

# CPP Study Guide

by Steve Kozak

F. Pose individuals and multiple subjects to achieve the most flattering results (6 items)

## 1. Feminine/masculine posing (S-curve, C-curve)

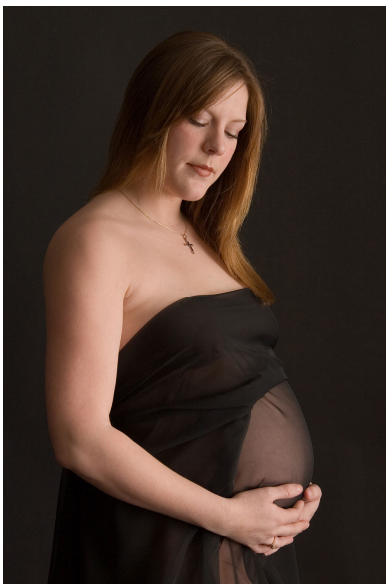
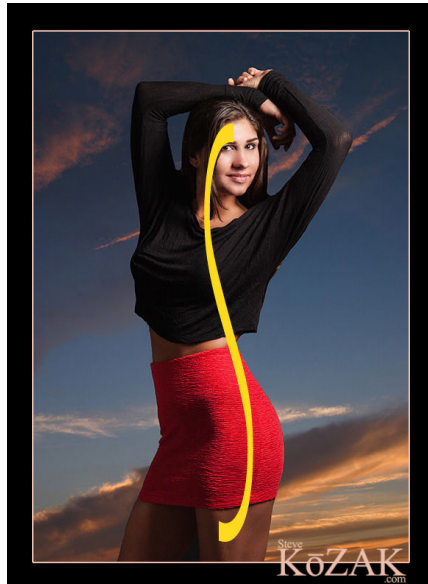
### Feminine Posing (S-curve)

The classic feminine pose creates the curvy contours of the body at the hips and with the upper body. The head usually tilts towards the higher shoulder, but this rule can be broken to taste.

The usual method also includes having the subject place their weight on the back foot which leaves the front leg free to bend the knee to complete the bottom of the “S”, although in the images at right, I got away with placing the weight on the front. The “S” can be reversed.

### Oval Compositions

Oval compositions are also considered to be feminine poses and are often used in maternity photographs. (see below)

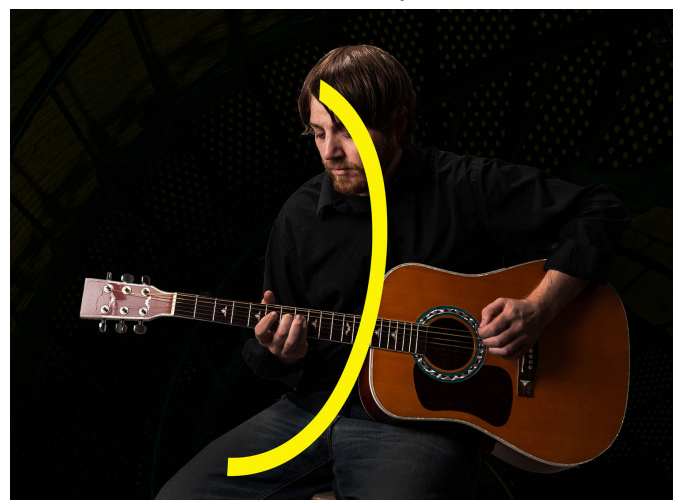


### The Basic Pose (C-curve)

The classic basic pose (sometimes referred to as a masculine pose) creates the look of a “C” curve. The masculine tilt of the head is toward the lower shoulder. (see below)

While considered, “masculine”, this does not mean that it might not be appropriate to pose a woman or a child in a “C-pose”.

The “C-curve” can also appear reversed.



