

TFP PHOTOGRAPHY: WHAT IS IT AND HOW TO USE IT TO MASTER YOUR CRAFT


Quick Guide
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We all started somewhere, and none of us have crossed the finish line yet. We're all learning, day by day, perfecting our craft. We need to use every day we have to our advantage and find something that keeps us moving forward. I'm sure many of us photographers have found ourselves in a specific situation. Full of motivation, full of excitement, holding the most expensive gear you could afford, basically ready to shoot. Err, not really. You don't have a model yet, and you can't shoot clouds in the sky forever. And a makeup artist or a stylist would help. What now?

Today, we'll cover the following:

- Why do collaborations help, whether you're a beginner or a professional?
- What is TFP shooting, and what are its benefits and common practices?
- What are the pros and cons of a TFP photoshoot?

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Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

NEVER STOP EDUCATING YOURSELF, BUT EXECUTE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

Reading this guide, you're educating yourself right now. Great job! Dedicate a part of your week to self-development, such as reading on Photzy. It should be a part of your routine. But find the right balance between "academics" and execution. Photography isn't quantum physics, so in order to get better at your craft, you need to take your camera and go out shooting what you just learned!

Go out and shoot!

GETTING STARTED PROFESSIONALLY

I'm not going to lie, having a portfolio is a necessity to start your own business. Whether you have a website or post on social media, consistency and quality of your content is what's going to sell you. This should be your main motivation to do so. But I know that it isn't that easy. You start practicing

on friends and family, but they're by no means the professional models you see on Instagram. You need more than that after a certain amount of time. And as in any business, collaboration is what usually makes it skyrocket.

COLLABORATION: BUILD MORE

We're all self-conscious about our work, especially when seeing the professional photographers we follow. But all of the fancy editorials and beautiful magazine covers they shot didn't happen with them being isolated from other creatives. You're

comparing yourself, sitting in a room with your camera, with someone who has spent decades networking and building their social database. Let's change that and start building yours.

TFP: WHAT IS IT?

TFP, the abbreviation for “Time for Print,” is used to distinguish photoshoots that have absolutely no monetary value for any party included. The only donation needed to enter is your skill and time. The idea behind it is that apart from paid shoots, creatives should be working on projects that are more enriching for their portfolios. It’s about equality

in terms of benefits and finding people in the same professional range. It means that it only makes sense to collaborate with people who have a similar level of experience (but it’s not a rule). The simplest example is a TFP photoshoot between a photographer, model, make-up artist, and a hair stylist. No one gets paid, but everyone enriches their portfolio.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

Model wearing professional makeup

FINDING LOCAL TFP GROUPS

Understanding the whole collaboration concept requires being actively in the center of it all, so find your local TFP groups and join them! Usually, you can find them on various social media platforms by searching for TFP + "country" or TFP + "city." It all depends on the size of the country or the city, but I'm sure there should be a group like this if you're living near a bigger city! And if there isn't one?! No excuses! It's your time to start one.

HOW TO POST INQUIRIES IN TFP GROUPS

There are some general “non-spoken” rules to follow when posting to the TFP group. Be as detailed as possible, so people can choose whether they want to work with you or not. Specify the following points:

- The creative profession you work in (are you a photographer or something else?)
- The creatives you are looking for (makeup artists, hair stylists, or fashion stylists?) and the work or style you expect from them
- What your portfolio looks like (if you don't have one, just be honest and state that the photoshoot is taking place in order to build your portfolio)

- What you want it to look like (do you have a specific vibe you're going for?)
- Where and when you want it to take place
- Other specifics you want to include

Other reasons to post to these groups are finding quick replacements for your already planned photoshoots. Whatever your need is, always be professional. Unfortunately, there are also some posts you might see that do not follow the common guidelines.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová


TFP collaboration between a makeup artist, beginner model, and myself as a photographer.

LEARN TO SAY NO!

This type of collaboration is often tied up with unprofessional behavior when you don't know how to set boundaries. Some people misuse these groups to gain free photography work, and that's wrong. Being in the industry for a few years, I often see inquiries such as:

- "Any photographer who'd be happy to photograph my wedding as TFP?"
- "Is there someone to photograph my handmade jewelry? I need photographs for my website. You'll gain exposure!"

And for such requests, you need to learn how to say no. And not just that, correct them in a polite way and let them know they're actually asking for full wedding coverage or for a product photoshoot, which is not anywhere near an equal exchange of services and talent.

