

Want to be a star? Ads seem to say it can happen. Ads online, on TV, and in magazines and newspapers proclaim: “Get ready to be a star!” But wait...how many people see those ads? Hundreds? Maybe even thousands? Would they all become stars? Hardly.

“You’ve got the look.”

The modeling pitch can come in person, too. Sometimes, people who call themselves “modeling scouts” approach kids in public places – the mall, coffee shops, even on the street – and tell them they have the look to be a model. The “scout” may even try to seem more trustworthy by telling you that he or she won’t make any money until you do. Mainly, their job is to flatter you. Who doesn’t want to hear they’re great-looking and could be a star?

The Pitch

Most modeling scams include a combination of these lines:

- *Want to be a model? Train with top professionals for glamorous jobs in the world of runway and photography modeling!*
- *Our scouts select only the models who will succeed, train them to be agency-ready, and get them on their way to fame and fortune.*
- *Since we only make money when you get paid by the clients, we start marketing you through our industry contacts as soon as you’re ready. So get ready to be a star!*

Whether it’s a “scout” or an ad, the rest of the script deals with modeling school, head shots, entering a contest, taking acting lessons, or even screen tests – all “guaranteed” to get you work. Of course, no jobs are guaranteed. Modeling and acting are very difficult

industries to break into, and these suggestions come with a big price tag – from hundreds of dollars for contest entry fees to thousands for photos or a screen test.

When you talk with a modeling “scout” or answer an ad, expect a rush to act fast. After all, the opportunity might “disappear if you don’t act now!” When anyone tries that, it’s a signal to say thanks, but no thanks. Remember: it takes time to check out all opportunities – legitimate or not. Talk to a parent, teacher, or another adult you trust before you commit time or money to any kind of “opportunity.”

If someone approaches you about your modeling or acting potential, be skeptical. If their sales pitch includes classes you can take, photographers you can visit, or contests you can enter to help you achieve success, do yourself a favor: Say no thanks. It may be flattering, but it’s a fake.



Where to Complain

If you know about a modeling scam, file a complaint:

- Contact your state Attorney General. Find their phone number at www.naag.org
- Notify the Better Business Bureau, which can help prevent other people from falling for the same scam. www.bbb.org
- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, the nation's consumer protection agency: www.ftc.gov/complaint

Things to Talk About and Do

- Look for modeling ads in magazines, online, and in newspapers. Find any key words in the ad: free, no risk, guaranteed, your lucky day, money-back, and this offer won't last. Discuss what the ad promises and how likely the claims are to come true.

Want to Find Out More?

Federal Trade Commission
www.ftc.gov

Ready for my Close-Up

"You, too, can have a glamorous career in the movies or on the runway!"

One company made that promise to hundreds of people, guaranteeing them work. The company said its scouts chose people who could make it as models or actors. They promised paying jobs if the customer took classes and did screen tests. They said many of their models had been hired into great jobs, and that they wouldn't make any money until the customer did, and that's why they could be trusted.

All their statements were lies and the FTC brought charges against the company. The court made the company pay fines and stop lying. According to the court, if the company ever started a modeling business again, it would have to say how much training might cost, say that its talent scouts might not have any experience in the modeling industry, that there's no guarantee of a job, and that it's unlikely the customer will ever get a high-paying job as a model or an actor.