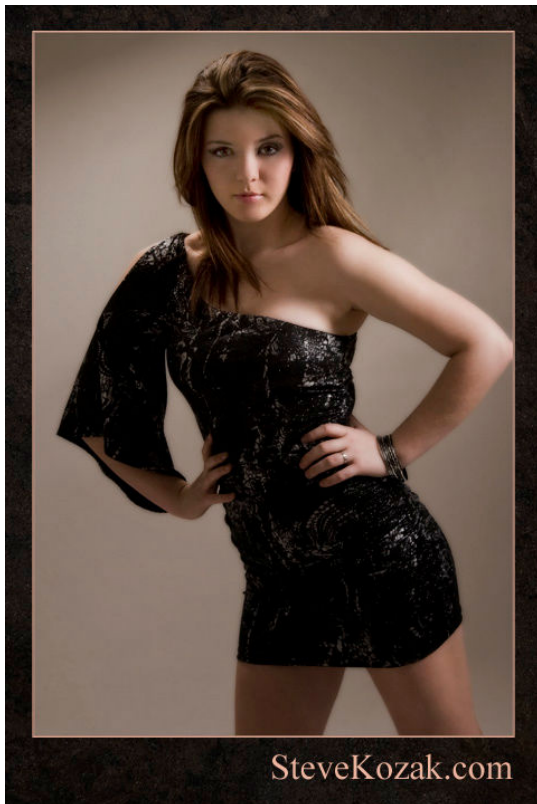
## Composition

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## Angular Posing

Angular posing accentuates the angles that are created with bent arms and legs as well as strong head tilts. These angles are created to create strong, visual compositions. (see right and below)



## Assertive Posing

This style of traditionally, masculine posing uses body language to portray a sense of confidence. From standing with shoulders square to the camera to powerful placement of hands and arms to portray status, power and confidence, assertive poses work with both men and women. (see left and both images below)

*The image at left demonstrates angular and assertive posing.*



*While appearing somewhat "protective", the girl in the image at right is also "assertive in her leaning in towards the camera to create a strong connection to the viewer.*

*This team of lawyers shows several assertive poses.*



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## 2. Group posing (Pyramid, triangular, spacing, connection)

### Group Posing

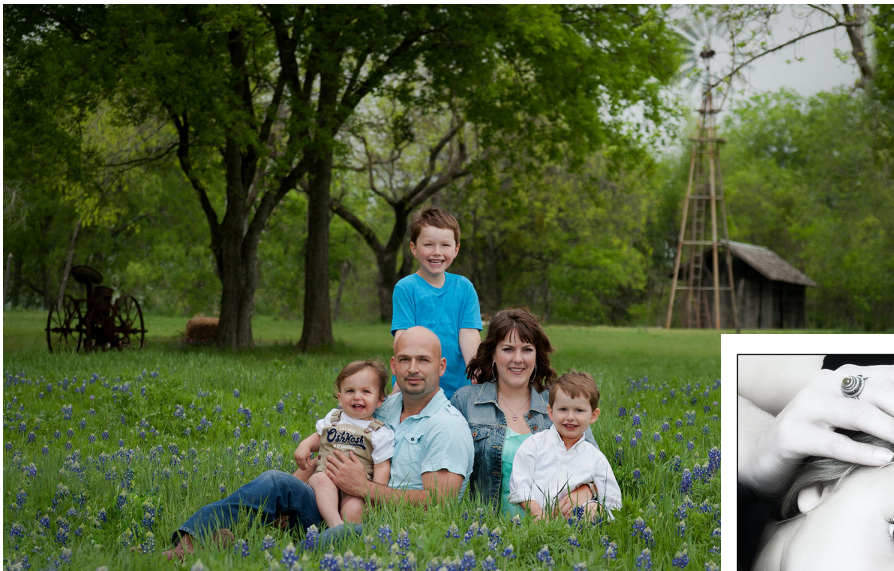
With group posing, it is generally preferred to create images with the subjects' heads on different levels rather than a straight line.

One of the ways to accomplish this is to pose in such a way so as to create “**shapes**”. Common choices include, **diamond**, **triangle**, **check mark**, **inverted check mark** and more.



The image above uses straight line posing. It is not bad but probably not ideal.

The image at left creates a triangular composition. The triangle is a strong compositional pattern that visually demonstrates strength and unity.



The image right uses a strong, triangular design with is often used in posing families.



In the image at left, each head is on a different level but does not really have a clear shape to the design. I should have improved this by having mom and dad switch places. That would have created a better diamond shape.

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The image at left combines two check marks in the composition.

