



AREN'T WE FIVE

'I'm ready for my
CLOSE-UP'

How to look good in photographs. By Gemma Burgess

You're stunning. Your cheekbones could shave diamonds. Your eyes sparkle like the second glass of champagne. Your lips are BJ-ready, in a totally classy way. Women want to be friends with you and men want to be naked with you. In short, you're radiantly charismatic and gorgeous with lashings of sex appeal.

And you believed that. Until you saw photo, after photo, of yourself. And you looked bloody awful. In every single one of them. Mouth set in a rictus grin, eyes shrivelled and frozen, your entire body rigid with discomfort. And now you're cameraphobic.

We all have personal cameraphobias, and they are as random as they are ridiculous. My friend Anna (all names changed to protect the self-conscious), who was told by her mother-in-law 'your teeth hurt my eyes' after a family Christmas photograph, promptly stopped smiling and became the Mona Lisa of every flash-filled celebration. Caroline believes she has an oversized, obscenely square jaw like Stan from *American Dad!* and as a result will only ever be snapped biting the inside of her cheeks, looking coyly yet awkwardly over her shoulder. Sophia is so convinced her upper

arms are abnormally thick and short (thanks to a thoughtless 'you could be a shotputter' comment from an ex) that she insists on being sandwiched tightly between two other people in every photo, as though her entire life were one long game of Sardines.

Now, I know that their obsessions are ridiculous. (Unlike mine, which are completely legitimate, because I do have jowls like a Disney bulldog and abnormally sparse eyelashes. I just *do*.) Yet my genuinely gorgeous friends are

recently discovered that symmetry isn't that important after all: computer-manipulated, immaculately symmetrical faces are considered less attractive than 'real' faces with a small degree of asymmetry. This explains why plastic surgery-abused faces, though theoretically made up of perfectly attractive and immaculately symmetrical elements, always seem somehow wrong and unnatural and therefore unattractive. (Cast of TOWIE, I'm talking to you.)

My genuinely gorgeous friends are convinced that they'll never look good in a photograph, ever...

convinced that they are not just unphotogenic, but ugly as sin, and that they'll never look good in a photograph, ever. But what does being photogenic actually mean? Does it simply come down to being beautiful?

For most of us, beauty is a bit like art. We know it when we see it. For decades, people have believed that beauty – and, therefore, being photogenic – requires perfect facial symmetry, which apparently signifies youth, fertility, health and all that jazz. But researchers

The ancient Greeks believed that beauty required proportional harmony – the Golden Proportion studied by the sculptor Phidias. According to this theory (and to da Vinci and every other artist until, more or less, Picasso and Dalí, who were both partial to a wonky eye or two), the perfect face is 1.6 times longer than it is wide; the distance between the hairline and the bit between the eyes, from there to the bottom of the nose, and from there to the chin, should be even; ▶

◁ the length of the ear is equal to the length of the nose; and the width of the eye is equal to the distance between the eyes.

I know what you're thinking, and yes, there is an app for the Golden Proportion, so you can check to see how you measure up. It's called Vanity; it takes a photo of your features and gives you a score out of 10. I got 8.6, which I was pleasantly surprised by, given that on a bad day one of my eyebrows is a full half-centimetre below the other and my chin is like Where's Wally (no, really, it is).

In photographs, it is the lighting that makes all the difference. Good lighting creates the right type of shadows and depth, which results in the most appealing outcome. With bad lighting, in addition to bad make-up and even dodgier poses, it becomes easy to appear one or all of the following: lipless, eyeless, browless, noseless, hairless, neckless, flatfaced, puffy, flushed, gaunt, jowly, double-chinned, triple-chinned, bulby-nosed, sallow, drawn, ancient, manly, draggy, shiny, and/or slightly simple. That's why we don't like photographs of ourselves. It's not us, it's not our Golden Proportions or lack thereof. It's the *medium*.

So what to do? We need to help the camera

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see us in a more three-dimensional way. Yes, it helps if you have luminous skin. Think Botticelli angel. Think organic, non-drinking-vegan yoga instructor on a juice fast. Think post-coital... you know, when the sex is great, and afterwards you go to the bathroom and look in the mirror and think, 'God, I am gorgeous – I'd bang me if I was him too.' But ultimately it's about knowing your best angles.

So: poses. Every Facebook album contains dreadful poses affected by ever-hopeful cameraphobes like you and me. The worst offender is, of course, the Duckface (basic theory: pout like a duck, stare at the camera). The Duckface pops the cheekbones, defines the jawline, plumps the lips and makes you look like a total willy. And no, you can't do the Duckface ironically. Trust me. I've tried.

Paris Hilton, whatever you think of her, knows exactly how to pose (or did, back when people were taking photos of her). If she's photographed alone, she arches her back, crosses one leg over the other, puts her hand on her hip, and – this is key – turns her upper body 90 degrees to the camera. Then she tilts her chin right down, swivels her eyes up and around to the lens, and smirks. (You just tried to do all that while reading this, didn't you?). She's instantly thinner, taller, sexier. But the problem with posing like Paris Hilton is that you come across a bit like Paris Hilton. And no one wants that.

Knowingly or unknowingly, Poppy Delevingne took the petrifying Tyra Banks's advice to heart and 'smizes' (smiling with your eyes) her heart out: no eye-crunchingly huge grins here. Poppy also knows exactly what angle to twist her head to show off her divine profile to best advantage, and rather than the Paris cross-leg, she likes to keep her ankles together but force her knees as far apart as possible to make her already gamine legs look Moss-like (ie, bandy). Baby sister Cara Delevingne likes to break up her perfect model poses with strange cross-eyed jester faces. We can probably assume she knows that her bone structure can withstand any amount of gurning and still look exquisite.

I have a theory that Olivia Palermo was genetically engineered to take a perfect photograph. She produces a seemingly genuine dimpled smile and keeps her eyes wide open and avoids a double chin. Olivia poses so consistently perfectly that I just want to brush her shiny hair and then give it a little yank to see if she'll yelp. And maybe cry. Just a little bit.

The camera seems to love Lisa B, and now

we know why: her secret is to look at the lens as though she has a secret. I'm not sure what that means if your secret is that you hate cameras, but never mind.

The winner for best poser is everyone's favourite style maven, Alexa Chung. She goes straight for the hand-on-hip-leg-cross, just like Paris. The difference? Alexa looks straight into the lens and smiles instead of simpers. She also uses props to vary her poses: she'll slip her hand into her pocket, or hold her handbag in front of her body. The result is casual, cool and chic. And it makes her arms look thinner. Like she needs that.

Verdict? The secret to the perfect pose – and saying adieu to cameraphobia – is to appear completely unaffected whilst actually working your Spanx off. Build a repertoire of poses that you can pull out automatically everytime someone says 'cheese', like the Little Teapot: put one hand on your waist, hold your purse/drink/friend with the other, twist your shoulders slightly, press your tongue against the roof of your mouth, point your chin down, look up to the camera, exhale through your nose and smile. If that doesn't work, just remember this: one day you'll be very old and wise, and you'll wish you had photographic evidence of yourself as you are, right now, today, this second. Hopefully that's enough to make you smile – even if your teeth do hurt someone's eyes. □

THE CAMERA LURVES ME

ARCH THAT BACK...



Paris Hilton

...ER, CROSS THOSE EYES...



Cara Delevingne

...AND THEN YOUR LEGS!



Alexa Chung