

The Phoenix Art Garage — Life Drawing Model Guide

Welcome

Thank you for serving as a life drawing model for The Phoenix Art Garage! This guide will help you understand what to expect, how to prepare, and how to deliver a great experience for our artists. Whether you're a seasoned model or this is your first time, this document covers everything you need.

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1. What to Expect

A typical life drawing session at The Phoenix Art Garage follows a general flow:

- **Arrival:** You'll arrive 10-15 minutes early to check in with the facilitator, discuss the session plan, and change.
- **Gesture Warm-Ups:** Sessions almost always begin with a 20 minute block of quick gesture poses — these are fast, dynamic poses lasting from 1 minute to 2 minutes. The goal is energy and movement, not perfection.
- **Short Poses:** After warm-ups, the session moves to a 20 min block of 4 five minute poses, and then 2 ten minute poses, allowing artists to begin capturing more form and shadow.
- **Break:** A 5 minute break is typically given after every 20 minute block. You'll have time to rest, hydrate, and warm up.
- **Sustained Pose(s):** The longest poses of the session is 20 minutes. These allow for detailed, finished work.
- **Closing:** The session wraps with a final pose that reaches the end time of 9:00.

The Tone: Our sessions are professional, respectful, and artist-focused. You are a vital collaborator in the creative process — not a passive subject. Your movement, energy, and presence directly shape the art.

2. Before You Arrive

Physical Preparation

- **Hydrate well** throughout the day. Posing is physical work — you'll be engaging muscles you don't normally hold.
- **Eat a light meal** about 1–2 hours before. You need energy, but a full stomach during long static poses is uncomfortable.
- **Avoid caffeine** right before the session if you're prone to trembling.
- **Stretch** before you come. Flexibility helps with dynamic poses and reduces cramping during long holds.
- **Wear loose, comfortable clothing** to change in and out of easily. Avoid tight waistbands or anything that leaves deep marks on your skin (these can be distracting to artists between poses).

What to Bring

- A **robe or large towel** to wear between poses. Always cover up during breaks, when moving around, or when adjusting your position.
- **Slip-on shoes** (easy to remove on the modeling stand).

What is Provided

- A **robe** in case you forgot your own.
- A remote controlled **space heater**, that you may operate.
- Chilled **water** and cups, hot water and tea or coffee.
- A **private bathroom** for changing.
- A **private retreat** space away from the class, if desired.

Mental Preparation

- Review the pose list below. Visualize yourself in different positions.
 - Arrive with a **positive, open mindset**. Sessions can feel vulnerable at first, but models consistently report that the professional atmosphere makes the experience comfortable and even empowering.
 - If you have any physical limitations, injuries, or range-of-motion issues, let the facilitator know **before** the session starts.
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3. Professional Standards & Etiquette

The Golden Rule

The studio is a workspace. Treat it the way you'd treat any professional environment. Your professionalism creates the atmosphere that lets artists do their best work.

Key Standards

Clothing & Nudity:

- You should arrive clothed and change into your robe in a private area (bathroom or changing area).
- Remove your robe only when you step onto the modeling stand/platform and are ready to pose.
- Replace your robe **immediately** when the pose ends — before stepping off the stand.

- Never walk nude through the studio. Never sit nude on shared furniture.
- A robe stays on during all breaks, all transitions, and any time you are not actively posing.

Communication:

- Conversation with artists **during active posing** should be minimal to none unless the facilitator has indicated otherwise.
- Between poses and during breaks, casual conversation is fine — but you are never obligated to discuss your body, personal life, or anything you're uncomfortable with.
- If an artist makes you uncomfortable at any point, let the facilitator know immediately.

Boundaries:

- Artists **may not touch you** to adjust a pose. If a pose adjustment is needed, the facilitator will ask you to reset or reposition yourself.
- Artists should not comment on your body — either positively or negatively. This is a class, not a social setting focused on you.
- You have the right to decline any pose you're not comfortable with. Period.
- You can take a personal break at any time. Just let the facilitator know.

Phone & Social Media:

- Keep your phone in your bag, on silent.
- Do not photograph the artists, their work, or the session unless you have explicit permission from the facilitator and the group.
- Do not post about specific sessions, artists, or students on social media without consent.

