



You Oughtta Be in Pictures!

**Some kids love nothing more than mugging for a camera --
But does that make them "model material"?**

HAS ANYONE COME UP TO YOU TO SAY, "Your daughter should be in commercials!" Maybe you've thought so, too. What's really involved?

The first question to ask yourself is: Does my child have the aptitude for this? Do they love having their picture taken and hamming it up on home video? Will they take direction? Are they friendly and outgoing with (let's face it), strangers? If you have a shy child or one that melts down consistently in new situations, or who much prefers the company of Elmo on your home television, you may have to reconsider this vocation.

The next step is landing an agent or manager to help you locate jobs. To find one, get recom-

mendations from friends whose kids are already "in the biz," or try well-known agencies--the tried and true hard hitters. Most reputable agencies' websites list open calls for potential new clients, or the protocol they wish you to follow for interviews/submissions. You may also request a franchised agent list for \$3 from the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) by calling their agency department at (323) 549-6733. There are a multitude of modeling agencies for kids out there, but beware: NEVER pay money up front to be represented.

An agent will ask to see photos of your child. High-quality photos you've taken are usually fine to submit for consideration. Tips: Fill the frame with your child's

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full face (no profiles), from the shoulders up, and also do one full-body shot. Dress your child in solid colors that enhance their eye and hair color--no prints that compete for attention. Do not use hats, glasses or other props that cover their features.

If an agent decides to represent your child, professional photographs are likely to be requested. Since small babies change so rapidly, photos you update yourself are often acceptable. For older children, agents can recommend photographers they work with. The cost for a photo shoot usually runs between \$200 - \$400, depending on the amount of film used. Your agent will then help choose the shots they want for a "zed card," which is simply your child's pictures along with the agency's printed information, logo, and your child's stats. You are responsible for the cost of printing the cards. Remember: your agency does not pay your expenses. You will be billed for any online photos posted on their site, printing, mailing, or other costs they incur. Often it will come directly out of your modeling fees.

How does your child get a modeling job?

Typically, your agent will call you the night before or even the day of an audition and tell you when and where to go. You need to be reachable by cell phone at all times, and have extra clothes and snacks as well as your photos, zed card, and paperwork (see box at right) packed in the car. Obviously there will be days you simply can't make it, but if you want to give modeling a serious effort, be prepared to drop everything at a moment's notice. That includes play dates, classes, your hair appointment, or to do list. If this is acceptable to you, read on!

Most of the best jobs are contracted through agencies and follow union guidelines. "Union" means the production company must meet certain legal regulations (i.e. minimum rates for work, limiting how many hours a child works in a day, allotment for meal time, or even providing on-set tutors if your child is of school age). Non-union shoots do not have to meet such criteria, and some may not pay you at all. If you go it alone without an agent, it's harder to land auditions for union work, and much of it entails waiting in "cattle call" auditions for literally hours.

When an agent books an audition, the production has already exhibited interest in your child and you are usually given a "call time". Other kids from your agency may also attend the same auditions as well as those represented by other agencies. If you are lucky, sometimes your child will be offered a job directly after your agent submits them, without an audition. Agents take a percentage of the pay (usually 20%), and pay varies widely by the company hiring. Some do flat fees, others hourly rates. Generally it takes 60 to 90 days to see a check.

Still interested? Then go get 'em! Nothing says you can't try it. If all goes well and you work consistently, you will receive priceless mementos from your little one's childhood, as well as be able to write off some of their clothing expenses, mileage, and drama/dance classes. Best of all, you can stash away some college money! -- *Jonna Jerome*

Before your star is ready for that close-up

Two things required by law for all child performers:

An Entertainment Work Permit. Obtain this permit as soon as you land an agent, or even before. If you nail that audition, but show up for the job without it, they will send you home. Forms for this free permit are available through the Department of Industrial Relations Labor Standards Enforcement (www.dir.ca.gov/DLSE/dlse.html).

A Coogan Trust Bank Account. This program was established to protect children from parents or managers keeping all their earnings! Your talent agency will directly deposit 15% of your child's earnings into this account. Only your child can withdraw it, and only after they turn 18. To open an account, you must deposit a minimum of \$300 to avoid penalty fees. You can open one before landing work, but you will be required to plunk down the cash yourself. Or, you can wait until your child has worked enough to earn the \$300 (which the agency will hold until you give them your account number for deposit).

If your child is fortunate enough to be cast in a SAG film or commercial, you will also be expected to join that union. (You do not have to join a union for print work). For more information, visit their website at <http://www.sag.org>.

NEXT MONTH: Thinking of adopting but afraid of the financial (let alone emotional) risk? Jonna Jerome explores adoption insurance.



THIS SUCKS!

Worried your little one can't do without a thumb or pacifier? Take comfort: It's natural! Even in the womb, most embryos actually suck their thumbs. You, stress, or the moon

in retrograde are not the cause of this behavior.

Sucking gives children a sense of security and helps them become more comfortable with their environment - especially if you are not close at hand. There's even a larger benefit for babies: the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that pacifier use may reduce the risk of SIDS when given at nap and bedtime.

The concern most parents have is that sucking will have adverse effects on their kids' teeth. More good news: the effects of thumb sucking on baby teeth are usually totally reversible up until permanent teeth start to erupt. Most children stop on their own long before that!

Feel like a short order cook in your own kitchen?

Now you have permission to stop! Preparing separate food for your kids sends the message that it's okay for them to not eat certain foods. Plus you're setting yourself up to keep making dishes until they deign to eat one of them! Instead, teach by example: "if mom likes this, it must be good!" Of course you don't want to force upon your child an entire meal that they find distasteful, so introduce one or two new things along with at least one portion of a dish you know they enjoy. That way, there will be something on their plate that will surely fill their stomach.

Another way to interest your child in new foods is to have them help prepare it. Whether it's just smoothing their own peanut butter on bread for a PB&J, or following a recipe, kids enjoy the final reward. See "Mom's Night: Dad and the Kids take over the Kitchen" on pg. 27.

Remember: your children won't starve themselves! When hungry enough, they will try more - and find something they enjoy.

Safe Suds

As our kids get older, it's tempting to step away from the tub to grab that extra towel, soap, phone, *whatever*. But DON'T. Even when a child is big enough to sit, stand, or even climb in and out of the tub unassisted, they can easily slip and fall. This could result in serious injury. If they simply swallow a little water, a young one can become dis-oriented enough to panic and ingest more. How about if a sibling is present? As much as your children may love each other, they may not realize that the other is in trouble. They may even think their brother or sister is just playing if they are flailing about. Don't take chances! Enjoy that wet bath time play with your kids while they still love having you participate, even if everyone leaves that bathroom clean except you!

