



Ballet Together

Train together. Be together.

BALLET VOCABULARY

Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1 • Weeks 1-12
CLASSICAL STYLE (with Balanchine influence)

BALLET VOCABULARY

LEVEL 1

This Ballet Together Level 1 Ballet Vocabulary document is built to pair up with the Level 1 - Quarter 1 Curriculum/Syllabus document, both aimed to help dance instructors teach their students the building blocks of beginner ballet movements.

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PLIÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*plee ay*)

MEANING: "to bend"

HOW TO: Dancer bends their knees over toes. This movement is done in all 5 ballet positions.

VARIATIONS:

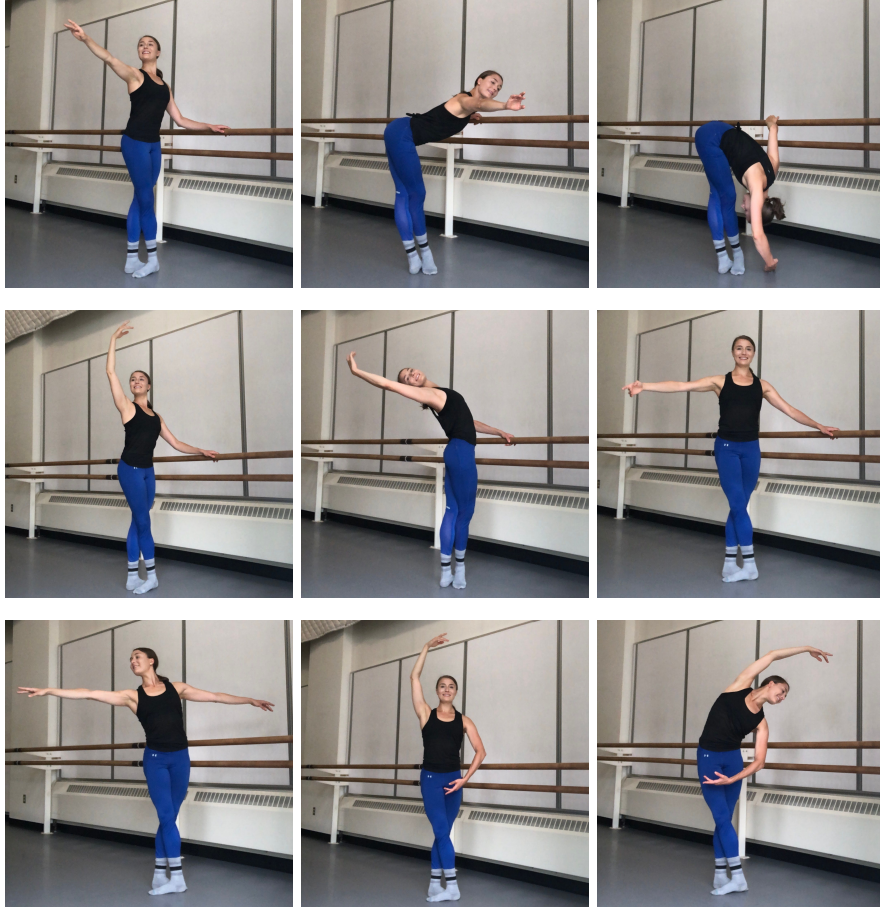
- **DEMIPLIÉ:** "half" plié is when heels remain on the ground and knees bend over toes, heels remain on the ground.
- **GRAND PLIÉ:** "large" plié is when heels raise from the ground and the knees bend over the toes as much as possible. Note that the heels remain on the ground when doing a grand plié in second position.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Upper body and spine should remain straight.
- Avoid leaning front or back.

PORTE DE BRAS (STRETCH)

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*poor-t duh brow*)

MEANING: "movement of the arms"

HOW TO: Dancer bends at the hips to stretch forward/backward or side-to-side and then returns to an upright position. Arms lengthen and straighten slightly before bending in any direction.

VARIATIONS:

- **DEVANT and DERRIÈRE:** "In front and back." The body stretches forward and backward with the arm in 5th position.
- **À LA SECONDE:** "To the side." The body stretches from side-to-side with one arm in 5th position and the other in preparatory position.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Keep shoulders relaxed and down with a long neck. The dancer's shoulders should not raise up towards the ears during this movement.
- The shape of the arms should remain rounded. The dancer's arms should never be fully bent or hyper-extended at the elbows.

