

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, plié, pick up the heels, lower, and straighten. This is to be done without pressing the tops of the feet over the toes, but instead just lifting and lowering the heels to concentrate on the lower calf muscle. Repeat 8x. Do the same in 1st position and 2nd.
3. Relevés and rises. Starting in 1st position, plié and relevé 4x. Then rise (without the plié) 4x. Concentrate on rolling through the foot and not dropping down. Repeat the whole set 2x in 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th.

4. 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 (towards the mirror), to the side 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 in, not sickling out.
5. In 5th position, lift the front foot to demi pointe, pressing over the toes to stretch the arch, then change to the back foot. Do this 4x, emphasizing rolling through the foot and keeping the ankle “in” on the back foot, not sickling out when it comes down from demi pointe. After changing feet 4x, rise all the way up to a demi pointe on 5th, slowly lower to 5th, plié sous sus, slowly lower back to 5th. Repeat the whole set (4 demi pointe presses, rise in 5th and lower, plié sous sus in 5th and lower) 4 - 5x.
6. From 5th position, tendu en fondu front, then pull straight up to sous sus, lower back to tendu en fondu, pull up to sous sus, and lower to 5th. Repeat 2 - 4x front, side, and back. Pay attention to turnout when stretching the leg out, especially to the back when the leg tends to turn in. Also, pay attention to keeping the weight on the standing leg so the working leg is lightweight.

### Center

1. Stand in 5th. Preparation with the arms. Plié and piqué to sous sus front 2x, side 2x, back 2x. Focus on rolling through the feet, never dropping from or heaving up to sous sus. Focus on pointing all the way through the foot, never bracing the toes (especially when going to the back). Focus on stepping on a straight leg to each direction and keeping the correct posture. Especially to the back, don't let the torso dip down, use the plié on the standing leg to push up and back to sous sus.
2. In 5th, prepare the arms. Piqué forward to coupe back 2x, then piqué to sous sus raise arms to 5th. Repeat going back now, with a coupé in front.
3. Traveling, tendu plié side and piqué to coupe front or back, continuing across the floor. Make sure the standing leg is rolling down into a plié between each one, and the working leg is straight when it piqués to demi point.