

Pointe Readiness



Student _____

Class Level _____

Comments _____



POINTE BASICS

Pointe work is an exciting and essential part of a ballet student's training. Our students begin preparing for pointe work during Level 2, first during their regular technique classes and then later, additional time is added to accommodate the need to master new skills. During this time, they work in flat shoes to learn pointe technique and combinations and to develop the strength they will need to dance en pointe. Each student responds to the demands of pointe preparation differently, and some will need longer than others to be ready for point work. Each student is evaluated in specific areas which determine their readiness for pointe work. These areas include: ability to maintain a turnout, body placement, balance, foot and ankle strength, flexibility and extension, weight, memory and concentration, attendance, attitude and commitment. Students preparing to go en pointe may be asked to be evaluated by a doctor to determine if their bone structure and strength are adequate for the demands of Pointe training.

GOING EN POINTE

Although the finished product of a trained dancer en Pointe is beautiful, it takes years of dedicated effort to master the technique and skills necessary to accomplish pointe work safely. Once a student has been evaluated and we are confident that they are ready, both physically and mentally, we will provide you with information about fitting pointe shoes, and will schedule a semi-private lesson, so that students and parents can be introduced to the specific requirements of pointe work, the proper care of their feet and pointe shoes. Once a student receives their shoes, beginners will spend approximately ten minutes per class en pointe at the barre, and will gradually increase the time in their shoes as their strength develops.

The following pages contain specific information on questions that parents and students often have. If you have any other questions or concerns with reference to pointe training, please feel free to speak with our teachers or the school director. We are here to assist you in any way we can.

Dancemakers Staff

CRITERIA FOR POINTE WORK

1. The student must be 10 ½ years old (or have special permission from the Director).
2. The student must have at least 2 years of training (or have special permission from the Director).
3. The student must be enrolled in the Conservatory Program at no less than a level 2/3.
4. The student must be responsible enough to bring all the ballet equipment she will need to class, including pointe shoes and accessories. The student must be well groomed, with her hair out of her face and in a bun. Ponytails are not acceptable and short hair must be held back from the face with a wide headband.
5. The student must be in good health and be able to take an entire class. If the student frequently needs to rest because of illness or injury, she is not strong enough for the demands that pointe work requires.
6. The student must be attentive in class and must work well. Going en pointe is a big step that requires commitment on the part of the student.
7. The student must have enough of an arched instep to stand en pointe. If there is a question concerning the anatomical structure of the foot the student may be asked to see a Doctor prior to beginning pointe work.
8. The student must be of a healthy, average weight.
9. The student must have sufficient strength in the following:
 - Be able to hold their turnout while dancing at the barre and center.
The most basic and essential concept of ballet is a turnout. Proper maintenance of turn out allows a dancer to distribute their body weight properly over the foot while working en pointe. Without consistent strength to be able to hold one's turnout, the safety of the ankles, knees and lower back can be compromised.
 - Have a strong, straight back while dancing.
Pointe work requires the student use the muscles in her legs and feet to stand en pointe and not use the pointe shoes as a crutch. A weak back will affect their posture; which in return, will adversely affect their balance while en pointe. A straight back is also essential for pirouettes.
 - Have proper use of Plie while dancing at the barre and in center.
Proper use of their plie better perpetuates the elastin quality that dancers must have in order to turn and leap properly and without danger of injury.
 - Have proper articulation of the feet while dancing.
Students must understand and be able to control the intricate movements of the metatarsal area of the foot in order to properly roll up to full pointe as well as come down from pointe safely. If the student is not in the habit of using these foot muscles properly then they will not be able to support themselves en pointe, which increases their chances for injury.
 - Pique passé with a straight leg.
Students should have enough strength to PUSH themselves onto half pointe without bending at the knee. This step is harder to do en pointe and a bent leg is a sign of weakness or improper step preparation.
 - Be able to balance relevés in center.
Strength for pointe is achieved by repeating exercises. Relevés are excellent for building the calf muscle strength and ankle strength, which is vital for pointe work. Strong relevés on half pointe are a good indicator of strength. The student must lift their heels as high as she can off the floor and be able to maintain that position indefinitely, since pointe work demands this ability to transition from flat to pointe.
 - Be able to hold passé balance on half-pointe.
The student should be well placed (hips square, back straight, legs turned out, standing heel high), and have the strength to balance on half-pointe. This is more difficult to maintain en pointe because the area for balancing is smaller and the strength requirements are greater.
10. **PARENTS NOTE** – Dancers are ATHLETES. They are required to train every day just like any athlete. The commitment that it takes from the parents to support their child's training is CRITICAL to their dancer's success.