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PART 2

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THREE-POINT CHECK COMBINATIONS

PHOTOGRAPHS CANNOT TALK, but they can still communicate. You experience various emotions depending on the energy the photograph casts on you. Some people can explain that energy, and others cannot. It is undeniable, however, that there's something we all feel when looking at a photograph of a person. Why does that happen?

The reason we feel a connection or a lack of one when looking at a photo of a person is because each of us has amassed an enormous database of human interactions since we were born. We have all observed the body language of people when they speak to us. We also have experienced that subtle gaze when someone is attracted to us, or the body language of someone interviewing us for a job. We learn to associate different feelings with different body languages.

As we grow up, we learn to differentiate a strong and confident body language from a flirtatious one. Photographers can create very distinct energies and looks in a photo by focusing specifically on the head and torso. They only need to use three parts of the body: *the collarbone*, *the chin*, and *the eyes*.

To simplify the charts I have put together on the following pages, we will consider only two options for posing these three parts of the body: facing you, or not facing you. By combining these three with the two posing options,

you will be able to create any feeling you desire. Later in this chapter, we will also introduce the option of moving your subject's chin up or down, and tilting the head toward the higher or lower shoulder.

As photographers, we must be conscious of the body language of our subjects. Yes, we could take hundreds of photos of our subject, until we find a particular result we like. But why not be conscious of what type of responses we want from our viewers and simply execute? In this chapter, we will explore every combination we can create using only the collarbone, the chin, and the eyes, along with whether they face the viewer.

3-POINT COMBINATION CHARTS

The charts that follow might appear a bit complicated, but they aren't. They simply represent the various posing combinations that you should be aware of. Don't force yourself to memorize these charts. It is far more effective to identify the combinations using your own work and become aware of the energy you feel with certain combinations. The process is similar to learning a language.

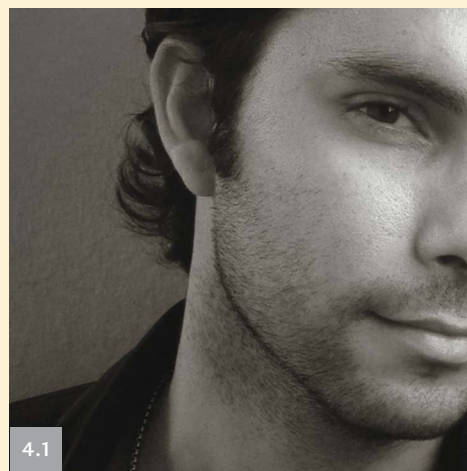
You can force yourself to learn French at home on your own, or you can move to France and immerse yourself in the language. Which approach do you think would be more effective at helping you become fluent in French? The goal is to be able to think in the language you are speaking so that the sentences flow smoothly and the language becomes second nature to you. The same principle applies to these charts.

FLASH CARD

Visual emphasis is always given to the point facing the camera. For example, if the collarbone and chin are not facing the camera but the eyes are, then greater emphasis is given to the eyes and less emphasis to the body and chin. This is a great combination for beauty or boudoir.

Depending on your angle, if you tilt your subject's chin to any direction you will expose the jawline. This should automatically cause you to adjust your lighting to chisel the jawline as much as possible. Do so by using lighting to create as much separation as possible of the jawline and the neck.

To help you visualize, look at **Figure 4.1**. There should be a distinct shadow line where the jawline meets the neck. This photo of me was taken by my great friend Jerry Ghionis at his house in Beverly Hills. Notice that by turning my chin to my left and turning my eyes toward the camera, greater emphasis was placed on my eyes, but it left my jawline exposed. Jerry then made adjustments to my position relative to the light to create that perfect shadow where the jawline meets the neck. The final result is a portrait where the eyes of the subject are emphasized and the jawline looks chiseled.



