

Advice for Your First Pointe Shoes



Do Get Permission

As simple as it sounds, the first step to getting *anywhere* en pointe is receiving permission from your teacher. Never buy, try on, or dance in pointe shoes without getting the green light from your instructor. Why? Dancing en pointe without a proper fitting, the right training, and good technique can lead to injuries that could put you out of dancing forever.

Don't Sew Immediately

Once you've been fitted properly and purchased your first pointe shoes, put them in their bag and tuck them away until your class. You may want to grab a needle and start sewing on ribbons and elastics (who wouldn't?), but it's important that you allow your teacher to check the fit of your shoes *before* you sew anything. The moment your needle touches the satin, the shoes become non-returnable. This means if your teacher says they're a bad fit, you're stuck with useless, pricey shoes!



Furthermore, sewing ribbons and elastics can be a difficult process for ballerinas new en pointe. Don't assume you know everything about what to sew or where to sew it! Instead, allow your teacher to explain to you what to do. Pointe shoes with poorly sewn or improperly placed ribbons/elastics can lead to Achilles tendonitis, as well as other potential injuries.



Do Get Fitted Properly

It can be extremely tempting to go online and buy the first pair of pointe shoes that look good. However, it's essential that you get fitted by a professional. Your first fitting is extremely important and *must* be done in person. Your first shoes will last a while, as you won't be doing classes en pointe every day. This means that a poorly fitting pair will cause pain, suffering, and maybe even injury. Ask your teacher for recommendations on where to get fitted. You may pay more than if you ordered online, but this is a necessary safety precaution to take into consideration.

Don't Play Around

The most tempting, exciting thing to do when you get your shoes is dance in them. That's what they're for! However, you should never, under any circumstances, dance in or go en pointe in your shoes outside of class. For the first year or so of your training, the focus will just be on learning to properly stand in your pointe shoes (both on flat and relevé).

When you dance en pointe without proper supervision from a teacher, you risk developing bad habits in your technique. This includes bent knees and sickled feet, which can lead to injury. On top of that, you risk wearing out your pointe shoes at home instead of in class — not fun to explain to your parents! While it's completely understandable to gaze at them lovingly or stroke the satin, leave your pointe shoes in your bag!

After watching tons of dance movies, you may be tempted to try all the crazy break-in techniques you see. These techniques are common, but they are done so by professional dancers with years of knowledge and experience en pointe. Your first pointe shoes will break-in naturally as you dance in them. Avoid banging them on concrete, smashing them, or lighting them on fire!



Do Monitor Shoe Health



Your first year en pointe will likely be limited to weekly classes. As a result, your shoes will last months. Talk to your teacher if/when:

- You feel a loss of support in your shoes.

- Your shoes feel drastically different at any time.

- You notice any changes in your feet.

Gauging when a shoe is dead can be difficult. Knowing when to put your pointes away and buy new ones is an important skill for all dancers. When in doubt: Ask your teacher how your shoes are doing, and tell them about any issues you've been having.

Dance Away!

Starting to go en pointe is one of the most exciting times of a ballerina's career. Treasure it! You'll never forget your first moments en pointe and how incredible it feels. Put your all into dancing! Being en pointe is a big responsibility, but it also means all your hard work in the studio is paying off!

