

## Not Your Mom's Pre-Pointe Class

If you took pre-pointe when you were growing up, we can guarantee the pre-pointe curriculum of today is a whole different class! In the past, pre-pointe was given to only advanced ballet dancers with a lot of experience. The curriculum was based on educating the brain, teaching all the ballet technique that the dancer would need to know once they had pointe shoes. About 6 years ago, this began to change. Through annual Dance Instructor conventions and seminars, a new pre-pointe conversation emerged. Teachers expressed a need to address the strength and flexibility issues associated with pointe. With rise of pilates and PNF sports super conditioning, science began to play a role in the way dance teachers approached the subject of preparing students for point and a whole new pre-pointe curriculum was born. For the first time in history, pre-pointe became all about preparing the whole body, not just the brain. Strength and flexibility in specific areas associated with pointe work are now addressed in pre-pointe class using the same science of strength and flexibility training that athletes use.

Any student at any level will benefit from pre-pointe, just as anyone working out at a gym would benefit from working out, even if they are not in great shape to begin with. Even a student registering in ballet for the first time can benefit from pre-pointe class. This class will build strength and flexibility. You will need your regular ballet classes to learn most of the ballet technique.

Our pre-pointe classes are successful in creating skilled students who develop the strength and flexibility to begin point safely and successfully. The proof is in the pudding. We have many, many students who have gone through this pre-pointe program for a year or two and then when their ballet skills were also strong, they have successfully begun dancing on pointe. Students are still required to have an adequate level of ballet technique skills before they are allowed to begin pointe. This pre-pointe class assures they will also have the strength and flexibility needed.

Does everyone who registers for pre-pointe get point shoes in a year? No, some students require two or three years of pre-pointe before they are ready. There is no magic age. There are physical strength requirements, physical flexibility

requirements, minimum age requirements, mental understanding of technique requirements and physical alignment requirements. When all those requirements are met, then you can get pointe shoes when your teacher says you are ready.

No one will be allowed to get pointe shoes without having finished at least one year of pre-pointe class.

After you do get pointe shoes, you will be at the barre for at least a semester or a year or several years depending on your body and your level of dedication. Students who show up regularly progress more quickly. No one dances center floor without permission. Certain things have to be accomplished at the barre first and every student takes a “center floor” readiness test before being allowed to go center floor.

There is a big debate about pointe shoes being bad for feet and the truth is running down the sidewalk barefooted causes more impact on your body than pointe shoes. Wearing high heels all day is much worse for your body than wearing point shoes for an hour or two once or twice a week. The way your pointe teachers approach pain is important. We let our dancers take off their point shoes when they begin to hurt. We only allow a certain kind of “gel” pad to be used in the point shoe for shock absorption and injury prevention.

Pre-pointe is a bare footed class!