

The following exercises are meant to help develop additional strength and flexibility in the feet and coordination for future pointe work. You may add a few of these exercises to the end of your classes in Ballet 2 and/or Ballet 3. You may also choose to have a short pre-pointe class each week for your students in these levels. Finally, while these exercises are written as pre-pointe exercises, done on demi pointe. They can be easily adapted to first-year pointe exercises.

Floor Work + Stretching + Strengthening

1. Use a small ball to roll out the foot and activate the arch muscles. Can be a tennis ball, golf ball, etc, although smaller is better because it's easier to target tight spots. Place the ball under the foot in the middle and slowly add your weight to it until you feel pressure. Roll it up and down the foot slowly, finding spots where the muscles feel tight and holding it there for a tad longer. Don't forget the sides of the foot. Roll out both feet.
2. Sit down with a Theraband and draw one knee up to your chest. Wrap the band over the toes and ball of the foot on that leg and, keeping the knee bent, pull the Theraband back to add resistance to the foot while you point and release *just* the toes. Do about 10 - 15 reps. Next, with the toes pointed, lower the foot so just the pointed toes tap the floor, and back up. Repeat about 10x. Lastly, flex the foot and roll through the *whole* foot to pointe, and roll back up to flexed. Repeat about 10x.
3. Sitting in a half-straddle (one leg bent in, other leg extended to the side) with the Theraband still covering the toes and ball of the foot, pull the Theraband towards you to add resistance to the foot, flex and roll through the *whole* foot to pointe, then roll slowly back to flex. Do 10 - 15 reps.

Barre

1. Stand in parallel at the barre, legs slightly apart, and place your tennis ball between the legs just above the ankles. Slowly rise up to demi pointe and lower, keeping the ball in place. If the ball falls, that means the feet are sickling out. Focus on really lifting the heels and pushing the tops of the feet forward, while feeling your weight primarily on the first three toes and the pad of the foot. Repeat about 10x.
2. In parallel with the ankles together, stand in a parallel sur le cou de pied and slowly rise up on one leg, hold for a beat, and slowly roll back down, repeating 8x. Then change to the other leg. Students should keep their core activated, shoulders relaxed, and backs straight, concentrating on lifting from the calf muscle only and not using the knees, back, or arms.
3. From parallel, plié, roll through the foot to demi pointe, pressing the tops of the feet forward, straighten the knees (the student is now standing in demi pointe parallel), and slowly lower

heels back down. Next, rise with straight legs, then en demi pointe plié, pressing the tops of the feet forward over the toes, slowly lower the heels to the floor, and straighten the legs. Follow with 3 rise (accent is *up*, lowering slowly), and 1 relevé. After parallel, repeat this combination in 1st, 2nd, and 4th positions. (4th position is repeated twice, once with the right leg in front, once with the left.)

4. Relevés and rises. Starting in 1st position, plié and relevé 3x, then en demi pointe plié pressing over the toes and straighten. Follow with 4 rises. Repeat the combination in 2nd position.
5. From 5th position, slowly bring the front foot up the ankle to sur le coup de pied, hold for a beat to check the turnout and the “wrapped” shape of the foot. Keeping that shape of the foot as best you can, extend the leg to tendu front. Plié into a demi pointe press on the extended foot to stretch the arch, return to tendu, then drop the heel into a port de pied. The student should now be standing in a 4th position with their weight centered between the legs. Using the inner thigh muscles and core, pull the front leg and foot (flat, not pointed) back to 5th. Repeat 1 - 2x en croix.
6. In 5th position, plié (&), sous-sus (1), bourrée steps in place (2-4). Repeat (5-8). One more plié to sous-sus, lift the front leg to passé and close back. Go right into a plié to repeat on the other side.
7. Beginning from a sous-sus, plié and tendu en fondu front, then pull straight up to sous-sus again and quick bourree steps for 4 counts, changing the leg to close in back on the last count. Repeat immediately to the back with a plié to tendu en fondu back, pulling straight up to sous-sus, quick bourrée steps for 4 counts, changing the leg to close in front again on the last count. Repeat the combination front and back again. Next, plié to tendu en fondu side, pull up to a tight sous-sus closing in back, hold for a beat, and full detournée. Repeat this again to the side. For the third time, plié to tendu en fondu and pull up to go straight into a detournée without pausing. As an added challenge, have the students immediately lift their front leg to passé following the detournée, closing in back to repeat the whole combination on the other leg.
8. Facing the barre while standing in B+, practice pas de bourrées en demi pointe side to side, making sure to roll down into a plié between each pas de bourrée. Aim for 4 sets of pas de bourrees left and right. Start slow to pay attention to turnout, making sure students are not turning/twisting their hips when they travel to either side. After at least 2 practices of pas de bourrees with straight legs, begin practicing them in picked-up coup de pied.

Center

1. Stand in 5th. Preparation with the arms. Plié and piqué to sous-sus front, plié, retiré relevé, close in 5th with plié. Plié and pique to sous-sus front, plié, pirouette from 5th, close in back to repeat on the other side. After doing both sides, repeat everything en dedans! Plié and pique sous-sus back, plié retire relevé, close in 5th with a plié. Plié and pique sous-sus back, plié, en dedans pirouette closing front. Repeat on the other leg.
2. Begin in 5th position. Preparation with the arms. Plié to sur le cou de pied back and pas de bourree 4x with a slow count, then 4x quick. Finish with a sous-sus and detournée to begin with the other leg.
3. Traveling on the diagonal. Tendu front en fondu and piqué into sur le cou de pied with the back foot. Repeat. Repeat with a piqué into a retiré with the back foot. Repeat with a pique turn. Continue across the floor, making sure to step on a straight leg and keeping the core stable without raising one hip higher than the other.
4. Begin in B+. Preparation with the arms. Plié and step to piqué 1st arabesque, close the working leg in front with a plié in 5th and immediately sous-sus, raising arms to 5th, plié. Repeat 3x. On the 3rd time, after the sous-sus, follow with bourrée steps moving back (on the diagonal line, not en face), with port de bras if desired. Finish with a plié to tendu side and soutenu turn. Begin on the other side.
5. From the back of the room. Begin tendu croisé devant. Preparation with the arms. Step forward on the tendu leg and piqué to a low 2nd arabesque, plié on the standing leg and pas de bourrée to close 5th position with the other leg front. Tendu croisé devant to repeat to the other side. These should be done slowly and in a low arabesque, focusing on controlling the turnout in the fondu from the arabesque to the pas de bourrée. When doing a plié in arabesque, lower the heel with control, not dropping, and follow with a clean pas de bourrée. Remind students to keep their chests and chins lifted and shoulders down in the 2nd arabesque and then into the fondu.