



# Classical Ballet ③

## Classwork & Teaching Suggestions

*for the Ballet Teacher of Intermediate to Advanced Students*

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Registered Teacher, **Royal Academy of Dance**



# Classical Ballet 3:

## Classwork and Teaching Suggestions

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## The Teacher Must Decide

The Ballet Arts series of manuals provides information, activities and suggestions for the teaching of ballet to children. The materials in these books have worked well for the author, and for other teachers of her acquaintance. However, the author cannot know what approach or which physical activities will be appropriate and safe for any particular teacher, class, or student. It is the responsibility of each ballet teacher to use his or her best judgment in applying the information and teaching suggestions contained herein, and in using the activities, enchainements, dances and teaching materials contained in the Ballet Arts series from **The Ballet Source**.

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**PURCHASE CLASSICAL BALLET 3**

# I. Improving Technique and Artistry

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# Using This Manual

## Introduction

These exercises, enchainements and technical suggestions are some that were given to me as a student, many years ago.

Neither the author nor The Ballet Source makes any guarantees or claims of any kind regarding the choreography and technical suggestions contained in this manual.

It is hoped that this collection of choreographed classes, and extra enchainements will be a welcome addition to your ballet teaching repertoire.

It is expected that teachers will make changes and additions as suits their needs and the needs of their students, and that they will use good judgment in selecting and using the material contained in this book.

Have fun with it! Introduce your students to some different challenges, and some helpful remedial work.

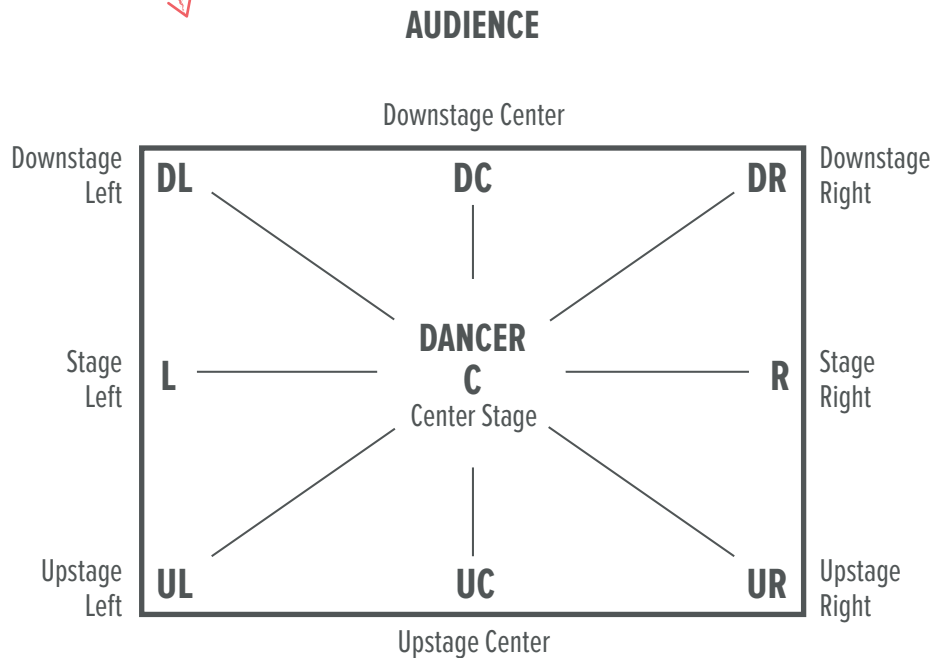
Lengthen or shorten the exercises, or the classes, as needed in your school. Expand the difficulty, or simplify it; again, as is needed in your teaching situation.

Ballet terminology does differ from system to system, and from teacher to teacher. Hopefully the terminology used here will be understood by the reader. Some explanations for terms used in this manual are on this page, and on the following. If you have a particular question, please [contact The Ballet Source](#).

The abbreviations on this chart of stage directions will be used to indicate where the dancer is to face:

## Stage Directions

The areas of the stage are named from the performer's point of view when facing the audience.



## Clarifications:

To indicate which foot or leg or arm to use, the capital letters R and L are used.

When the term demi pli   is used, unless otherwise stated, the entire exercise, going down, and coming up, is intended. The same is true for the term battement tendu.

When a relev   is indicated, again, unless otherwise stated, the complete exercise is intended: going up and coming down.

## Relev  

Releve feels like a tiny jump. Spring quickly from the demi pli   to the demi pointe. Spring quickly down again to the demi pli  .

## Rise, or   lev  

Lift the heels off the floor, keeping the knees pulled straight. Lift through the center of the foot. Lift as high as possible without the ball of the foot coming off the floor. Lower the heels to the floor again. This movement should be done slowly and smoothly, like an “upside down Demi Pli  .”

