

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, roll through the foot to demi pointe, pressing the tops of the feet forward, straighten the knees (student is now standing in demi pointe parallel), and slowly lower heels back down. Next, rise with straight legs, then plié en demi pointe, pressing the tops of the feet forward over the toes, slowly lower the heels to the floor, and straighten the legs. Repeat 2x. Pay attention to proper foot form here, making sure there is no sickling (the inside of each foot stays close together), The heels lower down together, never dropping the weight heavily down. After parallel, repeat this combination in 1st and 2nd positions.

3. Relevés and rises. Starting in 1st position, plié and relevé, slowly lower heels to floor. Follow with 1 rise and lower. Repeat a total of 4 sets. Concentrate on rolling through the foot and not dropping down. Repeat also in 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 (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.

5. In 5th position, plié, sous-sus, bourrée steps in place for 4 slow counts, then slowly lower back down to 5th. Plié, sous-sus and repeat the bourrées for another slow 4 counts. Hold the sous-sus and lift the right leg through passé to close in the back on rise. Then slowly lower.

Pay attention to turnout during the bourrées, making sure the legs stay close together but the knees remain “loose”, not locked. Maintain turnout and a pointed foot during the passé, keeping as little space as possible between the foot and leg when changing to the back.

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. Repeat immediately to the side, then back, and again to the side. Detournée toward the barre to change to the other side. Repeat the entire combination on the other side.

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. For the detournée, make sure the leg closes smoothly and snugly, staying high up en demi pointe, keeping the hips level. Let go of the barre as you rotate around.

### Center

1. Stand in 5th. Preparation with the arms. Plié and piqué to sous sus front, plié, relevé to retiré, close 5th in plié. Repeat 2x front, side 2x, back 2x. (When going to the back, the front leg is still the one that lifts, not the back leg.)

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 in each direction and keeping 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. Hold your core stable and keep the hips level with the retiré, keeping the knee to the side to maintain turnout.

2. In 5th, prepare the arms. Piqué forward to sur le cou de pieds back 2x. Repeat 2x going to the back, with a sur le cou de pieds in front. Repeat 2x side with a sur le cou de pieds front. Plié sous-sus, bourrée in place for 4 counts, plié and stretch. Finish. Repeat all to the other side.
3. Traveling straight across the room. Battement soutenu to the side and piqué to retiré devant. 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.
4. Repeat exercise #3, but travel forward on the diagonal with the retiré foot in back instead of traveling to the side with the retiré foot in front.
5. 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 3x changing the legs (right leg, left leg, right leg). Then plié, sous sus, bourrée in place raising the arms to 5th, lower down to 5th. Repeat the combination on the other side.

Make sure to have a plié with the heels down between each relevé passé and maintain turnout when closing in 5th position.