TENDU

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*tahn-DEW*)

MEANING: "to stretch"

HOW TO: Dancer stretches their leg away from their body, while their toes remain on the floor. This movement starts from either 1st or 5th position with the legs.

VARIATIONS:

- **DEVANT:** "In front." The working leg does the step to the front.
- **À LA SECONDE:** "To the side." The working leg does the step to the side.
- **DERRIÈRE:** "In back." The working leg does the step to the back.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Hips should remain even when doing this movement. Avoid lifting the hip of the leg that is extending to the tendu. Try placing hands on hips to check on proper hip placement.
- Straighten both knees, so the legs are long and extended.
- Point toes and make sure they continue the line of the leg.

DEGAGÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*day-ga-ZHAY*)

MEANING: "to disengage"

HOW TO: Dancer stretches their leg away from their body through a tendu and then off the floor with a pointed foot and straight leg. The foot disengages 2 inches (or 5 centimeters) from the floor. This movement starts from 1st or 5th position with the legs.

The *dégagé* heights tend to vary from a few inches to 45 degrees based on ballet style.

VARIATIONS:

- **DEVANT:** "In front." The working leg does the step to the front.
- **À LA SECONDE:** "To the side." The working leg does the step to the side.
- **DERRIÈRE:** "In back." The working leg does the step to the back.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Make sure the foot gets to 2 inches / 5 centimeters of the ground.
- The energy of *dégagé* is sharp and quick, not soft and slow.
- Both legs should remain straight during this movement.

EN CROIX

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PRONUNCIATION: (*ahn crawh*)

MEANING: "in the shape of a cross"

HOW TO: This term is used in ballet class to let dancers know the step should be done to the front, side, back, and side again. A step can be done *en croix* in reverse which would start from the back, side, front, and side again.

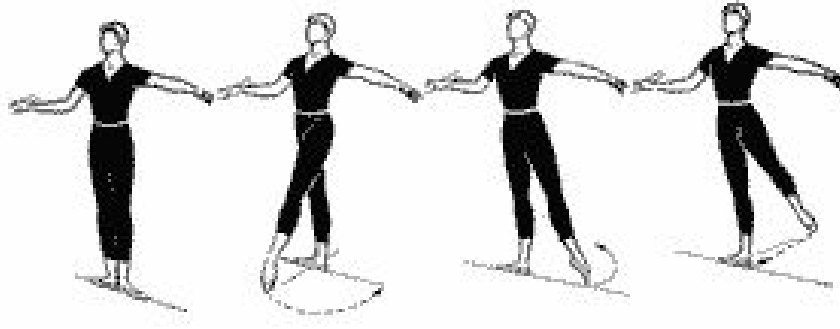
For example, an instructor may ask that students do *tendu en croix*. This would usually mean that students would do four *tendus en croix*: starting from 1st or 5th position, the dancers would do a *tendu devant* "front," close to 1st / 5th position, *tendu à la seconde* "side," close to 1st / 5th position, *tendu derrière* "back," close to 1st / 5th position, *tendu à la seconde* "side," close to 1st / 5th position.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Make sure your weight stays over the dancer's standing leg over the ball of the foot. The dance should not shift weight to the pointed toe.
- When doing the step *devant* "front," make sure the leg is placed in front of the dancer's belly button or nose.
- When doing the step *derrière* "back," make sure the leg is placed directly behind the dancer's spine.

RONDS DE JAMBE, À TERRE

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*rawn duh zhahnb*)

MEANING: “round of the leg, on the ground”

HOW TO: Dancer creates a circular movement of the leg, with the foot *à terre* “on the ground” or with the leg and foot *en l’air* “in the air.” The dancer is drawing a half-circle on the ground with their toes. This movement starts from 1st or 5th position with the legs.