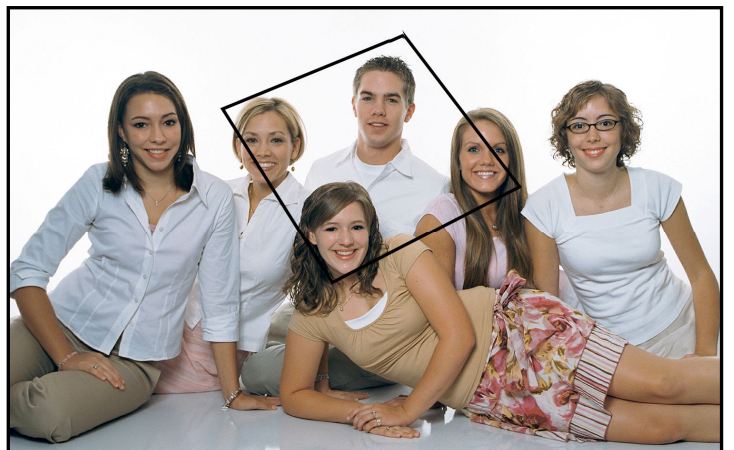
The image below places each head on its own level. The composition could be considered as almost oval. I always liked the “roundness” of the pose against the strong vertical and diagonal lines.



The image at left evokes a strong sense of affection that the boys have with their dad. Dad is leaning into his son and the youngest boy is leaning into and hugging his dad. Having their heads close together really sets off the feeling of closeness they have with each other.



The image at right starts with a diamond shape in the center. There are also two check marks. I probably would have improved the entire composition if I had switched the two girls at the far left.



## Composition



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## Posing Psychology

Posing groups of people introduces some consideration of their relationship to each other. Are they friends or colleagues? Are all of the subjects equal in rank or is there a hierarchy? For example, the owner of a real estate firm posing with her office staff might need to be posed in such a way to suggest prominence for the owner. The psychology of posing might suggest the owner be placed in front with the staff standing behind to bring stature to the owner.

The posing in the image at right suggests that I (the handsome guy in the center with his hands on his hips) might be the leader of this band of photographers photographing in the mountains. My strong assertive pose and the fact that I am in front of the group leaves that impression.



In the image at right, there is no clear “leader” of this group as everyone appears as something of an equal. Posing everyone on an straight line might illustrate equal authority or a sense of “team”. A sense of unity is created when subjects left and right of center turn their shoulders to the center.



## Posing Groups of Two

Posing groups of two may also require some consideration of prominence, but for most images with two people, it is a matter of capturing relationships. Siblings, friends and couples poses allow for some degree of intimacy with the interactions of the two where images of co-workers or colleagues should shy away from any implied sense of affection.

Consideration of the subject's height may also come into play, especially when one subject is particularly taller than the other. While not trying to imply that anything is wrong with two people being the same or of notable height differences, there are some techniques that can help create visual compositions that bring out the sense of the closeness in a relationship and downplaying drastic difference in height.



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In the image at left, the couple is very close to the same height. Compositionally, their heads are almost on the same level, so the pose might be more interesting if their heads were not quite as even.

In the image at right, the couple's heads are pretty far apart which leads to some degree of loss in the feel of intimacy between the two.



While maybe not technically true, I consider the faces to be the center of interest in full length and up to half-body poses. As I move into images that are closer up, I consider the eyes to be the center of interest. I try to make sure the eyes of both subjects are on different levels. I try to create my poses by placing the two subjects' facial features at a 45° angle to each other. The late, Monte Zucker taught that one subject's eyes should be placed at the level of the mouth of the other subject. This sometimes requires using uneven ground, use of a posing stool, posing steps or creative posing to get one subject higher than the other.



In both of these images, the eyes of the girl are about the same level as the guy's mouth.

The poses feel more intimate when the two tip their heads closer together.

**NOTE:**  
*Monte Zucker, Don Blair, Hanson Fong and Doug Box are all excellent sources for posing technique.*



## Composition



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## 3. Facial Views (full face, 2/3, profile)

### Facial Views

The three facial views are “full face”. “2/3 view” and “profile”.



#### Full Face

The nose and face are directly towards the camera. This is appropriate for passport photos but not always be the most flattering option.



