

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 and Elevés:** Stand in parallel with the ankles together. Plie, lift the heels to stretch the arches, pressing the tops of the feet forward over the toes, lower the heels, straighten. Repeat again. Then, do 4 eleve's in parallel, rising on 1, hold 2, lowering 3 - 4. Next, turn out and. repeat the whole combination in 1st position, then 2nd position.
2. **Demi Pointe Press and Relevés:** In 1st position, plié, relevé, then plie en releve pressing the tops of the feet out over the toes (making sure the knees are over the toes here too), straighten, plie releve again, demi pointe press en releve, straighten. Follow with 3 successive relevés, plie down and tendu to the side to repeat the combination in 2nd position.
3. **Relevés and Elevés with Single Leg Work:** Begin in 1st position, plie releve, eleve, plie releve, eleve, then 2 quicker relevés, 2 quicker elevés, and transition to standing on the right leg with

the left leg in coupe back. Repeat this combination but only on one leg this time. Repeat also on the left leg. Return to 1st position to finish, slowly lowering the heels back down to the floor. If it is too difficult for your students to do this full combination yet, try using only the first part (plie releve, eleve, plie releve, eleve) in 1st position and on the right and left legs, adding repetitions as they progress to build strength.

- 4. Pas de Bourrees:** Begin in 5th position and coupe back with the right foot. Plie, pas de bourree steps left, right, left, right. Students should now be standing in a plie'd coupe back, same as when they started. Step back on the right foot and degage en releve the left leg out to the side, then plie on the standing leg while bringing the left foot quickly to coupe back. Repeat the same motion by stepping back on the left foot, degage en releve the right leg to the side, and plie bringing in quickly to coupe back again (this step travels back away from the barre, so make sure students are leaning their chests forward and clinging the barre. Try not to put too much distance between you and the barre). Finally, plie in 5th position and sous sus, lower down in a plie coupe back with the left foot to repeat the combination on the other side.
- 5. Pas de Bourrées with Passe and Changing Tempo:** Begin in coupe back, plie, high passe pas de bourrée right to left, 2x slow, then 4x quicker (you can use passe de bourree steps for the faster ones or continue doing them through passe). Then, stepping on the back leg, step out to do a soutenu turn left down the barre and, staying en demi pointe, lift the front leg (the left leg) through passe to plie coupe back. Repeat the combination to the other side.
- 6. Echappe and Plie to Passe Releve:** Begin in 5th position, plie to echappe out, plie in 2nd position, rise, and close. Repeat again. Follow with 3 regular echappes. Then, echappe out and plie in 2nd once more, but this time push off on one leg to stand in a high passe releve. Hold for a couple counts, lower with a plie, and pirouette at the barre from 5th position, closing with a plie in 5th position. Repeat the combination again, with a passe releve and pirouette with the other leg. If you do not have the space to pirouette at the barre, or are unable to do a full pirouette at the barre, supplement by doing 2 passe releves *or* pirouette ½ turns.
- 7. Echappes to 2nd and 4th positions:** From 5th position, plie and echappe out 3x, then plie sous sus. Plie and echappe to 4th position, plie in 4th position, releve, and close. Echapep to 4th again, plie, releve, close. Repeat to the other side.
- 8. Bourrees at the Barre:** Begin in 5th position, plie sous sus and bourree in place for 8 counts, hold sous sus for 2 more counts, lower down 2 counts. Repeat again, this time bourree-ing down the barre for 8 counts. Repeat on the other leg.

Center

- 1. Fondu en Releve for Stability:** From 5th position, plie to fondu en relevé front, close sous sus, plie to fondu en releve side, close sous sus, and plie fondu en releve to the back closing in sous sus. Repeat straight away with the other leg.
- 2. Degage en Releve:** This is similar to what was practiced in the pas de bourree combination at the barre. Beginning in B+ with the right foot in back, plie, step on the back foot to releve while degage-ing the left leg to side. Lower with a plie and bring the left leg to coupe back. Step on the left foot back, releve and degage the right leg to the side, closing in back. Repeat this traveling back 3x, then sous sus. You can repeat immediately en dedans (stepping forward and degage-ing the back leg side to close front), or you can pause, change legs, and repeat starting on the other leg.
- 3. Echappe 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.
- 4. Echappes to 2nd and 4th:** Repeat this combination from the barre. Here again, students can pay attention to arms opening and closing during the echappes out to 2nd, and for the echappe to 4th, students can raise their arms to 4th or keep them in 2nd. Pay attention to turnout here, especially during the echappe to 4th and plie in plie, making sure the knees are facing to the sides, and that knees go over the toes during the plie. Make sure students do not sag forward or lean back during the plies in 2nd and 4th, try to keep a stable core.
- 5. Pique to Retire and Pirouette:** This practice is all about quick changes! Begin in 5th position with the right leg in front, plie and pique forward to retire back 2x, pique to sous sus, plie 5th and pirouette en dehors. Repeat right away traveling to the back; plie to pique back with a retire in front 2x, plie 5th, pirouette en dehors. Repeat traveling to the right, then to the left.
- 6. Pique to Passe Releve and Pique Turns:** Again, the goal here is to transition quickly and smoothly. Traveling across the floor or on the diagonal, plie to pique retire, then pique turn, repeat for a total of 3x, then step together in a sous sus. Change direction to repeat immediately to the other side.
- 7. Bourrees:** Begin in B+, plie and step on the back foot to a high 5th position en demi pointe. Bourree across the floor for 8 - 16 counts, taking small steps and always leading with the back foot. Next,, step out to soutenu turn, followed by a pique arabesque. Close the arabesque leg in front and plie coupe back to begin straight away to the other side. You can choose to have students slowly transition through port de bras or keep their arms in place

during the bourrees. 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

- 8. Runs and Emboites:** This exercise is fun to do while also helping students stay light on their feet and transition smoothly between movement qualities! This can be done traveling diagonally or in a circle. Do emboites for 4 - 8 counts, followed by 4 - 8 counts of quick ballet runs. Keep the back straight, shoulders down, and the chin parallel with the floor. Arms can be held to the side in a V. Make sure students are changing smoothly from foot to foot during the emboites and not “dropping” down, making the movement appear heavy.. The emphasis is up, not down.