VARIATIONS:

- **EN DEHORS** (ahn duh-AWR): “Outward.” Clockwise. The leg moves in a circular direction from front to side to back (or from 12 o’clock to 3 o’clock to 6 o’clock).
- **EN DEDANS** (ahn duh-DAH): “Inward.” Counter-clockwise. The leg moves in a circular direction from back to side to front (or from 6 o’clock to 3 o’clock to 12 o’clock).

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Hips should remain even when doing this movement. Avoid lifting the hip of the leg that is moving through *ronds de jambe*. Try placing hands on hips to check on proper hip placement.
- Make sure dancers are drawing a large semi-circle on the ground with their toe.
- The working or moving leg should remain straight when moving through the tendu positions and coming through 1st position.

COUP-DE-PIED

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*ku de pje*)

MEANING: "neck of the foot" (known as COUPÉ, in the U.S.A.)

HOW TO: Dancer positions a pointed working foot to be in front, wrapped around or behind the ankle of the standing leg.

VARIATIONS:

- COU-DE-PIED DEVANT: "Front." The working foot is pointed and placed with the little toe touching the front of the standing leg ankle.
- COU-DE-PIED DERRIÈRE: "Behind." The working foot is pointed and placed with the heel touching the back of the standing leg ankle.
- SUR LE COU-DE-PIED: "On the 'neck' of the foot." The working foot is placed wrapped around the standing leg between the base of the calf muscle and the top of the ankle.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Make sure the dancer's working foot is touching the standing leg in the appropriate position.
- Keep the triangle shape between the standing leg and the leg in coup-de-pied.
- In *coup-de-pied devant*, make sure only the little toe is touching the standing leg. The heel should not be touching in this position.

- In *coup-de-pied derrière*, Make sure only the heel is not touching the standing leg. The toes should not be touching in this position.

PETIT BATTEMENT

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*puh-tee battement*)

MEANING: "small beat"

HOW TO: Dancer starts in *cou-de-pied devant* or *sur le cou-de-pied* (working foot placed in front of ankle or wrapped around) and changes to *cou-de-pied derriere* -- front and back, over and over. When this movement is done slowly, the working leg opens slightly to a small *attitude* position to the side. This movement typically starts from 5th position with the legs.

VARIATIONS:

- COU-DE-PIED DEVANT and COU-DE-PIED DERRIÈRE
- SUR LE COU-DE-PIED and COU-DE-PIED DERRIÈRE

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Pay attention that the knee and thigh of the working leg remains to the side and doesn't move.
- Make sure the *coup-de-pied* gets fully crossed to *devant* "front" and *derriere* "back" fully when moving quickly. The two *coup-de-pied* positions should look different and should not blend together.

RELEVÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (re-lugh-vay)

MEANING: "to rise"

HOW TO: Dancer raises heels up and seemingly is standing "on their toes" in a *demi-pointe* (on the ball of the foot) or fully *en pointe* (in Pointe shoes) position. The toes remain flat and relaxed on the floor. This step typically starts with a plié and then extends to straight legs, but can also be done with only straight legs.

VARIATIONS:

- **USING BOTH LEGS:** Dancer can do a *relevé* in all the positions of the feet (1st / 2nd / 4th / 5th positions) with both feet grounded on the floor. The 5th position *relevé* is also known as "*sous-sous*."
- **USING ONE LEG:** Dancer can do a *relevé* with only one leg grounded on the floor in positions like *coup-de-pied*, *arabesque*, *attitude*, *passé*, among others.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Legs should fully straighten and lengthen while doing the *relevé* movement.
- When doing 5th position *sous-sous* *relevé*, make sure you can only see one toe and two heels when looking from the front. The toes should be touching and the heels should be pointing away from each other.

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- Make sure the dancer's ankles remain straight and do not lean too much towards the big toe or little toe. The ankles should continue the line of the leg.

(The first image below is the correct placement.)



PASSÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (pa-say)

MEANING: "to pass"

HOW TO: Dancer bends one leg into a triangle shape so the knee is in line with the hips and the toes are attached to the standing leg's knee either to the front or back.

VARIATIONS:

- **DEVANT:** "Front." The working foot is pointed and placed with the little toe touching the front of the standing leg knee.
- **DERRIÈRE:** "Behind." The working foot is pointed and placed with the heel touching the back of the standing leg knee.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- In *passé devant*, the toe is touching the front standing leg.
- In *passé derrière*, the heel is touching the front standing leg.
- The knee should be pointing directly to the side to create a triangle shape.

PIQUÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (pee-kay)

MEANING: "to prick"

HOW TO: Dancer begins with the working leg in a *dégagé* position that lowers "to prick" the floor (to a *tendu* position) and then rebound upward back to a *dégagé* position. The piqué combines the *tendu* and *dégagé* movements.

VARIATIONS:

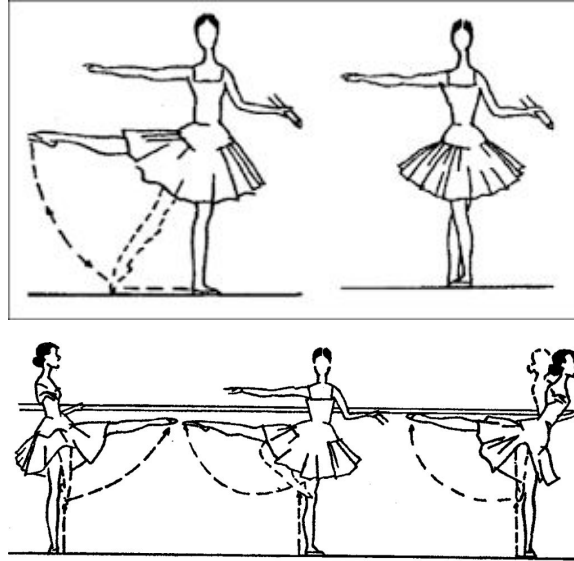
- DEVANT: "In front." The working leg does the step to the front.
- À LA SECONDE: "To the side." The working leg does the step to the side.
- DERRIÈRE: "In back." The working leg does the step to the back.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- The energy should be sharp. Have the dancers think that the floor is very hot and they don't want to touch it, so they touch their toes to *tendu* very quickly before coming up.
- The movement doesn't drift above the *dégagé* placement at 2 inches or 5 centimeters off the ground.

GRAND BATTEMENT

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*grahn bat-MAHN*)

MEANING: "large beating"

HOW TO: Dancer throws the working leg into the air from the hip and brings it back down to a position, typically to 5th position. If the movement is broken down in slow-motion, the dancer should move through a tendu to then lift the leg as high as possible without disturbing the hip placement and then return back through a tendu before returning to a 5th position.

A *grand battement* is important for grande allegro (large jumps), allowing a dancer to jump higher when performed correctly.

VARIATIONS:

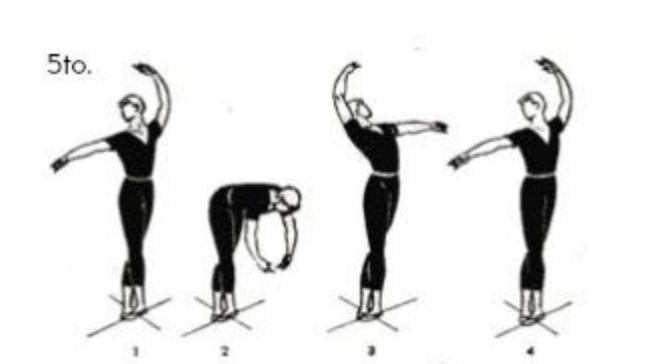
- **DEVANT:** "In front." The working leg does the step to the front.
- **À LA SECONDE:** "To the side." The working leg does the step to the side.
- **DERRIÈRE:** "In back." The working leg does the step to the back.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- When doing a *grand battement à la second* "side" with the arm also in *à la second* "side," make sure the dancer's leg passes behind the arm.
- Both legs are straight and lengthened and the toes are pointed.

ADAGIO

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (a-dahj-e-o)

MEANING: "at ease"

HOW TO: *Adagio* refers to slow movement, typically performed with grace and fluidity.

In classical ballet class, an *adagio* combination will concentrate on slow movement to help improve a dancer's ability to control leg movement and extension, all while keeping the entire body controlled and aligned.