Another point to keep in mind is your subject's bone structure and whether he or she has a double chin. This is important because different combinations with the right lighting can drastically change, for the better, a person's appearance. Always notice the direction of light for all of these portrait combinations. With experience, you will develop a repertoire of combinations you will be proud of.

WORKING WITH THE 3-POINT CHARTS

This section shows how I use the charts. By attaching a certain feeling or energy to a specific combination, I begin to naturally memorize the results of each chart. First and foremost, I associate the collarbone, chin, or eyes facing the camera with forming a strong connection with the viewer. Those points not facing the camera form a weaker connection with the viewer.

I also think of posing the head perfectly straight as a tool to toughen character and a tilt of the head as a tool to soften it. So, if the body is facing you and the chin and eyes aren't, I consider that body as having a strong connection but the eyes and face a weak one. You probably will not find promotional photos of professional boxers tilting their heads. That subtle tilt will make them appear less tough.

The strongest and most personal combination is when all three points are facing you and the head is perfectly straight. These are quick reference words to help me memorize what would happen if, for instance, I tilt the head or if I turn the collarbone away from the camera. Assume for a second you would like to create a strong pose for your subject but you want to soften it a little or make it less aggressive. In that case, you would turn the collarbone, chin, and eyes toward the camera but ask the model to tilt her head to either side.

Let's go through some examples of how the charts work and how to best use them to maximize our understanding of posing.

Figure 4.2:

- Collarbone facing the camera (strong), chin facing the camera (strong), and eyes facing the camera (strong).
- Head is straight (tougher).
- Energy: All three points are facing the camera in this portrait. Because of this, the subject appears strong and very much in your face. She is connecting with you in a very direct way. Her body, her face, and her eyes are all on you, the viewer. It is fair to say that a pose like this would be normal if you were having a conversation with her. Therefore, positioning all three points toward the camera makes the feel of this portrait very personal. Children often pose themselves in a very symmetrical way, giving this pose a possibly innocent energy. Because of the high connection level, this could be a good choice for a senior portrait or for a fashion portrait.

FLASH CARD

Tilting the head:

- If the subject tilts the head toward his/her higher shoulder, it will appear more feminine.
- If the subject tilts the head toward the lower shoulder, it will appear more masculine.





Figure 4.3:

- Collarbone facing away from the camera (weak), chin facing away from the camera (weak), and eyes facing the camera (strong).
- Head is straight (tougher).
- Energy: Both her body and her chin/face are turned away from the camera, and only her eyes are connecting with you. Because there is nothing else competing for attention, her eyes dominate with a seductive undertone. Her chin is facing the same direction as her collarbone, indicating that she could have been having a conversation with someone else and she quickly turned to look at you. This pose is a good choice for boudoir photography or when the subject wants to appear sexy and seductive, yet elegant and classy.

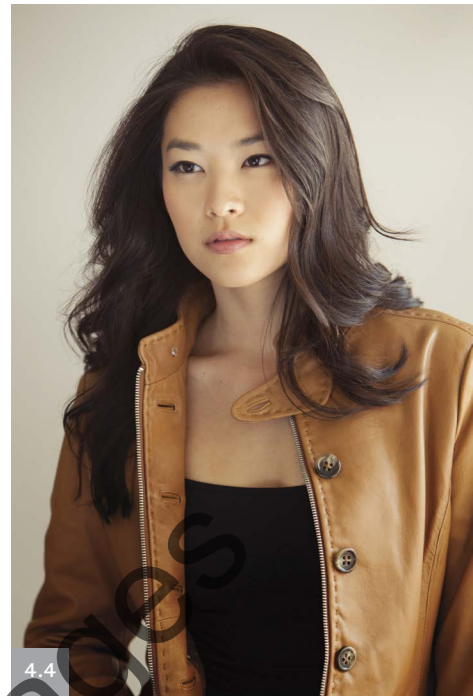


Figure 4.4:

- Collarbone facing the camera (strong), chin facing away from the camera (weak), and eyes facing away from the camera (weak).
- Head is straight (tougher).
- Energy: With only her collarbone facing you, the attention is directed to what she is wearing. There is not a great deal of personal connection here. But, compared to other combinations, this one is much more dynamic and high energy because this combination poses the collarbone and chin in opposing directions. If the collarbone and chin had been facing the same direction, the energy would be much calmer and harmonious, because she could easily have turned her eyes toward you and acknowledged your presence. But she didn't, so she appears illusive or aloof. Therefore, this combination is great for a fashion shoot, where the connection with the clothes is more important than with the person wearing them.