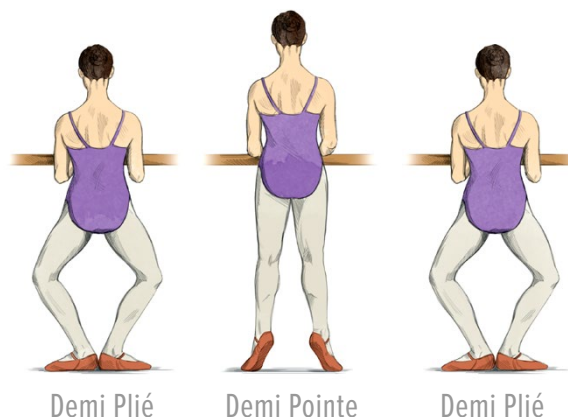
However, when the term “rise” is used, it will mean lifting the heels to demi pointe, keeping the knees straight. If lowering is also wanted, the word “lower” will be used.

Echapp   relev   ouverte would mean to do the relev   and stay. Echapp   relev   ferm   would mean closing to demi pli   from the echapp   relev   ouverte.

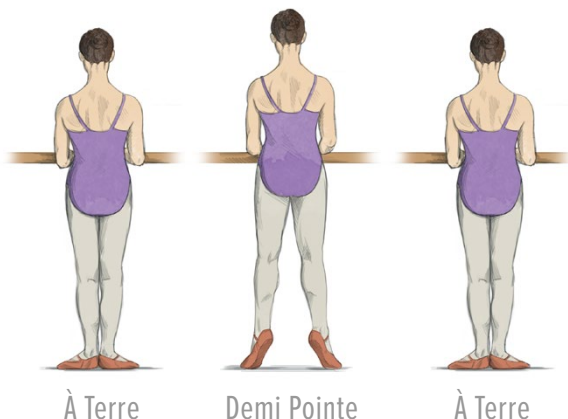
Battement gliss   is a battement tendu done off the floor about 3”. (This exercise is also known as Battement Degag  .)

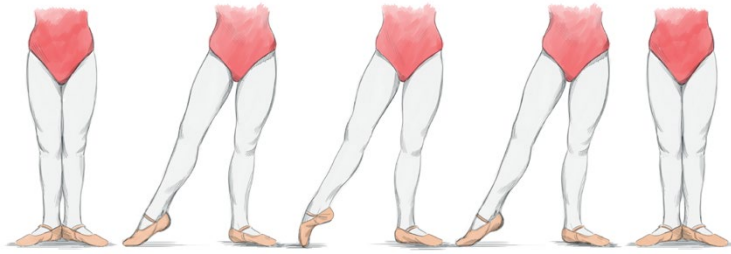
Degag   will be used to indicate the first half of a battement tendu: the foot stays and does not close. (Degag   means detached). Degag   will also be used to indicate this extended position, such as after a chass  , or when lowered from a developp  , etc.

## RELEV  



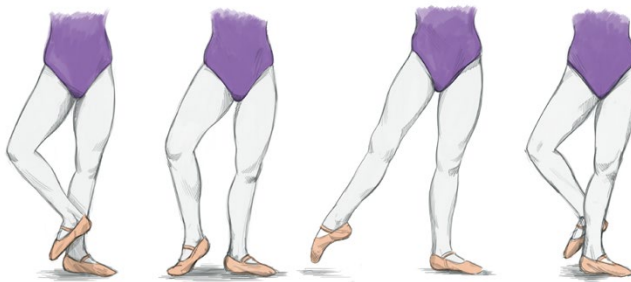
## RISE, OR   LEV  



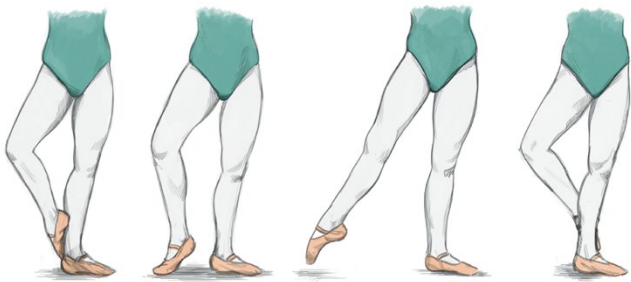


Battement Tendu showing the use of the metatarsal joint, or going through the demi pointe.

### THREE KINDS OF BATTEMENT FRAPPÉS



Battement Frappé With Flexed or Relaxed Foot



Battement Frappé With Wrapped Foot



Battement Frappé Piqué (or Pointed)

### Using the choreography in this manual:

1. If unsure of what is meant in a part of an exercise, just fill it in with what seems logical to you.
2. Feel free to change any part of an exercise that does not fit your teaching style, or the students' abilities, or what you want to work on at this time.
3. Feel free to use the exercises within any one class separately, or to mix the work in two or more classes.
4. This work is intended to be an addition to your teaching repertoire, not to replace it in any way. Use what works, what interests you, what challenges or improves your students performance.
5. Music: the meters and counts are intended to give an approximation of how to time and blend the parts of an exercise or enchainement. Feel free to adjust the meters and counts as seems best to you.