Adagio combinations are typically done at barre and in center. They usually consist of many basic steps of classical ballet technique, such as *porte de bras*, *arabesque*, *attitude*, *developpe*, *grand rond de jambe*, *passé*, and *plié*, among other steps.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Move gracefully and smoothly. Avoid any sharp or quick movements.
- Give each movement full attention and value.

BALANCÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*ba-lahn-SAY*)

MEANING: "balanced"

HOW TO: A dancer moves while alternating balance between their feet. The rhythm is usually in three counts and has the motion of going "down, up, up" with the legs.

As a preparation, a dancer starts in a 5th position and extends the right leg to a *degagé* to the side on the first "and" count.

"Down" (count 1) is when a dancer transfers their weight onto the right foot while crossing the left leg behind the ankle in a *coup-de-pied plié derrière* position.

"Up" (count 2) is when a dancer transfers their weight to the back left leg and slightly lifts, pointes and straightens the right leg in front, while the left leg is in *relevé*.

"Up" (count 3) is when a dancer transfers weight to the front foot to *relevé* on the right leg and extend the left leg to a *degagé* side.

VARIATIONS:

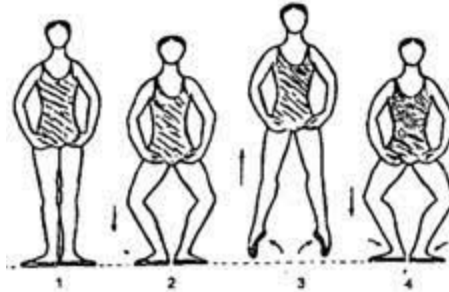
- **BALANCÉ DE CÔTÉ:** a *balancé* from side-to-side.
- **BALANCÉ EN TOURNANT:** a *balancé* while turning either half or quarter turns.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Keep an even beat with the steps. Count "1, 2, 3" for "down, up, up" to help stay on the music.
- Step from side-to-side, so the movement is not in one single place.

SAUTÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (so-tay)

MEANING: "to jump"

HOW TO: This term can be used alone or with another term to mean the step is performed while jumping.

A *sauté* done in 1st position would be a jump that begins and ends in 1st position with a jump with the feet pointed in a 1st position in the air. A *sauté* done in *coup-de-pied* would be a jump that begins and end in *coup-de-pied derrière* with a jump with the legs remaining in *coup-de-pied* and the bottom leg pointed in the air. These are only two examples.

VARIATIONS:

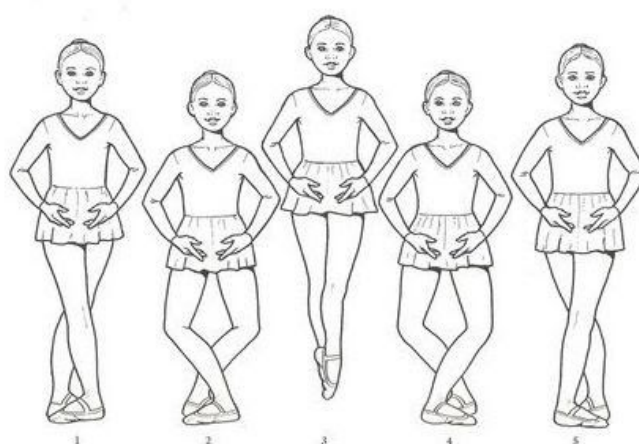
Many steps in the ballet vocabulary can be done as a *sauté* (or jump).

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Make sure the dancer's knees are straight and their toes are pointed when they are jumping in the air.
- Most *sauté* jumps land in a plié, so make sure the dancers land in a soft and controlled plié with their knees over their toes to protect from injury.

CHANGEMENT

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*shahnzj-mahn*)

MEANING: "to change"

HOW TO: A dancer performs a jump from 5th position with the feet, jumping and changing the feet position in the air so they land with the opposite foot in front. So a dancer performing a changement with the right foot in front to start, the dancer will plié, jump and straighten their legs, switch their legs and feet so the left foot is now in front while keeping their legs straight and feet pointed, then land in a plié.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- The legs and feet should change immediately in the air and remain close to one another. The legs should get to a 5th position (*sous-sous*) in the air.
- The dancer's knees should be straight and their toes should be pointed in the air.