Figure 4.5:

- Collarbone facing away from the camera (weak), chin facing away from the camera (weak), and eyes facing away from the camera (weak).
- Head is straight (tougher).
- Energy: All three of the key points are turned away from you. This pose does not feel personal at all, and there is no connection with the viewer. It does, however, provide you with a quick glance of who she is and what she looks like, but her personality is subject to interpretation. The lack of connection with the viewer makes this combination a great choice to depict a powerful person or a leader. When the collarbone is facing one way and the chin the other way, it creates a highly dynamic pose. The pose feels energetic instead of passive. It resembles movement instead of rest. This combination also elongates the neck, making the person tall and elegant. Because of the impersonal nature of this combination, many ancient Roman sculptors used this combination to sculpt the busts of their leaders.

Figure 4.6:

- Collarbone facing the camera (strong), chin facing the camera (strong), and eyes facing the camera (strong).
- Head is tilted toward lower shoulder (softer, but with a more masculine feel).
- Energy: This is an example where all three points have a strong connection with the viewer, but the simple act of tilting the head automatically softens the image. However, this tilt is toward the lower shoulder, giving the photo a more masculine and confrontational energy. Compare Figure 4.6 with the following photograph, where the tilt is toward the higher shoulder.



Figure 4.7:

- Collarbone facing the camera (strong), chin facing the camera (strong), and eyes facing the camera (strong).
- Head is tilted toward higher shoulder (softer and with a more feminine tender feel).
- Energy: Not only is the energy in this photo strong, but you also connect with her feminine side. The only change from Figure 4.6 was tilting the head toward the higher shoulder. This is why I believe it is so important that photographers be aware of what the results will be calling out posing directions to clients. You should know the answers to such questions as how the energy of the pose changes by tilting the head, turning the body to the side, and so forth. I know this is hard work, but it is worth every ounce of energy when you have a client in front of you and you are a master at what you do. That feeling is amazing!

COLLARBONE, CHIN, AND EYE COMBINATIONS

The chart combinations on the following page provides you with every possible combination of the three points: the collarbone, the chin, and the eyes. They are meant to be used as a reference guide/study guide. They do not include head tilts or raising the chin up or down; those optional tools can be used with the charts.

If, for example, light were coming from above, you would raise your subject's chin toward the light source. This would illuminate the face evenly, getting rid of unflattering shadows. Keep in mind that opposing directions create energy, whereas same directions create harmony. For example, if the collarbone is facing camera left, the chin is facing to the right, and the eyes are looking back to the left, this would be a high-energy combination. If all three points were facing the same direction, however, it would create a greater sense of harmony and calmness.

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin	X	
Eyes		X

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin	X	
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin		X
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin		X
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin		X
Eyes		X

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin		X
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin	X	
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin	X	
Eyes	X	

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin	X	
Eyes		X

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone		X
Chin		X
Eyes		X

	FACING YOU	AWAY
Collarbone	X	
Chin	X	
Eyes		X

Become familiar with how the combinations affect the energy of the poses. Do it naturally and slowly so that you can remember each one. Once you have a good grasp of a few combinations, start adding chin direction, up or down, and tilting the head toward one of the shoulders. After becoming familiar with a few combinations, ask yourself what kind of energy you want, and what part of your subject you would like to feature. Then come up with a combination to give you exactly that. Remember to enjoy the process, and do not force yourself to memorize the charts in one sitting.



