo shoots where I applied these techniques based on the energy I wanted to portray in my photographs. I hope that after reading this book you will pose with intent, instead of just guessing and throwing posing directions around in hope that one looks good. I do not want to sound harsh, but if you intend to use photography as a way of making a living, then you must photograph skillfully for the survival of your photography business.

After considering Laura's clothing and hairstyle (**Figure 4.8**), I thought an aggressive and powerful pose would do the most justice to the overall styling. So I used the same technique as **Figure 4.5**, where none of the three points face the camera, and the collarbone and chin point in opposite directions. Although I label the points not facing the camera as weak, I'm referring to a weak personal connection with the viewer, not weak as in fragile. This distinction is important.

The fact that none of the three points face you makes this photo impersonal, so you connect with her more as a statute than as a friend. I placed her hair over her eyes to add to the mysterious nature of this pose. With her eyes hidden from the viewer, the photo leaves more of her personality to your imagination.

The beautiful bride in **Figure 4.9** had one of the most unique wedding dresses I'd ever seen. There was no question in my mind that I needed a three-point combination to showcase the dress without it competing with her face. The answer was for her collarbone to be facing the camera and her chin and eyes facing away. This combination impels you to admire her dress without her eyes "demanding" that you look back at her. You can clearly see how turning her face away from the camera softens the connection with her eyes. I added a subtle head-tilt toward the higher shoulder to make the pose appear more feminine and elegant.

For the photo in **Figure 4.10**, I wanted the opposite effect of **Figure 4.9**. In this case, I still wanted to feature the dress, but I also wanted to keep a strong personal connection with the bride. The best three-point combination was easy to choose: All three points should face the camera.



4.9

This three-point combination in **Figure 4.11** with the collarbone and the chin facing the camera and the eyes turned away is rarely used, but it can be very effective. It's one of my favorite combinations when doing a boudoir photo shoot. The energy here is sensual yet personal. Her eyes are not connecting with you, but she can feel your presence and accepts it because her body and chin are directed toward you. To me, this is the perfect three-point combination to create a balanced mix of aloofness and warmth. I know that sounds like a contradiction, but that is the best way to describe the energy in this photo.



4.10



4.11

ON YOUR OWN

Examine the following photos (**Figures 4.12–4.15**) with a group or another person and go over the combinations used and the energy they project. Be specific, as I was in the previous examples. Discuss, compare notes, and learn from each other.





4.14



ANALYSIS

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