#### 2/3 View

The face is turned away from the camera but not at profile. Two keys to watch are: the back eye should be completely visible and there should be flesh visible between the nose and the back cheek.



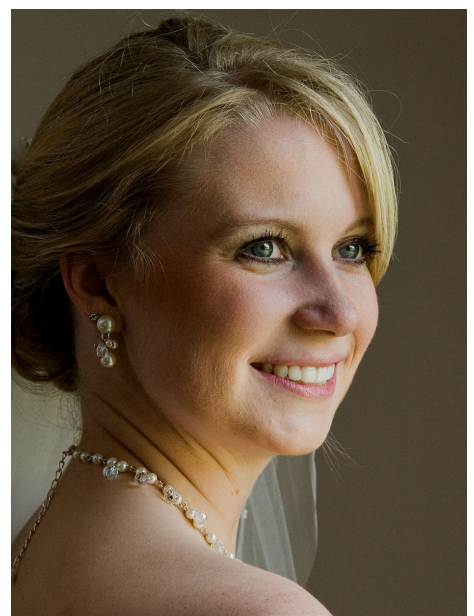
#### Profile

The face is turned 90° from the camera. The back eye is not visible, but the back eyelashes can be seen.



The image at left shows a pose where the nose breaks the plane of the back cheek, but not quite a profile. This causes an unflattering accentuation to the nose.

In the image at right, I turned her head so that the nose is comfortably contained inside the back cheek. This is much for flattering to this beautiful bride.



## Composition



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## 4. Body posing (Breaking the plane and weight placement)



### Body Posing

There is so much wrong with the image on the left, it is a great place to start with body posing. Let's begin:

- Shoulders are square to the camera
- Hips are square to the camera
- Elbow pointed straight into the camera
- Showing the back of the hand
- Right arm in tight to the body
- The entire pose is in a straight vertical line
- Weight on the front foot.

So, what can we do to correct the lack of good posing in this image? Let's examine a few guidelines to improve the pose.

### Turn Feet Away

With the feet turned to the camera, it has the effect to broaden the hips and create a straight body line. (right)

Turning the feet away from the camera lines up the body to create an angle throughout the shoulders and hips. Placing the weight on the back foot helps this as well.



Turning the body creates a more graceful line to the shoulders and more curves to the hips. Graceful lines and curves create more interesting movement to the body.

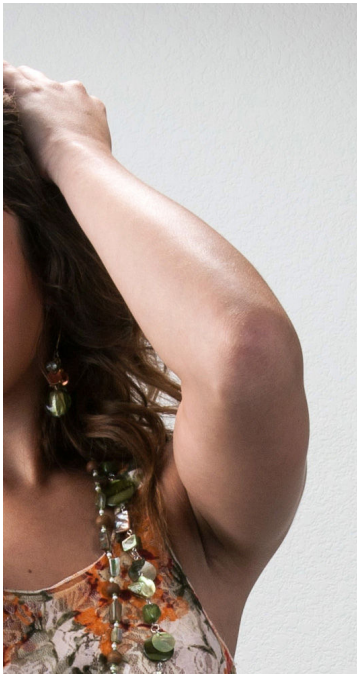
In the image at left, I turned her feet and hips about 45° away from the camera. Notice how this creates curves and has a slimming effect on her hips when compared to the image above.

## Composition



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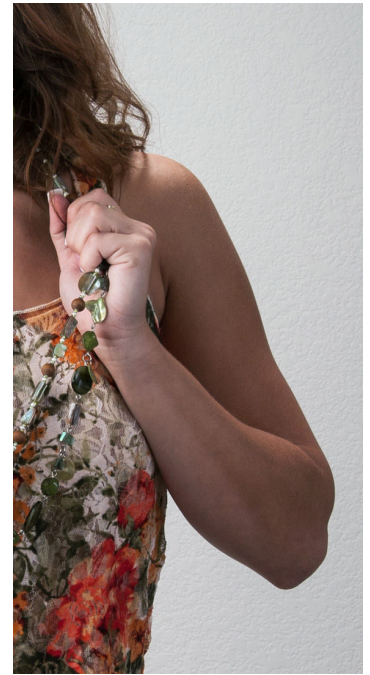


## Don't Point Body Parts Toward the Camera

It is best to keep feet, legs, knees, arms, and fingers from pointing directly into the camera. Anything that points toward the camera appears larger and possibly distorted.