Boundaries Checklist:

- ☐ Robe on whenever not actively posing
 - ☐ No unauthorized touching
 - ☐ No phone during posing
 - ☐ Respectful, professional tone at all times
 - ☐ Report any discomfort to facilitator immediately
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4. Posing Fundamentals

Choosing & Setting a Pose

- **Stability first.** Before the timer starts, settle into the pose and find your balance. Shift your weight until you're confident you can hold it.
- **Breathe.** Seriously. Many beginner models unconsciously hold their breath. Breathe naturally and deeply throughout every pose.
- **Find a focal point.** Pick a spot in the room to focus your eyes. This helps you stay still and gives your gaze intention, rather than a wandering or blank stare.
- **Engage your core.** Even in relaxed-looking poses, a slight core engagement helps you stay balanced and reduces fatigue.
- **Tension = movement.** If you're clenching muscles that aren't needed for the pose (shoulders, jaw, hands), you'll tremble and fatigue faster. Consciously relax what you can.

When You Need to Adjust

You are human. If you absolutely must shift or reset during a long pose:

- Do so **slowly and quietly** — artists understand and will work around minor adjustments.
- If pain or numbness is building, it's better to micro-adjust than to collapse out of a pose.
- For gesture poses under 1 minute: just hold it. It's almost over anyway.

"The Model's Involuntary Dance"

- Minor trembling, swaying, or muscle fatigue during long poses is normal and expected.
 - Artists know this. It won't ruin their drawings.
 - If you feel a cramp coming, gently come out of the pose — your health matters more than any drawing.
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5. Gesture Poses (1 – 2 Minutes)

Purpose: Gesture poses capture energy, movement, and the "essence" of a pose. They're warm-ups — for you and the artists.

How They Work:

- The facilitator announces gestures at the start.
- You quickly move into a dynamic, expressive pose.
- Hold it steady for the duration (1 to 2 minutes).
- The facilitator is able to manage a timer for you, or you may use your own.
- A typical gesture series might include 10–20 poses in 15–20 minutes.

Tips for Great Gesture Poses:

- **Think in terms of action.** Reach, twist, lean, crouch, stretch. Avoid symmetrical, standing-at-attention poses.
- **Exaggerate slightly.** What feels dramatic to you will read as subtle on paper. Push the line of your body a bit further than feels natural.
- **Use all three dimensions.** Turn your torso, tilt your shoulders, shift your weight to one leg. Front-facing flat poses are the least interesting.
- **Vary your level.** Alternate between standing, seated, kneeling, reclining, and crouched poses.
- **Use the space.** Don't stay in the same spot — move around the stand or platform between gesture rounds.
- **Facial expression matters.** Gesture poses evoke emotion — think about what the pose "feels" like and let that show subtly.

Gesture Pose Ideas

- Reaching upward — both arms, full stretch, weight on toes
 - Twisted torso — arms crossed, looking over one shoulder
 - Crouched/curled — knees to chest, forehead to knees
 - One-legged lean — weight on one foot, other leg extended behind
 - Pushing — both hands forward, chest open, aggressive stance
 - Pulling — arms drawn back, as if pulling a heavy rope
 - Falling/draping — draped over the stand, one leg up
 - Sitting with twist — seated on stool, torso rotated
 - Lunging — wide stance, weight low, one arm extended
 - Windblown — lean to one side, arms trailing
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6. Short Poses (5 – 10 Minutes)

Purpose: Short poses let artists start capturing form, volume, and basic shadows while still keeping the energy of a timed pose.

How They Work:

- You set a slightly more considered pose — one with interesting angles and a clear line of action.
- Artists are doing "shorter studies" — quick sketches that capture the whole figure.
- There's usually no break between short poses — you'll reset and go again after a brief rest (30–60 seconds).

Tips:

- These can be the same general shapes as gestures, but held with more intention.
- Think about creating strong silhouettes — if someone looked at you from across the room, would the pose be readable?
- You can use props: a stool, a draped cloth, a cushion. Ask the facilitator what's available. Also, feel free to bring a prop that is meaningful to you (a violin if you are a musician, tutu if you are ballet dancer, or hammer and tool belt if you are a carpenter).

Short Pose Ideas

- Seated on a stool — legs crossed, elbows on knees, leaning forward
 - Standing contrapposto — weight on one leg, S-curve through the body
 - Seated on the floor — one leg extended, one bent, leaning back on hands
 - Reclining — on your side, propped on one elbow, knees bent
 - Kneeling — upright, hands on thighs, chest open
 - Standing with hip tilt — one arm overhead, ribcage shifted
 - Seated, legs wide — torso upright or leaning forward between legs
 - Back view — standing or seated, looking over one shoulder
 - Crouched on the stand — weight on the balls of the feet, compact shape
 - Standing, arms overhead — clasped hands, slight arch in the back
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7. Sustained Poses (20+ Minutes)

Purpose: This is the main work of the session. Artists are building detailed studies with shadow, form, and anatomy.