## Retiré Positions



Petit Retiré



Petit Retiré Devant



Petit Retiré Derriere



Demi Retiré



Demi Retiré Devant



Demi Retiré Derriere



## Positions of the Arms as Used in This Manual



Bra Bas



First Position



Demi Bras  
or Open First



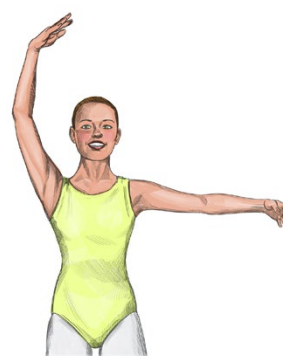
Demi Seconde Position



Second Position



Third Position



Fourth Position  
or Attitude



Fifth Position



Open Fifth Position  
When Coming from Fifth



Open Fifth Position  
When Coming From Second,  
or, Diagonally Up



First Arabesque



Third Arabesque

# Suggestions For Improving Technique and Artistry

**General Rule:** If posture is correct, the legs and arms will have a reasonable chance to work at their best. Posture incorrect? Legs and arms will have a hard time.

## Placing Feet for Even Turnout at the Barre

Turn thighs out, the feet follow. Place supporting leg first, then the working leg.

Need rosin to turn out at the barre? Dancer is turning out beyond ability—using the floor friction instead of their muscles—can lead to lower leg and foot injuries. Don't use rosin to try to increase turnout—it causes wrong muscle use. Will not help center work.

## For Placing Hands on the Barre

Facing the barre: with arms relaxed at sides, lift where they are, and place hands on the barre, elbows next to waist. Elbows are relaxed, not sticking out.

Sideways to barre: Stand in 2nd position. Lift arms to 1st, then open to 2nd. Place left hand on the barre. Elbow should be just in front of body. Hand on the barre will be a few inches further in front. Keep the barre arm relaxed, and fairly straight.

Close right foot to 1st or 5th, moving left hand forward on the barre as

needed. Now the pliés can be done in all positions without moving the supporting leg. Simply adjust the placement of the left hand on the barre.

## For Grand Pliés

There should not be any shoulder movement during grand pliés, as this causes the back muscles to work unevenly, creating incorrect posture.

Use the back to stabilize the balance. Lower, middle, and upper back areas—all must be held, supported, not allowed to drop. Stretch front of hip joint so it feels flat; this helps keep the tail down.

Hips must stay slightly above the knees in all grand plié positions. Going down further causes a loss of control, and puts undesirable stress on the knee joints.

## For Battement Tendu Closing to Demi Plié

The legs work together, at the same time, (as in battement fondu.) As the leg moves out both legs straighten at the same time. When closing, both legs arrive at the demi plié at the same time. Timing is smooth. Don't hold the plié, and don't separate it from the rest of the movement.

## Details For Using the Feet in Battement Tendu

Feel a lengthening of the leg as it moves away. Hold hips level, and still. Move the foot about two inches out of 5th with the heel still on the floor.

Move the foot outward to the “demi pointe” position. Finish the movement with a full extension of the foot. Return the same way.

Do this every time the foot moves out of or into a closed position.

## For Battement Glissé (also known as Battement Degagé)

Don't take the foot too high—this is a preparation for petit allegro steps.

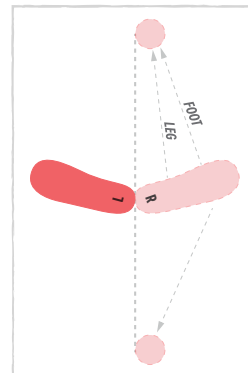
Brush to about 2” off the floor. Keep the supporting leg turned out, and its kneecap pulled up. Use the feet, use the floor.

When brushing to the back, think of moving the thigh back rather than the foot or lower leg. Derriere might have a very slight incline of the pelvis for some dancers. The shoulders compensate by moving slightly forward, but not facing down.

## Alignment of the Feet in Battement Tendu

### From 1st Position to 4th Position

The correct alignment when moving the foot out from 1st position, is to use the open 4th position, both front and back.



A more effective use of the turnout muscles is possible in open 4th than in a crossed 4th.

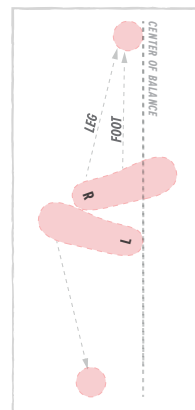
This makes it possible for the rond de jambe a terre to actually increase the ability to turn out, as it was originally intended to do.

