

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. **Rises for Calf and Ankle Strength:** Stand in parallel at the barre. Pointe one foot at the ankle in a parallel sur le cou de pied and slowly rise on one leg. Pause. Slowly lower back down. Repeat 8x on both legs.
2. **Demi Ponte Press for Arch Flexibility:** In 1st position, press the right foot into a demi pointe, stretching the arches. Then point, stretching the tops of the feet. Come back to demi pointe, and return to 1st. Repeat 2 - 4x right and left. Then demi pointe right, roll up to rise in 1st position and lower to demi pointe left. Repeat this 4 - 8x, rolling through a rise in 1st each time.
3. **Rises and Relevés:** From 1st position, plié, straighten, rise, lower down, repeat 2x slowly. Then relevé 4x, rise 4x, and plié en demi pointe to stretch the arches, straighten en demi pointe and hold a balance for 2- 4 counts. Repeat in 2nd and 4th positions. 4th position is done twice, one with the right foot in front and again with the left foot in front.

4. **Foot Articulation I:** From 1st position, tendu front only to a demi pointe (leg is straight but the ball of the foot and toes remain not pointed), then fully pointe stretching through the whole foot, return to a demi pointe, and return to 1st position. Repeat 2x front, side, and back with right and left legs.
5. **Foot Articulation II:** From 1st position, tendu front, press the weight forward onto the foot to stretch the arch, hold for a beat, return to tendu, and close. Do this 2x front, 2x side, and 2x back. Pay attention to not sickling in any position. To the front, you want to feel as if the outside of your ankle is pressing forward (toward the wall you are facing). To the side, feel as if the top of your foot is pressing out. Pay special attention to the back in making sure the weight of the foot stays over the big and second toe and the ankle is down, not sickling out.
6. **Single Leg Work:** From 5th position, fondu en relevé slowly and controlled, 2x front, side and back, then repeat on the left leg. Make sure both knees plié at the same time and straighten at the same time, maintain turnout on both the working and the standing leg. Do not raise the hip on the working leg, becoming “lopsided”, but do your best to keep both hips level. Pay attention to posture, making sure the back is tsraight, torso is not sinking, shoulders not hunching.

NOTE: This exercise should be done facing the barre until students are able to fondu en relevé to 45 degrees while maintaining good posture and turnout. Then, advance to fondu en relevé, with only one hand on the barre, en croix.

7. **Intro to Échappé:** From 5th position, plié and échappé both legs out sharply to 2nd position en demi pointe, legs straight, plié there in 2nd position, relevé, and return both legs to pliéd 5th position. Repeat 4x. This should be done slowly at first. Pay attention to the legwork; both legs should go out and return at the same time while keeping the turnout. Make sure there is no sickling and that students do not bounce or “jump” into the échappé. Both legs work at the same time to slide out and return.
8. **Pique Step for Balance:** Stand slightly away from the barre in B+. Plié and step to a pique arabesque, placing the hands lightly on the barre. While keeping the arabesque, plié on the standing leg, relevé, hold for a balance, then plié and lower the arabesque leg to step back from the barre again. Change legs and repeat on the other side. Repeat 4 - 8x, changing legs between each pique arabesque.

Make sure students pull up in their arabesque, shoulders down, chests open, chins level. When doing the plié in arabesque, make sure the arabesque leg does not drop with the plié but stays in place, straight and pointed. For added balance work, have students let go of the barre during the brief balance and bring arms to 5th.

Center

1. From 5th position, plié en fondu, relevé keeping the foot in coupe front, plié again and relevé to sous sus. Repeat 2x front, 2x back. Can repeat the full set again if desired.
2. Begin in 5th position in center. Plié, relevé passé and close in back with a plié. Immediately lift the other leg in relevé passé and close back. Repeat 4x changing the legs (right leg, left leg, right leg, left leg). Then plié, pique to sous sus, plié & pirouette en dehors from 5th position, close right leg in back. Plié, pique to sous sus forward with the left leg in front now, plié, pirouette en dehors from 5th position to the left.
3. Stand in 5th. Preparation with the arms. Plié and piqué step forward with the right leg into a retiré back with the left leg, plié and pique step to repeat 2 - 4x. Repeat to the side, with a retiré in front, and to the back with a retiré front.
4. Échappés in Center: beginning in 5th position, perform the same Intro to Échappé combination from the barre, but in center. Arms should remain en bas or in 2nd position.
5. Traveling across the room, battement soutenu to the side and piqué to retiré devant. Repeat across the floor 3x, then smoothly change direction and repeat on the other leg, pique-ing to retiré devant 3x to the left. Next, repeat the combination but with *pique turns* rather than static retirés, 3x right to the right, plié sous sus to transition, then 3x left, plié sous sus.
6. Begin in B+, prepare the arms. Traveling across the room on the diagonal line, plié and pique step to arabesque en relevé. While in the arabesque, plié relevé again, then lower down and step through to repeat. Continue pique arabesque, plié relevé, across the floor. This may be quite difficult at first, but is essentially a stability exercise. Pay attention to all the same factors as the pique to arabesque exercise at the barre, but this time students are bringing their arms to a 1st arabesque position each time.
7. Traveling across the floor, pique step to passé on rise, then step into a pique turn. Continue across the floor, making the transition between the pique and the turn smoothly. Practice with a slower tempo to help students find their stability on one leg and alignment during the turn, then practice on a quicker tempo, bringing the leg sharply to passé, emphasizing the need to find their center quickly on one leg and extend the working leg out quickly for the turn,