APPLYING THE 3-POINT COMBINATIONS

This chapter's previous photos were chosen to demonstrate various concepts. The following photos come from actual photo shoots where I applied these techniques based on the energy I wanted to portray in my photographs. I hope that after reading this book you will pose with intent, instead of just guessing and throwing posing directions around in hope that one looks good. I do not want to sound harsh, but if you intend to use photography as a way of making a living, then you must photograph skillfully for the survival of your photography business.

After considering Laura's clothing and hairstyle (**Figure 4.8**), I thought an aggressive and powerful pose would do the most justice to the overall styling. So I used the same technique as Figure 4.5, where none of the three points face the camera, and the collarbone and chin point in opposite directions. Although I label the points not facing the camera as weak, I'm referring to a weak personal connection with the viewer, not weak as in fragile. This distinction is important.

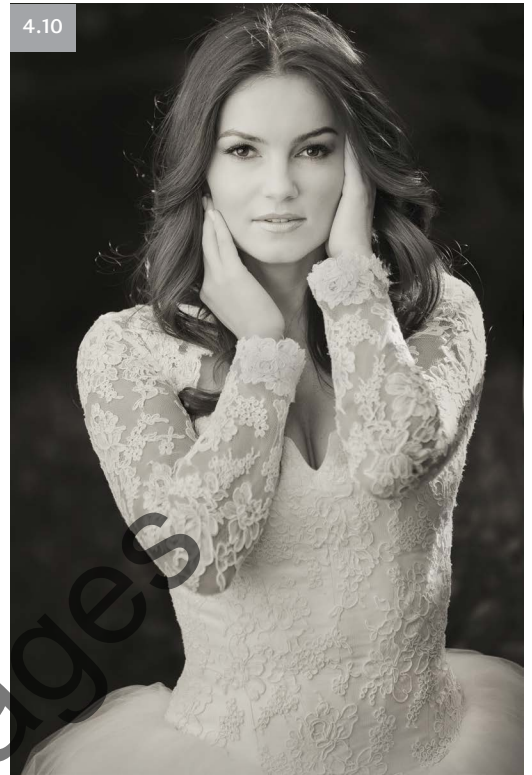
The fact that none of the three points face you makes this photo impersonal, so you connect with her more as a statue than as a friend. I placed her hair over her eyes to add to the mysterious nature of this pose. With her eyes hidden from the viewer, the photo leaves more of her personality to your imagination.

The beautiful bride in **Figure 4.9** had one of the most unique wedding dresses I'd ever seen. There was no question in my mind that I needed a three-point combination to showcase the dress without it competing with her face. The answer was for her collarbone to be facing the camera and her chin and eyes facing away. This combination impels you to admire her dress without her eyes "demanding" that you look back at her. You can clearly see how turning her face away from the camera softens the connection with her eyes. I added a subtle head-tilt toward the higher shoulder to make the pose appear more feminine and elegant.

For the photo in **Figure 4.10**, I wanted the opposite effect of Figure 4.9. In this case, I still wanted to feature the dress, but I also wanted to keep a strong personal connection with the bride. The best three-point combination was easy to choose: All three points should face the camera.



4.9



4.10



4.11

This three-point combination in **Figure 4.11** with the collarbone and the chin facing the camera and the eyes turned away is rarely used, but it can be very effective. It's one of my favorite combinations when doing a boudoir photo shoot. The energy here is sensual yet personal. Her eyes are not connecting with you, but she can feel your presence and accepts it because her body and chin are directed toward you. To me, this is the perfect three-point combination to create a balanced mix of aloofness and warmth. I know that sounds like a contradiction, but that is the best way to describe the energy in this photo.

ON YOUR OWN

Examine the following photos (**Figures 4.12–4.15**) with a group or another person and go over the combinations used and the energy they project. Be specific, as I was in the previous examples. Discuss, compare notes, and learn from each other.





4.14



ANALYSIS
