

Dear Jill

I'm a model considering moving to New York...

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Do you have any tips?

—Zoe, St. Louis, MO

Dear Zoe,

You and a lot of other readers will devour the New York section of this issue—all the agencies, models, stars, hotspots—and be ready to make a brand new start of it...to be a part of it... Not so fast!

Before you go emptying your bank account and building a fantasy future in your pretty little head, there's one thing you should know: the Big Apple can be rotten to the core at times. It's one of the most competitive markets for models, photographers, artists, actors...and the cost of living will kick you in the butt if you're not working (and even if you are). To prepare you for the hard-knock life, here's my New York Survival Guide...

Useful Phrases

1. "Taxi!" (Scream at the top of your lungs, wave your arms—most effective if done close to oncoming traffic while wearing a micro-miniskirt.)
2. "I don't have any money!" (Use this with beggars who mistake you for a successful anorexic model, rather than a starving model; also, useful when visiting your agency's accounting department, but be prepared to get down on your knees and beg for the money from your bookings months before.)
3. "I'm on Elite's (T Management's, Next's, Ford's...) list." (Use to bypass the line at clubs—most effective if you're 5'11", female, and look like Karolina Kurchova.)

Accommodation Translations

1. "Model" apartment: A \$3,000/month (actual cost) dwelling in which four to eight fine young things each pay a couple thousand dollars a month (yes, somebody's making a killing) to share one or two bedrooms, a beauty-product-packed bathroom, an icy cold shower, and a kitchen stocked with coffee, celery, pasta, and ketchup.
2. "Cute" apartment: About the size of a hamster Habitrail cage.
3. "Affordable" apartment: Any place where the rent for a month is about equal to your rent for 12 months anywhere else in the U.S.

Open Call Translations

1. Agent: "You're a bit too editorial for us."
Translation: (a) "You have an edgy, exotic, extreme look which may be right for an agency that deals with more editorial work," or (b) "You're not pretty enough to be a model."
2. Agent: "We're not taking any new models right now."
Translation: (a) "We have a lot of great models in town, and we're not taking anyone who isn't at least as beautiful as Gisele Bundchen or Christy Turlington," or (b) "You're not pretty enough to be a model."
3. Agent: "Lose 15 pounds and come back and see us."

Translation: (a) "Lose 15 pounds and we might be interested," or (b) "Get out of my hair."

4. Agent: "You're too commercial for us."

Translation: (a) "You have a cute/all-American/classic look, but we deal with edgier, editorial models," or (b) "You're too average/plain/short to be a model."

5. Agent: "We're not seeing anyone over 18."

Translation: (a) "You're pretty, but if we're going to invest time, money, and energy into a model, there are plenty of young, beautiful people to choose from who will maximize the return on our investment," or (b) "You're not model material—go back to school/get a real job."

Translation (b) is always more likely, and the likelihood that (b) applies to you increases proportionately with the number of agents that give you one of these responses. Be persistent, don't take any of it personally, and know when to call it quits. You can always try again next year; neither I, nor David Mogull (see p. 96), was picked up by an agency during our first round of New York open calls. Good luck!



ILLUSTRATION: Scott McBee