

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. **Demi Pointe Press for Arch Flexibility:** In parallel, demi pointe press the right foot, then the left foot, right foot, left foot, then plie with both feet together. Staying in the plie, lift both heels into a high demi pointe, lower them, and straighten. Repeat this a second time. Next, turn out to first position and repeat the combination. Demi pointe press right, left, right, left. Plie, lift the heels while pressing the tops of the feet forward to get a high demi pointe and stretch the arches, lower the heels and straighten. Repeat 2x in first position and 2x in second position.
2. **Relevés and Elevés:** In first position, plie, releve, and slowly lower the heels to the floor, focusing on pulling up as you go down and controlling the landing without dropping the heels. Repeat 2 or 3x. Then, four relevés without pausing.

Make sure the movement is a smooth transition from the plie to the demi pointe. There should be no “popping” or hopping up, and student’s torsos should not sink with the plie but should maintain a straight line down the spine.

3. **Rises and Single Leg Work 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 4x on both legs. Then transition straight away to turned out and do single leg rises with one leg in coupe back, 4x on each leg. For added strengthening, this combination can be done 8x in each position instead of 4x.
4. **Single Leg Relevés and Pas de Bourrée:** Begin in 5th position and coupe back with the right foot. Single leg plie relevés 3x, then pas de bourree to coupe back on the other leg. Repeat with single leg relevés in coupe back on the other leg.. Repeat the whole set 4x (right, left, right, left). On the last pas de bourree, stop in 1st position and slowly lower the heels down to finish in 1st position. Make sure students’ hips do not tilt or turn with the pas de bourree, but their upper body remains stable. Focus on maintaining the turn out, especially during single leg relevés.
5. **Pas de Bourrées with Passe:** Begin in coupe back, plie, high passe pas de bourrée right to left, 4x. Then, stepping on the back leg, step out to do a soutenu turn down the barre and, staying en demi pointe, lift the front leg through passe to plie coupe back. Repeat the combination to the other side.
6. **Échappe and Plie to Passe Releve:** Beginning in 5th position, plie to echappe out, plie in 2nd position, rise, and close. Repeat again. Follow with 3 regular echappes (*without* the plie in 2nd position between). Then, echappe out and plie in 2nd once more, but this time push off on one leg to stand in a high passe releve. Balance, then close the passe leg in back. Repeat the combination again, this time bringing the other leg to passe releve on the last movement.
7. **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, bring the arms to 5th and hold for a balance, then place hands lightly on the barre and plié, 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.

Center

1. **Fondu en Releve for Stability:** From 5th position, fondu en relevé front, close sous sus, lower back to 5th. Fondu en releve to the back with the other leg,, close sous sus, lower down. Fondu en releve to the side (using the front foot to extend to a la seconde), close in back, detournee. Here you can lower down to 5th and change legs to go to the other side, *or*, for added technique, straight after the detournee bring the front leg up to passe en releve and hold for a brief balance before closing in back.
2. **Échappe and Plie to Passe Releve:** Repeat this combination from the barre but in center. Here students can pay attention to their arms, smoothly transitioning between 2nd position and 1st position during echappes. Finding balance in the releve passe right after the plie releve will be challenging, but it's excellent practice for balance and core stability.
3. **Passe Releves and Pirouette:** Begin in 5th position in center. Plié, relevé passé and close in back with a plié, relevé passe close front, relève passe close back, plie, sous sus. Repeat passes with the other leg. Lastly, plié, pique to sous sus forward, plié, pirouette en dehors from 5th position, close back. Repeat the pique, sous sus and pirouette on the other leg.
4. **Traveling Releve Passe with Tempo Change:** Traveling straight across the room. Battement soutenu to the side and piqué to retiré devant, 2x slow, then 3x quick. 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. Especially with the quicker tempo, make sure the extended leg “gets there quickly”, meaning it extends straight to battement soutenu quickly right after the retire, so the movement can continue quickly but smoothly.
5. **Traveling Releve Retire Back and Quick Coupes:** Similar to exercise #4, travel forward on the diagonal with the retiré foot in back 2x slow, then do 3 quick pique to coupe back and follow with a soutenu turn. Repeat, continuing across the floor. Repeat to the other side.
6. **Parallel Runs en Demi Pointe:** This exercise is fun to do while also helping students stay light on their feet and to move smoothly with quick movements! Traveling on the diagonal, do quick runs in parallel en demi pointe for 4 - 6 counts, then do a precipite and repeat. The chest can lean slightly forward while keeping the back straight, shoulders down, and the chin parallel with the floor. Students can keep their arms in a low V for the runs, then criss-cross over the precipite.
7. **Bourrees:** Begin in B+, plie and step on the back foot to a high 5th position en demi pointe while bringing the arm to 5th and the other arm to 2nd. Bourree across the floor, taking small steps and always leading with the back foot. You can choose to have students slowly transition through port de bras or keep their arms in place. Pay attention to keeping the

knees loose, or “soft”, as stiff knees will make the movement jerky, but not so loose that the bourrees look more like big steps in place.