

Dancing on Pointe at the Ballet Conservatory of Asheville



Why Dance on Pointe?

Dancing on pointe is one of the most beautiful forms of ballet dancing. It is the foundation of the classical ballet and we have all come to know and love. In fact, when most people think of ballet, they think of girls on pointe. Marie Taglioni -- the great Italian ballerina -- is widely considered to be the first dancer in *en pointe*. That was 1832!

Not everyone who wants to take pointe will be able to. Typically that's because the student doesn't have the right physical characteristics. At BCA, the pointe student's physical well-being is paramount. And that may mean pointe dancing is not for you.

Pointe Requirements

Dancing on pointe is an advanced form of ballet dancing. It is not for the casual dancer. Here are some basic requirements:

1. Be at least 10 years of age.
2. Participate in a Pre-Professional program at BCA.
3. Demonstrate excellent work habits and leadership skills in ballet class.
4. Possess strong ballet technique, strong ankles, good body alignment, and sufficient flexibility.
5. Accomplish excellent work in pre-pointe class.
6. Be recommended by Miss Angie or Mister Wayne.

Once these conditions are met, you'll need to...

1. Be fitted for pointe shoes.
2. Learn how to tie your pointe shoe elastics and ribbons and take care of your pointe shoes.

Your First Pointe Shoe Fitting

For students and parents alike, the world of pointe shoes is a whole new ballgame. Because of the nature of pointe dancing, pointe shoes have to be fitted precisely to the girl's feet. And unlike typical dance shoes, pointe shoes have a variety of features that need to be customized for each dancer. These can include, size, width, vamp length, box size, shank strength and shank length.

Once you've completed all the BCA pointe requirements, you're ready for pointe shoes. Your first pointe shoe fitting will be at The Sock Basket in Greenville, SC. We recommend the Russian Pointe pointe shoe. But, in the end, the best pointe shoe is the one that works for you. Once you're fitted, your shoes will most likely have to be ordered.

Because of the nature of pointe shoe fittings, it can take up to an hour to fit a girl. We strongly encourage the dancer's parent/guardian to attend the pointe shoe fitting so they can learn more about the process. You can expect to pay about \$80 for your first Russian Pointe pair of pointe shoes. In addition, you'll have to purchase ribbons, elastics, and toe pads. During the fitting, we'll go over how to sew and tie your pointe shoes.

Pointe Class

Once you have your shoes, you'll be ready for your first pointe class! This is an exciting time for everyone and one of the big milestones in a ballet dancer's training. If you've gotten this far, Congratulations!

You'll return to your pre-pointe class and work pretty much the same way. Your first few sessions in shoes will be brief, probably just a few minutes at a time. We'll take the time to go slowly and make sure you are working in the shoes correctly. As you get stronger, you'll do more on pointe.

Great Websites and Video

There are loads of great websites and videos out there on pointe dancing, pointe shoes, and getting started. Here's just a few:

Russian Pointe

<http://www.russianpointe.com/>

Video: Fitting Pointe Shoes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35gPlaYOnm4>

Video: Sewing Pointe Shoes

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feCNkoAUbe4>

Video: Pointe Shoe Tying & Tips

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yT6kao1y-c>

FAQ

Is pointe work painful?

The first time you go on pointe, you may experience some toe pain as you get used to standing on your toes. But if you're ready for pointe shoes at BCA, we've done our best to prepare you so you have as little pain as possible. Typically, girls dancing on pointe for a while find most pain disappears quickly.

Can anyone go on pointe?

No. You have to have a strong interest in ballet, be at least 10 years of age, and satisfy the pointe requirements at BCA.

Can I work at home in pointe shoes?

No! You must only work in pointe shoes when instructed to do so in class.

How long will my pointe shoes last?

That depends on how often you work in them, your strength, and the makeup of the shoe. Girls with stronger, higher arched feet will break shoes quicker than other girls. Some girls are just tougher on pointe shoes than other girls. Typically, a young pointe dancer will grow out of her shoes before she wears them out.

Should pointe shoes have room to grow?

No! Pointe shoes must fit the young ballerina's foot properly. If not, she'll be in lots of pain and risk serious injury.