ÉCHAPPÉ SAUTÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (ay-sha-PAY)

MEANING: "to escape"

HOW TO: A dancer "escapes" by jumping away from their starting position to another position. A standard *échappé* is done without the dancer's feet ever losing contact with the floor the entire movement. But since this is an *échappé sauté*, it is done in the air.

The dancer begins in 5th position plié and jumps to a 2nd position in the air and then lands in 2nd position plié. To return, the dancer does a plié in 2nd position and returns to a 5th position sous-sous in the air before landing in plié. Typically, *échappé sauté* is done changing legs.

VARIATIONS:

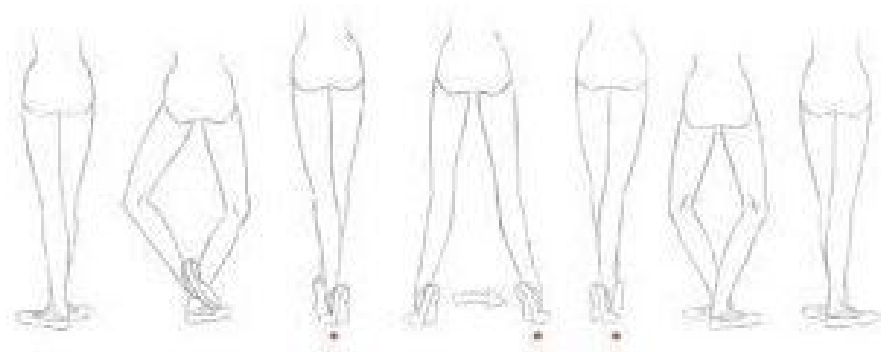
- **ÉCHAPPÉ SAUTÉ:** Dancer performs this step by jumping from 5th position to 2nd position and back to 5th position.
- **ÉCHAPPÉ BATTUS:** Dancer performs this step by jumping from 5th position to 2nd position adding in numerous beats before opening and landing.
- **ÉCHAPPÉ EN POINTE:** Dancer performs this step by moving from 5th position to 2nd position *en pointe* (on demi-pointe or in Pointe shoes) without losing contact with the ground.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Knees should remain straight and lengthened when executing this step.
- Make sure the dancer is getting to the position they are escaping to as quickly as possible in the *sauté* (in the jump).

PAS DE BOURRÉ

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (tahm-bay pah de boo-ray)

MEANING: “beating steps”

HOW TO: A *pas de bourrée* has many forms that mostly relates to the direction the dancer is moving or if the legs are bending or staying straight. It gets its definition because a dancer doing a *pas de bourrée* will have his/her legs coming together for a movement before opening again.

A dancer transfers body weight quickly from foot-to-foot in three small steps. There are various ways of entering into a pas de bourrée, but the basis of the step is taking steps from 5th position *sous-sous relevé* to 2nd position *relevé* back to 5th position *sous-sous relevé* (right foot front), step to a 2nd position *relevé*, then close to a 5th position *sous-sous relevé* (left foot front) and land in plié 5th position. The step can be done to the left side.

VARIATIONS:

- TOMBÉ, PAS DE BOURRÉ: Transferring weight and “falling” onto a leg before doing a *pas de bourré*.
- COUP-DE-PIED, PAS DE BOURRÉ: Start in a *coup-de-pied plié* before doing a *pas de bourré*.
- INVERSER, PAS DE BOURRÉ: “Reverse” the direction of the little steps to go backwards.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Make sure the dancer’s positions in 5th position *sous-sous* and 2nd position *relevé* are very clear and precise.
- The 5th position *sous-sous relevé* should only show one-toe and two-heels when done correctly.

RÉVÉRANCE

Ballet Vocabulary • Ballet Level 1 • Quarter 1



PRONUNCIATION: (*reh-vah-rahns*)

MEANING: "to courtesy" or "to bow"

HOW TO: A révérence (or bow) is done at the end of class to show respect to their teacher (and, if present, piano accompanist). A révérence exercise is usually given by the teacher in the form of an adagio that often contains port de bra in various ballet positions, often ending with a final bow. It is a gesture of mutual appreciation between the teacher and the students.

COMMON CORRECTIONS:

- Remain graceful and elegant.