

Criteria for Pointe Work

1. The student must be 10 1/2 years or older.
2. The student must have at least 2 years of training.
3. The student must be taking a minimum of 3 classes a week consistently (for a total of 4.5 hours weekly).
4. The student must have sufficient strength to do the following:
 - Be able 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, since it is much more difficult to hold turnout *en pointe*.

- Have a strong, straight back while dancing, especially the lower back.

Pointe work requires that 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 throw the student off balance while *en pointe* and will make it difficult to do ballet steps. A straight back is also essential for pirouettes.

- 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 *en pointe*, and will increase the chances of strain and injury.

- Use plié while dancing.

Students must use their pliés while dancing because this is how they get up *en pointe*. If they don't use their pliés, they will have to bend their leg incorrectly in order to get *en 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 *en pointe* and will probably knuckle over on their toes, thereby increasing their chances for injury.

- Pique passé with straight leg.

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

- Be able to do 16 relevés in the center without stopping.

Strength for pointe work is achieved by repeating exercises. Relevés are excellent for building up calf muscle strength, which is vital for pointe work. This exercise is more difficult to do *en pointe* because of the extra height, so strong relevés on half-pointe is 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.

- Be able to 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 *en pointe*, as the surface area for balancing is smaller and the strength requirements are greater.

5. The student must be well-groomed, with her hair out of her face and in a bun. Ponytails are not acceptable! Short hair must be held back from the face with a wide band.
6. The student must be responsible enough to bring all the ballet equipment she will need to class. Pointe shoes require extra care and accessories.
7. The student must be in good health and able to take a whole class. If the student frequently needs to rest because of illness or injury, she is not strong enough for the extra demands that pointe work requires.
8. The student must pay attention in class and must work well. Going *en pointe* is a big step and requires commitment on the part of the student.
9. The student must be of normal weight.
10. The student must have enough of an arched instep to stand on pointe.