Structure:

- A 20 minute pose is common (sometimes repeated with a break in between to provide a 40 minute pose).
- The facilitator builds breaks for 5-10 minutes for models between long poses (let the facilitator know if a brief "shakeout" where you can step down, stretch, and reset is needed during a pose).
- Sometimes the long pose is split into two sessions with a longer break in the middle.

Tips for Sustained Poses:

- **Find the pose's "rest position."** The pose should be holdable. If it's genuinely painful after 5 minutes, it won't work for 20. You can make it look dramatic while being physically sustainable.
- **Distribute your weight.** If standing, can you lean on something? If seated, is your weight on your sit bones or are you hovering?
- **Plan your breathing rhythm.** Deep belly breaths. If you're doing a pose that compresses your torso, make sure you can still breathe fully.
- **Mental stamina matters.** It's easy to get bored or restless during a 20-minute hold. Some models count breaths, some mentally rehearse song lyrics, some focus on micro-adjustments to different muscle groups. Find what works for you.

Sustained Pose Ideas

- **The Recliner** — Semi-reclined on a platform/couch cushions, one leg up, one arm behind head. (Classic and comfortable for long holds.)
- **The Seated Thinker** — Seated on a stool, hunched forward, elbows on knees, head in hands. (Great for artists studying the back and shoulders.)
- **Contrapposto Standing** — Classic weight-on-one-leg with a twist through the torso. Add one arm reaching or resting on hip.

- **The Twist** — Seated or standing, torso twisted so shoulders and hips face different directions. Lots of interesting anatomy for artists.
 - **Reaching Upward** — Arms overhead, slight lean, one foot forward. (Energetic but holdable with support.)
 - **The Drape** — Draped across the stand, fabric or robe artfully arranged — less about specific anatomy, more about form and fabric folds.
 - **Floor Sit** — Cross-legged or legs extended, leaning back on hands or forward over knees. Very stable for long holds.
 - **Back Study** — Model faces away from the class. The back is one of the most complex and interesting areas for artists.
 - **Kneeling/Upright** — Hands at sides or clasped, chest open. Strong silhouette, very holdable.
 - **Dynamic Lean** — Leaning against a wall or prop, one foot on the wall, body at an angle. Feels dynamic, rests weight on the prop.
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8. Poses & Pose Ideas — Quick Reference

By Duration

Duration	Pose Type	Examples
1– 2 min	Gesture	Reach, twist, lunge, crouch, fall, wide stance, windblown, pushing, pulling, sitting twist
5–10 min	Short	Seated lean, reclining, back view, hip tilt, kneeling, floor sit, contrapposto, cross-legged
20 min-40 min	Sustained	Recliner, seated thinker, twist, floor sit, back study, drape, contrapposto with prop, dynamic lean, relaxed floor pose

By Energy Level

High Energy (for gestures and short poses):

- Both arms reaching overhead, full body stretch
- Twisted athletic stance, weight lunging forward
- Crouched low, ready to spring
- Arms wide, chest open, chin up

Medium Energy (short to mid-length poses):

- Seated with a lean, one arm extended
- Standing with weight shift, gentle S-curve
- Kneeling with upright torso, arms relaxed

Low Energy (sustained/long poses):

- Reclined, one arm behind head
- Hunched forward, elbows on knees

- Draped across furniture
- Curled on side on the floor

By View

The podium at Phoenix Art Garage sits in the center of the room, with artists sitting in a circle around it. Consider making sure you change your position so that artists get a variety of these poses.

Front Facing:

- Great for: understanding the full figure, proportions, the line of the pose
- Example: standing contrapposto, arms at sides or one on hip

Back Facing:

- Great for: back anatomy, shoulder blades, spine line, glutes
- Example: seated with slight arch, hands behind, looking over shoulder

Three-Quarter (¾):

- Great for: depth, foreshortening, the interplay of near and far limbs
- Example: torso angled, one arm forward and one back

Profile (Side):

- Great for: silhouette clarity, studying the profile of the face/torso
 - Example: standing in profile, one arm reaching forward
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9. Working with Repeated/Problematic Poses

Holding a Pose for Too Long

- If a pose becomes genuinely painful (not just uncomfortable), **signal the facilitator**. Your well-being is always the priority.
- "Uncomfortable" is expected. Sharp pain, numbness, pins-and-needles, or joint strain are signals to stop.

