

Pointe Work

Tone & Poise



Ballet pointe work guidance

I've pulled together some bits of information to help with preparing adults into pointe, either as a complete beginner or revisiting a skill.

Preparing for pointe work

Things to consider prior to pointe work

As adults, we will have a mixture of experience, previous injuries and questions. One benefit of doing pointe work as an adult is that you are far more likely to ask questions! There are also many other benefits including improving balance, control and training a very specific part of the body. Everyone will have different experiences of Pointe, some will have no experience, others may have hated it, and there are the odd few of us who absolutely loved it! Pointe shoes have come a long way since the 90's when I started, there are now numerous things you can put into your shoes to make the experience more comfortable and supportive. The likelihood is that your feet will have changed shape and so even if you still have your pointe shoes, you will likely need to be refitted. I can recommend local shops that fit pointe shoes, just ask. And for those with prior experience, just remember you will need to take it slow and re-train, various things – including confidence – may not be where it was when we were 16!

Things adult dancers might need to check-in with to make pointe safe

Core & Posture: A strong posture is vital, the ability to use your core to hold your body in alignment is key.

Ankle Stability: We need to work your ankles to align directly over your second toe when rising. If your ankles are weak or tend to roll inwards or outwards there is an increased risk of injury.

Foot Flexibility: Using the demi pointe position we need to work towards a straight vertical line through your shin, ankle, and foot when at your highest demi-pointe.

Ballet Knowledge: Most experts recommend a minimum of 2-4 years of consistent ballet training, however, as adults, this will vary depending on how much ballet you did as a child, and how long ago this was.

Key pre-pointe exercises

- **Relevés & Rises:** Slowly rise onto the balls of your feet (demi-pointe) in parallel and first position, controlling the descent. Focus on a smooth transition rather than the height of the rise. This can

then develop into the snatching action, replacing the weight to the balls off the feet moving the feet slightly to be under the body in a relevés.

- **Band Work:** Sit with legs straight, place a resistance around the ball of your foot, and flex your ankle upward and downward. This builds strength without crunching your toes.
- **Isolation your toes:** Point your feet and ankles fully. Alternate extending and lifting just your big toe, then lift just your smaller toes. You can also practice picking up tea towels or paper.
- **Bridges:** Lie flat, tuck your pelvis, and lift your hips off the floor while keeping your glutes engaged. Feel free to join my Pilates classes that use this and similar exercises.

The shoes themselves

Every foot is different and so everyone needs a fitting, and I encourage you to try on as many brands as possible as they all fit differently – just like Adidas, Reebok etc. Brands that are easy to come by include;

- Bloch
- Gaynor Minden
- Merlet
- R-Class
- Freed
- Virtisse

Before the fitting

Trim your toenails – but not too short!

At the fitting

- Wear the tights or socks you intend to wear in class
- Try on as many brands as possible – sizing and fit will vary
- Speak up – tell the person fitting where it is tight/loose etc.
- Don't be afraid to check or ask questions

After the fitting

- If I have seen you in the shoes, you can sew your ribbons straight away
- Most fitters will recommend that your teacher checks your shoes before you sew the ribbons on so that you can still return them if needed
- There are various ways you can sew ribbons on – please see below
- You may want to add elastic to help you feel more secure – please see below

Darning pointe shoes

Traditionally, everyone would darn their pointe shoes. However, you do not have to darn your shoes, it does prolong the life of the end of your shoe, as the satin on the tip can wear away leaving a rather bald-looking area around the pointe. You can pay someone to do it, or follow a YouTube video if you are feeling confident! Alternatively, you can get various things to stick onto the pointe which acts as a cheat why to darn! If you are only using them once a week then it's not compulsory. I will have rosin with me at class so that you don't slip.

**Sewing your ribbons & elastics on – some great video guidance
(others available but this is VERY clear)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-t8eBGfFZw>

References & guidance

- <https://balletmisfits.dance/blog/2019/8/12/pointe-trilogy-33-adults-on-pointe-how-to-start-and-progress-like-a-child>
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- https://www.movedancewear.com/dancer-help/a-beginners-guide-to-pointe-shoes/205/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=22977148257&utm_term=&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23653701541&gclid=Cj0KCQjwjb3SBhDgARIsAMKiWzjVZnM5WkObluRQo14JkHyKWPSIJ8F1VqmR2FniF6qNUgyPEGt8Ty8aAtAvEALw_wcB
- <https://uk.blochworld.com/blogs/advice-education/pointe-shoe-guide?srsId=AfmBOopIT2PuqEmMO5l6jkGUyrlHaV6Cqm9TlqBasi-eQeF2pOYYbWUo>
- <https://www.freedoflondon.com/pointe-shoes-top-ten-tips/>