

PRO-TIPS

1. Avoid skirts, leg warmers, shorts, or sweaters. Your alignment is even more important en pointe.
2. Be careful and intentional - do every movement on purpose, with a clear goal and concrete idea in your head. Flailing and unintentional movement leads to injury.
3. Take care of your body. Stretch. Ice things that hurt. Take a hot bath. Do what you need to do. Just take care of your body!

COMMITMENT

Pointe work requires a commitment not just from the dancer; the family should also know what is required, and what is expected as well.

PARENTS SHOULD KNOW:

1. Pointe is expensive. Shoes must be in good condition, and once they are worn out they cannot be worn without high risk of injury. Shoes retail \$60-\$100 a pair and last for an average of 6-12 hours of dancing.

PREPARING FOR POINTE

WITH CARE AND INTENTIONALITY



AM I BEHIND?

In a word? No. Starting pointe later than other students may be frustrating, but it is always for the best. Waiting until your body is ready will not put you behind, rather it will allow you to work to your fullest during your training, and get to where you need to be.

Pointe also requires preventative tools like special padding, and copious amounts of sports tape.

2. Pointe is a risk. Even the best dancer with the best teacher can still end up with an injury. Parents need to fully understand and consent to their dancers working in pointe shoes.

3. Everyone's body is different. Your dancer may accelerate or seem to be "behind" in their class due to lack of strength, the way their bones are shaped, or their coordination. Every dancer must learn to use the body they have, and sometimes it isn't the way they expect it to be. Be patient with your dancer when she gets frustrated, and encourage her to push through and work with what she has.

REQUIREMENTS

This guide outlines the physical, mental, and emotional requirements, and the commitments students and families must be ready to make before beginning pointe work.

INJURY PREVENTION

It's essential that you realize (whether you're a student or a parent) that pointe is highly dangerous if done incorrectly. Everything in this guide will refer back to injury prevention, and keeping the dancer's body healthy and safe.

ARE YOU READY?

There are multiple parts of your body that need to be ready before attempting pointe work.

BONES

There are 26 bones in the foot; all of them must be in the correct spot. If the bones are not lined up correctly, the cartilage cannot protect them from abuse, which leads to arthritis, bone spurs, stress fractures, a "grinding" sensation, and pain.

Bones also grow in response to abuse. Very much like a callus, if one section of bone is constantly put under pressure, that bone will grow and change shape in an effort to protect the integrity of the foot. This can lead to misshapen feet and painful alignment.

Finally, if the bones in the foot are too soft when a dancer goes "en pointe," growth plates can be damaged to the point where the foot will not grow correctly. In a worst case scenario, the bones can fuse together, preventing articulation (and walking).

The growth plates in a girl's foot are usually set around age 12, and the shape of the foot mostly set approximately 6 months after her first menstrual cycle.

MUSCLES

The intrinsic muscles in the feet must be strong enough to support the dancer's weight on one foot, mainly on the big toe. Many other muscles need to hold the rest of the dancer's alignment in place while she executes highly complicated steps. If the muscles are strong, they will support the bones, and prevent bone damage.

MUSCLE MEMORY

A dancer who works in pointe shoes must not only have very good technique, she must have good technique *on accident*. She should have her foundation so ingrained in her mind and body that she cannot help but do a step correctly. This prevents her from losing focus and injuring herself.

CORRECTIONS

The student must also be able to apply corrections almost immediately, and be able to keep that correction "fixed" after having received it. This protects the dancer from accidental injury due to bad technique.

ATTITUDE

Students who work on pointe should have a strong will and desire to work hard, and should have high respect for their teachers. They should value their bodies as instruments that are finely tuned and are in need of care. They should condition and stretch without being told. They should always come to class, work hard, and be on time and prepared. They should not give excuses, but rather humbly accept a correction and strive to become better versions of themselves. They should have respect for the art and science of ballet. A dancer may be ready in every other aspect of their training, but a teacher may still choose not to put them in pointe shoes based on these things, and rightly so. Pointe training is a huge responsibility and should not be entrusted to the wrong person.