Feeling Exposed or Vulnerable

- This is normal, especially for new models. The studio environment becomes comfortable quickly — usually within 1–2 sessions.
- Use your robe as a "shield" between poses. Wrap yourself up, take your time stepping onto the stand.
- Focus on the **craft** of posing — the physical challenge, the breath, the stillness. Redirecting your attention helps a lot.
- If you're feeling overwhelmed, step down. Always okay. No questions asked.

Boredom During Long Poses

- Mental games: count backward from 500, plan your dinner, mentally compose a letter.
- Breath work: try box breathing (4 counts in, 4 hold, 4 out, 4 hold).
- Body scanning: consciously release tension from your scalp to your toes.
- Micro-isometrics: gently engage and release different muscle groups to maintain circulation.

Artists "Staring"

- This is their job. They're looking at form, shadow, and line — not at you as a person. It's like being looked at by a doctor or a tailor. Professional, not personal.

- If the atmosphere ever feels off rather than professional, tell the facilitator.
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10. Breaks & Self-Care

Between Poses (Micro-Breaks, 15–30 seconds)

- Step down, shake out your limbs, roll your shoulders.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Have a sip of water if allowed.
- Step back onto the stand, robe off, set the next pose.

Mid-Session Break (10–15 minutes)

- There is a 5 minute break every 20 minutes, with a mid-class break of 10-15 minutes
- Put your robe on. You may leave the room.
- Warm up: move around, do gentle stretches, use a heat pack if needed.
- Hydrate. Have a light snack if needed.
- If the studio is cold, bring layers. A lot of heat leaves your body when you're still and unclothed.

After the Session

- Stretch thoroughly. Posing uses muscles in unusual ways.
- Warm shower if possible.
- Note any poses that were particularly challenging or that you'd like to revisit.
- If you felt any strain or pain that persists, take care of it — ice, rest, or see a professional if needed.

Ongoing Self-Care for Regular Models

- **Yoga or stretching routine** — keeps you flexible and reduces injury risk.
 - **Strength training** — core and leg strength make sustained standing poses much easier.
 - **Skin care** — if you're modeling frequently, keep skin moisturized. Dry skin under studio lights can be uncomfortable.
 - **Mental health** — modeling can be emotionally intense. Check in with yourself. Talk to the facilitator if you need support.
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11. Troubleshooting & FAQ

Q: What if I can't hold a pose for the full time?

A: Do your best. If you need to adjust, do it slowly and quietly. If you need to come out of the pose, come out. No one will be upset. Communicate with the facilitator beforehand if you know a pose will be challenging.

Q: Can I request guidance or a recommendation for a pose?

A: Absolutely! If you are having trouble thinking of your next pose please let the facilitator know.

Q: What if I'm cold?

A: Tell the facilitator. They can provide a small heater. Some models wear warm robes between poses.

Q: What if I get an involuntary... physical response?

A: It happens. It's a physiological response to temperature, friction, or nothing at all. It's not your fault. Simply adjust, use your robe, and move on. Professional studios have seen it before. If it's a recurring concern, talk to the facilitator privately.

Q: Can I look at the artwork?

A: Yes, artists are typically happy to show you their work. Always ask before photographing or sharing artwork.

Q: What if an artist is making me uncomfortable?

A: Tell the facilitator immediately. You should never have to endure discomfort. The facilitator will address it.

Q: How do I get better at modeling?

A: Practice. Attend sessions regularly. Study figure drawing yourself — understanding what artists are looking for helps you deliver it. Watch videos of professional models. Ask the facilitator for feedback.

Q: Do I need to be a certain body type?

A: No. All body types are valuable and needed in life drawing. Different bodies offer different learning opportunities for artists. You are welcome here.

Quick Session Checklist for Models

- ☐ Arrive 10 minutes early
- ☐ Check in with facilitator
- ☐ Discuss the session plan and any physical limitations
- ☐ Bring robe
- ☐ Warm up/stretch before first pose
- ☐ Robe off only when on the stand and ready to pose
- ☐ Robe on immediately when pose ends
- ☐ Breathe throughout every pose
- ☐ Communicate any pain or discomfort to facilitator
- ☐ Hydrate during breaks
- ☐ Stretch after the session

This guide is a living document. If you have suggestions, additions, or feedback, please share them with the facilitator. We want this to be as useful as possible for all our models.

— The Phoenix Art Garage