

Ballet is...

Beautiful



Continuing ballet technique at Gotta Dance

Ballet technique is the foundation of all dance. Ballet training teaches grace, discipline, poise, and control in the developing dancer and emerging young artist. It serves to create a deep sense of body-mind connection, to build strength and endurance, to increase flexibility, and to challenge the mind. We are thrilled that you will be continuing your ballet training at Gotta Dance and want to inform you of ballet opportunities along your unique dance journey.

As a dancer at this level, you have proven your dedication to ballet. It is at this juncture in your dance education that you may want to consider taking more than one ballet class weekly. Dancers who take two or more ballet classes weekly not only show greater strides in ballet technique, but also display visible improvements in other dance techniques such as jazz, modern, contemporary, and more. Ballet is unique because it exists as a stunning, powerful, and moving art on its own, but also serves as an excellent supplement to other styles of dance training.

OPTIONAL GOTTA DANCE POINTE PROGRAM

WHAT IS POINTE?

Beginning at the Pearl level, Gotta Dance begins to teach pointe lessons to those dancers who meet our requirements. Pointe is an extension of ballet technique, in which dancers wear special shoes called "pointe shoes" to rise up onto their toes while dancing.

Pointe is unlike all other dance forms at Gotta Dance because of the safety risks involved in the nature of the art. In order for dancers to safely undertake the rigors of pointework, they must first have a strong grasp of fundamental ballet concepts and technique. This is why dancers are required to take at least two ballet classes at the Aqua level if they want to be **considered** by their teachers for pointe the following season.



THE IDEAL FOOT STRUCTURE

In addition to strong technique, dancers who are recommended for pointe also have a foot structure that supports pointe work. A vital requirement of pointe work is that the dancer is able to fully stand over the box (or top) of the pointe shoe. A dancer who can only stand on the edge (or back end) of the box is liable for injury.

A lot of this has to do with the dancer's anatomy. The ideal ballet foot has a high instep with strong ankles. Dancers with this structure are able to maintain a high releve (heels lifted in a turned out position) on demi-pointe so that it is easy to make the transition to releve on pointe. If a dancer cannot maintain a high releve in ballet slippers, she will not be able to do so in pointe shoes.

Many dancers have wonderful careers in dance without studying pointe. There are several successful dancers in the industry who could not do pointe, but have made it into modern companies, Broadway, and even commercial dance. They have used their knowledge of ballet technique to assist them on their individual dance journeys.

Please read this Pointe Magazine article for more information about feet for ballet:

<http://www.pointemagazine.com/issues/aprilmay-2011/your-best-body-bad-feet>

IDEAL FOOT STRUCTURE FOR POINTE:



Pictured above, these dancers have high insteps and are able to maintain a high releve in ballet slippers. As a result, when the ballerina puts on pointe shoes, she is able to stand completely over the pointe shoe box. The dancer is now ready to safely learn technique surrounding pointe work.

FOOT STRUCTURE NOT IDEAL FOR POINTE:

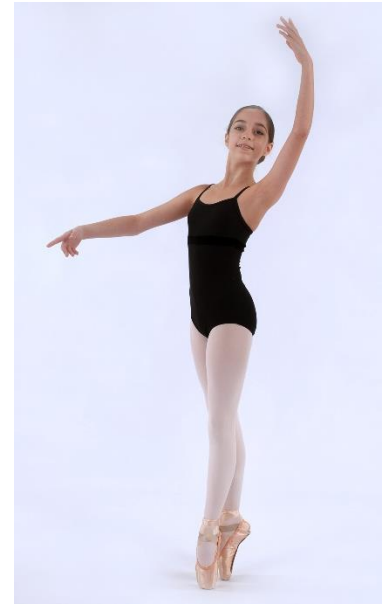


Pictures above, these dancers feet do not have the ideal structure for pointe work. The dancers are not able to reach a high releve in ballet slippers, so they will have even further to travel to reach a full releve in pointe shoes. As a result, the dancer is not able to stand on the box of her pointe shoe. As you can see from the picture, the ballerina is standing on the back edge of the pointe shoe box. This is a red flag to teachers, as it opens up the door to injury and dancer frustration.

