

Dear Jill

I want to be a runway model...

Dear Jill,

I watch all the fashion shows on *VideoFashion!* and it all looks so cool! How do I become a runway model? Are there other jobs behind the scenes which could be fun? I'm 18 years old, 5'11", and enthusiastic!

—Heather, Fort Lauderdale, FL

Dear Heather,

While there used to be a different bevy of beauties prowling the catwalk than those who worked as print models, these days overlap is common—if not required. If you're both photogenic and strut-worthy, you have a better chance. Now the girls who walk the runways on the show circuit in New York, Milan, and Paris are the same girls who own all the coveted editorial in the major fashion magazines. The bigwig editors are making the circuit as well and watching the runways for the ubiquitous faces which they will snap up and catapult to stardom with spreads in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* and *Tear Sheet* (the editor of the last glossy in that list admits to not being really a "bigwig," but certainly a tall person with a big "mop").

Speaking of the *Tear Sheet* editor, she (I'm going to go with third person and keep you wondering as to exactly how many Jills there are around here) found runway modeling to be her bread and butter in the Miami market. *Runways* agency (305-673-8245) is a godsend to models who are tired of spending all their days being #352 on the cattle call list at catalog castings. With all the ladies who lunch in Palm Beach, Bal Harbour, and Coral Gables, fashion shows and informal modeling bookings abound. Some drawbacks: models are still required to carry a "shoe bag" to bookings, a car or carpool network is necessary, and rates are low (informal/trunk show modeling pays around \$50/hour; fashion shows range from \$150 to \$600, depending on caliber and time commitment). But if you haven't been spoiled by Manhattan yet (where the shoe bag has been obsolete for over a decade and the rates are infinitely higher), it's good steady work.

Many agencies across the country have runway divisions to meet the needs of designers, department stores, and merchandise marts. Manhattan, in particular, is a hotbed of activity for those who *measure up* to designers' needs. Models are booked not only to walk runways (including the prestigious ones in Bryant Park twice a year), but also to work as showroom models and fit models—not so prestigious, but profitable: up to \$200/hour. Some fit models (who are generally required to be a size 8—a considerable loosening up of the belt compared to size-4 catwalkers) are under contract with design houses and may work every day of the week; a fit model I know has been at one of the biggest fashion houses for two decades (fit models don't have to worry about wrinkles either, as long as their body measurements stay constant), and she owns a stable of horses in Westchester. Not bad, but be warned: It's physically exhausting, tedious, unglamorous work. (Editor Jill has done her share and kept trying to convince her husband to try changing his clothes for eight hours straight and see if he felt deserving of a massage from his spouse at the end of the day.)

If you find that you can't get the Naomi Campbell hip swivel down, or the only place an agency tells you to walk is out the door, then certainly there are behind-the-scenes jobs galore. From dressers and designers to lighting technicians and music mixers to producers and public relations people to hairdressers and makeup artists—many more bodies make for a successful fashion show than just those that carry the clothes down the catwalk. Contact schools that cater to these various fields in your area and start as a volunteer or apprentice. You should have enough time to position yourself for a role in Miami's ever-growing Fashion Week (May/September) which brings thousands of people to big tents on South Beach to get a taste of what you've been watching on *VideoFashion!*

Good luck, and hold onto your greatest asset: enthusiasm!

—Jill

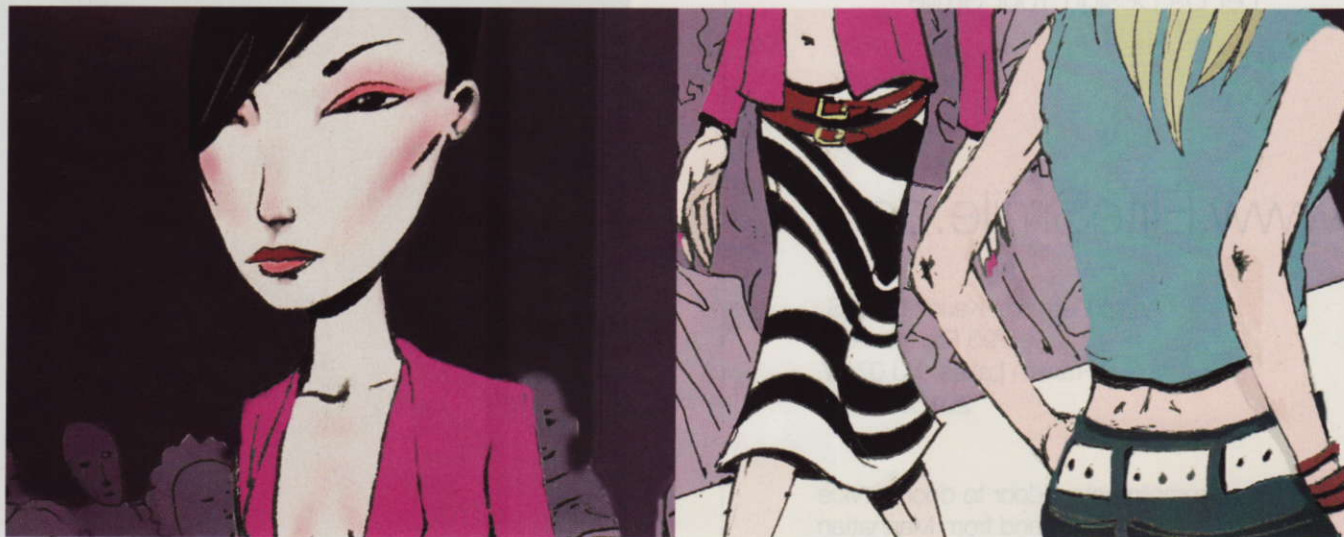


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