

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO POINTE AT iDANCE



Institute for Dance, Inc.
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INTRODUCTION

Is my dancer ready for pointe, and when? What does it mean to be 'en pointe'? Is it safe? These are just a few of the questions we receive on a regular basis when dancers approach the next phase in their dance education. Many parents are understandably concerned about their children participating in an activity that has the potential to harm them in any way. This is especially true in relation to girls progressing onto pointe. As a huge number of dancers' parents were not dancers themselves, we have created this basic guide to dancing 'en pointe' at iDance to help parents (and their dancers) better understand the requirements and expectations of pointe work.

Please review this document carefully, sign, and return the attached **PARENT WAIVER FOR PARTICIPATION IN POINTE WORK** to indicate that you have (a) read this guide and (b) do or do not agree to allow your dancer to participate in pointe work, should her teacher deem her ready and able.

As always, should you wish to discuss your child's dance education further or have any questions after reviewing this document, please contact the front office to schedule a meeting with Ms. Shannon, our Ballet Mistress, or Ms. Kathy, our Studio Director.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

CHKD Sports Medicine Ctr.
6425 Richmond Rd.
Williamsburg, VA 23188
(757) 345-3242

Ellman's Dancewear
19 S. Belmont Ave.
Richmond, VA 23221
(804) 358-0655

Dancer's Boutique
1220 Richmond Rd.
Williamsburg, VA 23185
(757) 220-6703



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WHAT IS POINTE?

Pointe is the study of ballet while wearing blocked satin shoes that allow the dancer to raise the body onto the tips of the toes.

Advancing to pointe work is a serious step and should be treated as such by students and their parents. Pointe work builds on ballet technique and every struggle, problem, weakness, and deficiency is amplified with this new layer of difficulty.

Pointe work is an evolution and extension of effective ballet training. It is **not** the result of a particular number of years in ballet class, being of a certain age, or even of an intense desire to dance en pointe.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS READY TO DANCE 'EN POINTE'?

Dancers placed in the Pointe Prep class are considered ready, by their teacher, to begin preparing for dancing en pointe.

All dancers entering this class must be examined by a dance medicine therapist at CHKD. The therapist will check the following:

- Structure of student's ankle and foot
- Degree of flexibility and amount of natural arch in feet
- Core strength (abdominal and back muscles)
- Strength of leg, ankle and foot muscles
- Dancer is of a healthy weight

All dancers will be tested by Ms. Kathleen **before** they are given permission to purchase pointe shoes. A total of five (5) tests will be given throughout a season.

- Test 1 – First Week of Fall Classes
- Test 2 – First Week in November
- Test 3 – First Week in January
- Test 4 – First Week in March
- Test 5 – Last Class in June

It is important for students and parents to understand that everyone will progress at different rates. It is unlikely that an entire class will be ready to attempt pointe work at the same time.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY CHILD DOES NOT PASS ANY OF THE FIVE EXAMS GIVEN?

Students attempting pointe work before they are ready risk building bad habits which may take years to correct. Even more serious is the potential for injury or permanent damage to bone or muscle structure of the foot, which far outweighs the risk of disappointment.

If you or your child have any concerns, please arrange a meeting with Ms. Kathleen. Be sure to ask what is needed to improve, but please respect Ms. Kathleen's judgement and knowledge if she feels you are not yet ready for pointe.

It is important to remember that a teacher willing to say no to you has likely put a lot of thought behind their decision. A teacher who tells everyone yes is not someone you should trust to train your child.

In a few cases, after careful consideration of the student's physique and foot structure, Ms. Kathleen may deem it best that a dancer does not attempt pointe work at all.

WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED OF MY CHILD?

Dancers should come to class well groomed – hair should be out of the face and in a bun; ponytails are not acceptable. Leotards and tights should be clean, in good condition, and meet the dress code.

Dancers must be responsible enough to bring all of the ballet equipment needed to class. Pointe shoes should be in proper working order, along with all accessories.

Dancers must pay attention in class and work hard. Going en pointe is a big step that requires great commitment on the part of the student.

Dancers must have an excellent attitude and attendance! Pointe work is a positive experience for those ready to devote themselves to quality ballet training.

Dancers must be in good health and able to participate in the entire class period. If a dancer frequently needs to rest because of illness or injury, she is not strong enough for the extra demands that pointe work requires.

THE DOS AND DON'TS FOR TAKING A POINTE CLASS

Do expect blisters and discomfort in your shoes.

Don't blame the fitter or your teacher for this!

Do expect to dance en pointe for about 10 minutes per class.

Don't expect to perform en pointe your first year.

Do support fellow dancers when they are faced with challenges.

Don't tear down fellow dancers when they succeed.

THE COST OF DANCING EN POINTE

The average cost of a pair of pointe shoes is \$150.00 including accessories (ribbons, elastic, toe pads, pointe shoe bag, etc.). Pointe shoes will typically last eight (8) hours of dance time, meaning that if you put them on first thing in the morning and dance for 8 hours straight, they would be “dead” after the eighth hour. As a beginner, you should expect to need at least two (2) pairs of pointe shoes the first year; and to purchase new pointe shoes several times a year for the remainder of your child’s dance education.

In the same way every dancer progress at a different rate, so will the wear and tear on their shoes. As a parent, you **must** be willing and prepared to purchase pointe shoes when needed. You put your dancer at great risk of serious injury sending her to class with “dead” shoes. **iDance scholarships are available**. Please inquire at the front desk or visit our website for more information on scholarship guidelines and applications.

WHERE TO PURCHASE POINTE SHOES

We recommend Ellman’s Dancewear in Richmond or Dancer’s Boutique in Williamsburg for all your dancewear needs. However, **for your first pair of pointe shoes we suggest seeing Jenny at Dancer’s Boutique**.

Tips to prepare you for your first fitting:

- You must make an appointment.
- Please allow at least 45 minutes.
- Be sure to have your toenails trimmed.
- Arrive dressed in leotard and tights.

THE DOS AND DON'TS FOR BUYING POINTE SHOES

Do schedule a professional pointe shoe fitting.

Don't purchase pointe shoes online.

Do attend the fitting with your dancer.

Don't take over the fitting, speak for your child, or criticize the fitter.

Do show Ms. Kathleen your shoes BEFORE sewing ribbons.

Don't allow your dancer to go en pointe at home (unless instructed by Ms. Kathleen).

PARENT WAIVER FOR PARTICIPATION IN POINTE WORK

Please select whether or not you agree to your child's participation in pointe work classes, and the financial and time commitments required for such work.

_____ **YES**, I want my child to pursue a dance education en pointe.

_____ I understand there are additional costs required with dancing en pointe and agree to purchase pointe shoes as needed.

_____ **NO**, I do not want my child to dance en pointe.

Please note, selecting "no" does not disqualify your dancer from participation in ballet altogether, or other styles of dance, should ballet be a pre-requisite. We will always offer flat-shoe ballet classes for our older and more advanced dancers.

Student's Name

Parent's Signature

Date