The image on the left is greatly improved by not pointing the elbow toward the camera. Instead, lower the elbow and use the bent arm to create a diagonal line.

One of the first rules of posing I ever heard was, "Anything that will bend...bend it." That is still a pretty good "guideline" to use. I try to say, "guideline" instead of "rules" because there are always compelling reasons to go against conventional wisdom.

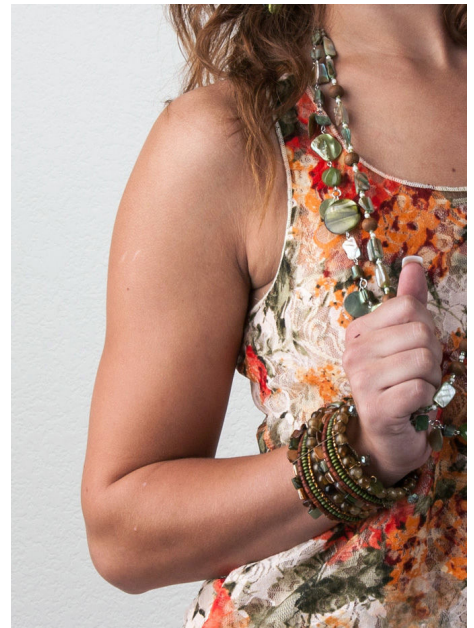


## Create Space Between Arms and Body

Arms clinched in tight towards the body tend to give the appearance of added weight. Opening the arm to create space between the arm and body has a trimming effect. I have, however, used the arm close to the body to "conceal" weight. Again, a guideline, not a rule.

## Don't Show the Back of the Hand

The back of the hand creates a large area of flesh tones that may compete with the face. Typically, you try to photograph the side of the hand.



## Bend the Wrist

Bending the wrist creates a thinner appearance and nice lines. Bend the wrist downward (towards the ground). In other words, lift the hand upward rather than allowing it to hang downward.



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## Before and After

So here are the improvements I made to the pose at left.

A curvier body, leading lines, and movement created by the arms and opening the arms from the body show her figure in a much more flattering way. (see right)



In the image at left, the bride is posed with her feet and body turned squarely towards the camera. This creates broad shoulders and creates no shapely curves to flatter her upper body.

In the image at right, her feet are turned about 45° and the weight is on the back foot. This creates a nice diagonal line to the shoulders and shows off her feminine form.

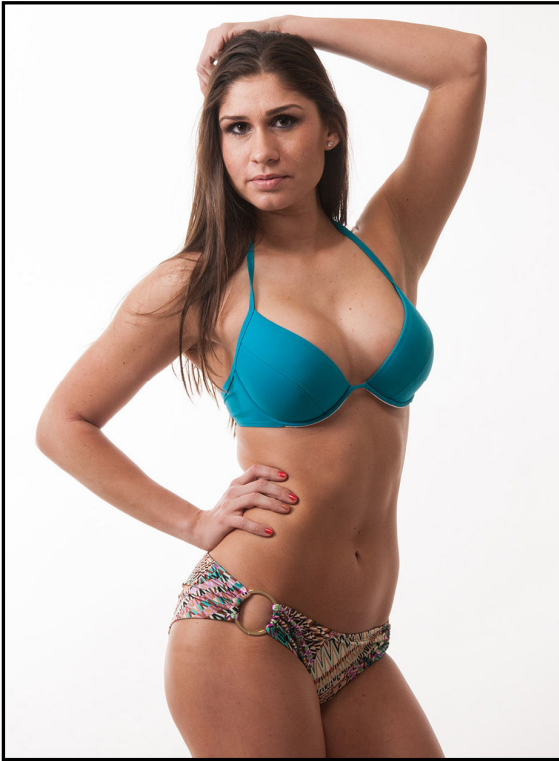


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With the weight on her front foot, her front leg appears heavier.  
(left)

Placing the weight on the back foot allows the subject to bend her front leg to create a more slimming pose.  
(right)



**Composition**