STEPS TO POINTE AT GOTTA DANCE:

Pointe work is never a guarantee to dancers for the reasons mentioned above. However, there are steps you can take to help you reach your goal if the possibility of pointe work appeals to you!

- 1.) Dancers who would like to be considered for pointe must take **at least** two ballet classes at the Aqua level the season before starting Pearl. Be an active listener in class and apply every correction given out. Rather than focusing on shiny pointe shoes, focus on improving and perfecting ballet technique.
- 2.) At the end of the season, dancers must receive a teacher recommendation to begin pointe work. This recommendation is based on taking (and regularly attending) two Aqua Ballet classes, the anatomy of the dancers' body, as well as meeting the requirements of the checklist below. Please understand that taking two ballet classes will not automatically result in a recommendation for pointe work the following season. Dancers should enroll in more than one ballet class primarily for their passion for this graceful art, and their desire to progress and improve.



GOTTA DANCE POINTE CHECKLIST:

Please refer to this checklist throughout the year to see how you are doing to meet your goal!

- Dancer is utilizing her turnout muscles properly throughout each ballet class. (Turnout must come from rotation in the hips, not from the knees or ankles.)
- Dancer can maintain turnout both standing on a flat foot and in releve (heels lifted) while keeping the entire body in alignment.



NOTE: As you can see, the photos of the dancers on the left are properly using outward rotation to maintain a turned out position. Body alignment does not change when the heels are lifted off of the floor.

- Dancer articulates through the feet throughout the class (ex: in tendus, degages, jumps). This means that the dancer extends from a flat foot into a demi-pointe and again into a strong, fully stretched foot when going through movement patterns and combinations.
- Dancer is able to maintain a high releve position. (Dancers must be able to achieve a high, turned-out releve in ballet slippers.)
- Dancer is working towards the mastery of the Aqua ballet dance syllabus, and has a firm grasp of Aqua ballet steps and concepts by the end of the season.

- Dancer displays signs of strong, developed ankles. (When standing properly, a dancer's ankles should be pulled up and not rolling forward into the instep.) Ankles must be strong for pointework or injury may occur.



NOTE: The figure on the far left displays the difference between a lifted and supported ankle (right ankle), and an ankle that is "rolling in" (left ankle).

The middle photo shows a dancer rolling forward into her instep, which, if not corrected, may cause injury in dance class.

The photo on the right shows a dancer properly standing in a turn-out position with lifted ankles. This dancer is working safely and is ready to begin pointe work.

- Dancer displays proper alignment throughout ballet class. When standing in a neutral first position, this means that a dancer's tailbone is pointed downward (no sway back or tucking under of the pelvis) and her neck is long. Tummies are pulled up, and knees are facing out over the toes rather than facing forward. In the photo on the right, the girl in the green leotard is displaying proper alignment while the girl in the red is not.
- Dancer has a strong sense of her core muscles at work. A strong core keep the body in check even when the arms and legs are executing separate movements.
- Dancer arrives on time to ballet class. Dancer is focused during classes and applies all corrections. Dancer takes ballet technique seriously and is an active listener and participant in class.
- Dancer displays level of maturity and focus.



ACKNOWLEDGING OUR DANCE FAMILIES AND DANCERS

Gotta Dance acknowledges the emotional investment of each dancer in her studies as well as the financial investment of each family in a quality dance education. We thank you for choosing to train at Gotta Dance, and we consider you part of our family. We understand that several dancers aspire to one day dance in their first pair of pointe shoes! We also understand that there may be emotional letdowns if educators feel that a dancer is not yet ready for pointe work or does not have the proper anatomy. First and foremost, we want to ensure that every dancer is training in a safe environment. We will not put dancers in an environment where they will risk injury. Final decisions regarding pointe work are made because we care about dancers' well-being, and we thank you in advance for understanding our point of view!

