

CRITERIA FOR POINTE WORK

Pointe work is an exciting and essential part of a ballet student's training. Our students begin preparing for pointe work in Level 3 and during this time they work in pre-pointe shoes to develop the strength they will need to dance on pointe. Students should expect to remain in Level 3 for a minimum of two years to develop the skills and strength necessary for pointe work. Students are evaluated and are invited to begin pointe work in Level 4 on an individual basis. Each student responds to the demands of pointe preparation differently. Some will need longer preparation time than others to be ready for pointe work. For their own safety, students will not be allowed to begin pointe work if physical limitations prevent them from meeting minimum criteria.

1. The student must have at least two years of training.
2. The student must be taking a minimum of four ballet classes per week consistently for a total of six hours weekly.
3. The student must be responsible enough to bring all the ballet equipment she will need to class. Pointe shoes require extra care and accessories.
4. The student must pay attention in class and must work hard. Going on pointe is a big step and requires commitment on the part of the student.
5. The student must be in good health and able to take the entire class. If the student frequently needs to rest because of illness or injury, they may not be strong enough for the extra demands that pointe work requires.
6. The student must have sufficient strength to:

Hold their turnout while dancing

The most basic concept of ballet is turnout. It makes it possible to do certain steps that could not otherwise be done. Holding turnout while dancing is a good sign of strength. If the student does not have the strength to maintain their turnout, they are not strong enough for pointe work; it is much more difficult to hold turnout on pointe.

Have a strong, straight back and core while dancing

Pointe work requires that the student use the muscles in her legs and feet to stand on pointe and not use the pointe shoes as a crutch. A weak back, especially the lower back, and core will throw the student off balance while on pointe and will make it difficult to correctly execute ballet steps.

Keep the heels forward toward the big toe (no sickling)

The most stable position for pointe work is to have the weight slightly forward over the big toe. If the weight is over the little toe, it is more difficult to stay up on pointe, and will increase the chances of strain and injury.

Stand on pointe properly

The most stable position for pointe work is where the weight of the body is slightly forward over the big toe enabling the entire box of the pointe shoe to make contact with the floor. If a student's instep is not sufficiently arched, they will not be able to make the proper position of the foot required for pointe work resulting in excess strain on the foot and possible injuries.

Use pliés while dancing

Students must use their pliés while dancing because this is how they get onto pointe. If they do not use their pliés, they will have to bend their leg incorrectly in order to get on pointe. Pliés should be done with the knees pointing straight over their toes and with the heels down.

Point their feet while dancing

Students must point their feet while dancing in order to strengthen the muscles that pointe work requires. These muscles need to be strong enough to support their body weight on the ends of their toes. If the student is not in the habit of using these foot muscles then they will not be able to support themselves on pointe and will probably knuckle over on their toes, thereby increasing their chances for injury.

Piqué passé with straight leg

Students should have enough strength to push themselves onto half-pointe. This step is harder to do on pointe and a bent leg is usually a sign of weakness or improper step preparation.

Do 16 relevés and sautés in the center without stopping

Strength for pointe work is achieved by repeating exercises. Relevés and sautés are excellent for building up calf muscle strength, which is vital for pointe work. Relevés are more difficult to do on pointe because of the extra height, so strong relevés on half-pointe are a good sign of strength. The student must also go up as high on half-pointe as she can, since pointe work demands this ability. A student who keeps her heels very low to the ground is not preparing her calf muscles adequately, and will not have the strength for pointe work.

Jump with strength and land well-placed and turned out

Having a strong jump demonstrates that the student has the strength necessary in the feet and legs to be able to relevé onto pointe. The ability to maintain proper placement when landing jumps will translate into correctly coming down off pointe and limiting her chance of injury.

Hold a passé balance on half-pointe

The student should be well-placed (hips square, back straight, legs turned-out), and have the strength to balance on half-pointe. This pose is more difficult to correct on pointe, as the surface area for balancing is smaller and the strength requirements are greater.