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KNOW YOUR VALUE AND PROS AND CONS

Remember, the reason you're doing this is for your own benefit. Never devalue your work and do not mistake free work for an equally beneficial exchange of talent. TFP photoshoots are what helped me build my professional portfolio, and it gave me tons of benefits:

- Portfolio – As mentioned before, it's a great resource to sparkle up your portfolio with what you want to shoot. You need to build your portfolio by keeping your ideal customer in mind.
- Consistent content – It's easier to stay up to date with social media when you have valuable content in your hands.
- Most valuable learnings – This is the time to experience and to make mistakes to learn from. I'm not saying you shouldn't be professional, but you are there to make the most out of your work and experience things you wouldn't dare to in a real business environment.

- Networking strategy – Knowing other creatives in your area is truly priceless, not only due to collaborations, but also for the word of mouth recommendations! You never know when someone may recommend your business to a potential client. This also works when they tag you on their socials!
- Push the boundaries – You might have a few crazy photoshoot ideas in your brainstorming box, and this is the right way to execute them!

Of course, there is a huge benefit in the photoshoot itself as well. You might try your best photographing the subject, but having a professional make-up artist work with you can reduce your retouching time and makes your model pop. Make-up used for photography is different from what you're used to seeing on a daily basis, because it largely works with contouring and skin perfecting, and it generally looks stronger in real life. This is necessary, because on camera it looks just right.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

As mentioned before, there is one con tied up with TFP shoots: the public doesn't understand the correct use, which can lead to devaluation of one's work if not used properly. You know how it goes... if the cousin of the husband of your sister's friend hears that you photographed something for free, oh man, he will want those pictures!

There are no highly professional signed models in the TFP groups (they simply can't be), but it also shouldn't be accessible to anyone who just wants free Instagram pictures. Make your decision. Choose someone on your level and know what they bring you.



Photograph by Ludmila Borošová

CONCLUSION

If you act professional and treat these photoshoots with the same level of importance as you do with your clients, you will be fine, and you will gain valuable knowledge and experience. Don't forget to trust your skills, be punctual, have high

communication standards, and respect the model. Know your business model and how many TFP shoots you can do in a certain period. I'm sure you will create something beautiful together that you wouldn't be able to pull off by yourself.

Self-Check Quiz:

- 1) What is TFP?
- 2) How do you find your local TFP group?
- 3) Would you agree to shoot a wedding as a TFP?
- 4) What are the things you shouldn't miss writing in an inquiry?
- 5) What are the pros of TFP?
- 6) What are the cons of TFP?
- 7) How can a make-up artist help on the spot?

Assignment:

- Find your local TFP group or the closest one to you.
- Search for TFP photographs created in your area. Open your social media and try hashtags such as #tfpprague, #tfpamsterdam, or #tfplondon.
- If there isn't any group in your area, create one! Take inspiration from the bigger groups in different areas and contact creatives you already know.
- Create a data sheet of all the people who would be interesting to work with.
- Follow them on social media and start networking with them.
- Write down at least five photoshoot ideas you want to execute.
- Create your first TFP post and arrange the photoshoot! You will do great!
- Bonus: If you want to be more comfortable, contact your local lawyer or create a simple contract for you and the model to sign to protect both sides.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



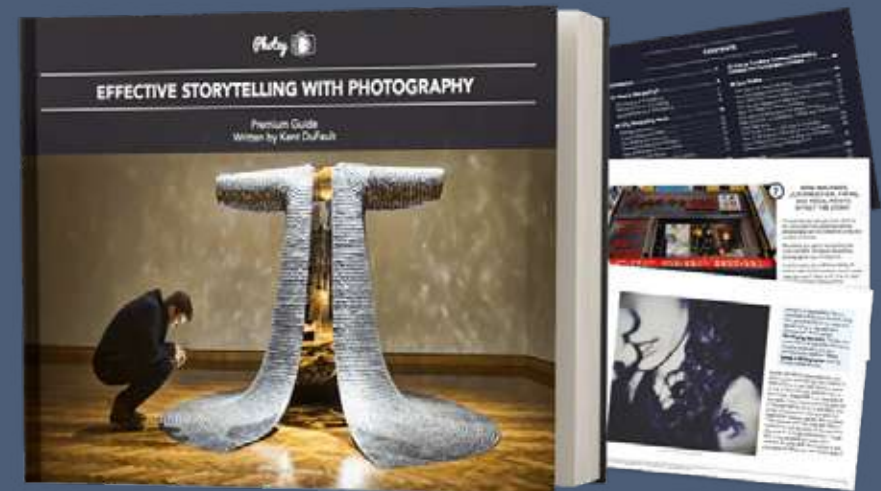
Ludmila is a Slovak photographer focusing on portraiture. She does photography while finishing her Master's degree in Business Administration, specializing in Entrepreneurship. She is based in Prague, Czech Republic, but loves to travel around the world and share her stories, as well as her photoshoots, on her blog.

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