

These are the most important aspects of ballet that must be understood before going en pointe.

1. Technique and strength. The important criteria that teachers want met before pointe:

- The strength to hold turnout consistently while dancing.
- The strength to hold all aspects of the upper body correctly. That includes stomach, ribcage, spine, neck, head, hips and shoulders.
- The ability to be pulled up, especially in the knees. There is a difference between knowing what pulling up is and a real full grasp of the concept and the way it feels. A teacher can tell the difference.

2. Commitment, attitude, and maturity.

- The dancer needs show a proper respect for the art of ballet and responsibility of pointe. Respect that pointe will NOT be learned overnight, requires hard work, and that it can be dangerous.
- The dancer must be hardworking. She should be enthusiastic about class and dance. She should show up to class in proper attire, neat and tidy, ready to learn and work her hardest.
- The dancer must be committed to learning ballet. The dancer should take at LEAST three classes per week of ballet. While there are exceptions to this, the dancer should have taken ballet at least a year or two.

3. Health and physique.

- The dancer must be in proper health to handle the stress of pointework. That means not very overweight, and, equally important not UNDERWEIGHT. She shouldn't just be coming back from injury or sickness.
- She should possess a great deal of stamina. A dancer who struggles to make it through a full class is not ready.

4. Age.

- The average age for most dancers is between the ages of 10 and 12, with 12 being most common. Starting earlier doesn't mean a dancer is better than her peers and starting later doesn't reflect on the dancing abilities of the student. Being older means you are more mature and hopefully can understand the expectations better.

5. Feet.

- Not everyone has feet suited to pointework. A person with exceptionally flat feet and stiff ankles will struggle dangerously to get over her boxes. Even if that dancer is exceptional and strong, pointe could be very dangerous. Banana feet are not a requirement either. Just the ability to get at least a straight line from the shins through the toes when pointing without struggling.
- The dancer should have no problem holding a HIGH, strong demi-pointe when balancing on one leg.

Here are some things you can do to help you improve in ballet faster, especially in the areas required for pointe.

1. Get a notebook and write down all your corrections from class. Better yet, write down ALL corrections for EVERYONE. Look over them before your classes and pick out the most important to work on. Over a few weeks you should see a few that appear over and over. Focus on those.
2. Do lots relevés. Do them on both legs, one leg, with one leg in coupé, with one leg in passé, with one leg in arabesque, with one leg in seconde, just do them at home a LOT.
3. Practice balancing on a high demi-pointe. As high as you can. Remember height is controlled a lot by your feet, but you must REALLY pull up! Think of a little wave of pulling up moving through your body. Pull up through your arches, your ankles, your knees, your hips, your core, your chest, your neck and your head. Practice holding those long balances on one leg. Do it while you're brushing your teeth and everywhere else.
4. Sit-ups and abdominal work. (And lots of them.) Helps build a stronger core.
5. Be polite. Often this is overlooked by many students, but a polite well behaved student shows the maturity required of pointe work. Respect the etiquette. Curtsy to your teacher and to the pianist (if there is one) at the end of class before clapping even if no one else does. Make sure you are always prompt and on time.
6. Respect your dress code. Keep your bun neat and tidy. Remember to take off your watch and other jewellery before class.
7. Always try the combinations and keep dancing. When you get lost don't just stand there, keep dancing SOMETHING. If you get discouraged by a hard combination, try even harder. Don't go to the back and sit it out or barely try. A good attitude is important. This is always impressive to teachers.
8. Ask about pointe. This is mostly important for late starters. Don't go up to your teacher and say, when can I go en pointe? There are only two scenarios when you should ask. If you are a late starter taking adult classes say something like, I was hoping that one day I could learn pointe. Is there anything in particular I should improve on in order to get there? The other scenario is if other girls in your class start pointe and you don't. It's perfectly reasonable to ask if there are specific things you should improve on so you can learn pointe with the rest of the class. Also don't ask more than once.

Dancers must remember that **pointework is a privilege not a right.** They should also remember that pointework, while it is an important marker, is not the end of ballet training! Pointe shoes won't magically make you a better dancer. Your ballet training will still continue the same way. Pointe can also be fun and challenging and is something to get excited about. Just not too carried away...