

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, Relevés, and Elevés** - In parallel, demi pointe press alternating right and left feet, 4x, then plie in parallel, roll up to releve and straighten, then lower heels to the floor. Repeat once more, but this time with a plie in each demi pointe press. Next, turn out to 1st position. Plie, roll up to releve, straighten, lower down. Follow with 2 plie relevés in 1st. Next, eleve, plie en releve, lower the heels to roll down and straighten. Follow with 2 elevés. Repeat the roll-ups, relevés and elevés in the 2nd and 4th positions.
2. **Foot Articulation and Arch Stretch** - From 1st position, tendu front to demi pointe (the ball of the foot and toes remain on the floor), then pointe, return to demi pointe and plie press forward on the foot to stretch the arches. Return to pointe through straightening the leg and close in 1st. Repeat side and back.

3. **Single Leg Relevés en Coupe-** From 5th position, plie releve to a coupe front, 2 more plie relevés keeping the front leg in coupe, close in sous sus, lower back down to 5th. Plie releve coupe back, 2 more single leg relevés with the coupe leg back, then pas de bourree to change sides. Repeat on the left side.
4. **Fondus en Releve** - This can be done facing the barre or with one hand on the barre, depending on the skill level of your students. From 5th position, fondu en releve 2x en croix. On the last fondu en releve to the side, close to the back in a sous sus and detournee to the other side. Repeat left.
5. **Echappes to 2nd and 4th Positions** - Echappe to 2nd position 2x, pass releve close back. Repeat again, with a passe on the other leg. Next, echappe to 4th position 2x with the right leg in front, passe releve closing back. Repeat the echappes to 4th with the left leg in front, passe releve to the back and sous sus to finish.

Center

1. **Single Leg Relevés** - From 5th position, plie releve coupe front, plie in coupe, releve, close in sous sus. Repeat to the back, with 2 relevés in coupe back, close sous sus. Then plie in 5th position, passe releve, plie 5th, pirouette en dehors to finish. Repeat to the left.
2. **Degage en Releve** - Beginning in B+ with the right foot in back, plie, step on the back foot to degage releve the left leg to side. Lower with a plie, bringing the left leg to coupe back. Step on the left foot back, degage releve the right leg to the side, closing in back. Repeat this traveling back 3x, finish with a sous sus. Repeat en dedans (stepping forward and degage-ing the back leg side to close front). Once form is clean, have your students practice this a little faster, focusing on a smooth transition from leg to leg, without any jarring or “jumping” up to releve.
3. **Echappes** - Repeat the echappe exercise from the barre portion of class here in center. For increased technique work, change the passe relevés to pirouettes en dehors.
4. **Pique Arabesque** - traveling diagonally, begin in B+ and step to pique arabesque, plie releve in arabesque, step through to lower. Continue across the floor 3x, then tombee pas de bourree to 4th position, pirouette en dedans, close 5th and sous sus to finish. Repeat straight away to the left.
5. **Bourrees and Soutenu Turns** - bourree steps traveling across the floor for 4 - 6 slow counts, followed by a soutenu turn. Continue across the floor. Repeat this combination to the left. Another option is to do this combination at a faster tempo.

Always make sure the bourrees are smooth and fluid, with “soft” knees and light steps, not heavy. Make sure students take small steps leading with the back foot, avoid creating a lot of space between the lower legs.