All positions en l'air to devant or derriere are in an open 4th, with the leg directly front or back of its own hip joint.

### From 5th Position to 4th Position

Tendus from 5th: use the crossed 4th position.

The toes are inline with the supporting heel, but not crossed over any further. Once the leg goes en l'air, however, the leg should lift directly in front of its own hip joint. This puts it in the open 4th.





Legs off the floor should always be in the open 4th. It allows the turnout muscles to work more strongly, and gives a more open feel to the classic line.

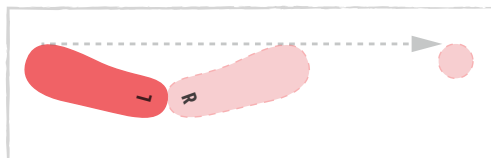
### **Battement Tendu to 2nd Position**

For battement tendu to 2nd position: The toes of the two feet are in a straight line, which will be somewhat in front of the dancer, and exactly perpendicular to the direction the dancer is facing.

Do not line up the extended toes with the supporting heel!

This does not allow the muscles to work correctly in second position, either a terre, or when the leg is off the floor.

The ability to turn out determines where this line for the toes in second position will be for each student.



### **For Rond de Jambe a Terre**

The shape is a letter D, using the open 4th position, and making a straight line through 1st position.

The path through first is the slower

part, the stabilizer of the movement. The dancer should feel as if the leg is still “underneath them” in first, while it circles. Keep hips in place. Use the feet.

To develop control in the air for allegro, practice the circular part of rond de jambe a terre just barely off the floor, using consistent turnout, and a strong, secure brush through 1st.

### **For Assemblé Soutenu**

Assemblé soutenu is a rond de jambe from and to 5th position. This is how it differs from rond de jambe a terre, which is based in 1st position. Shoulders and hips must stay level and square on the fondu—don’t drop the working hip.

Because this circular movement comes from 5th, the crossed 4ths are used for soutenus instead of the open 4ths as for rond de jambe a terre.

Toes are in the same line for 2nd position. Working heel is in line with supporting heel in 4th.

### **For Battement Fondu**

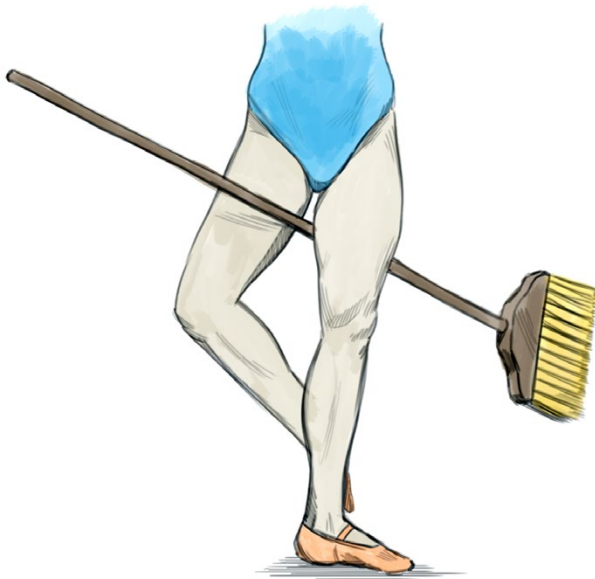
To improve placement, practice fondu without the extension, as simply a demi plié on one leg. This helps placement.

When extending derriere, think of moving the knee back and letting the foot follow. Battement fondu prepares for ballonnés.

### For Frappé & Petit Battement

Don't tense or constrict the ankle or knee joints—they must move freely in the correct pathways.

To keep the thigh from turning in during the exercise, imagine a broom handle holding the thigh out; it can't turn in.



### For Battement Retiré

Working leg draws a line up the supporting leg—stays in contact all the way up, and all the way down.

Keep hips absolutely level. Keep heel “in” when closing back—this helps maintain the turnout. Pull the body up on the closings—don't sink down.

### For Developpé

Devant: don't sit back, keep torso upright and tall.

A la Seconde: keep hips level; feel that the heel is slightly forward of the knee (this is a feeling, not a place).

Note: don't show the sole of the foot to the front, in 2nd. That is overturning, and is not correct technique (not correct use of muscles), according to most ballet authorities.

Derriere: go through the attitude position; don't forget to push the thigh back when moving out of the retiré.

### For Grand Battement

Use some pressure on the floor as the foot leaves 5th. This frees the leg to lift more easily!

Get the placement right first, then work on the height of the extended leg. Keep the back steady, supported.

Think about lengthening the back of the knee when extending the leg derriere.

### Understanding Extensions to the Back

The reason students so often bend the knee when extending a leg to the back:

1. The muscles needed to lift the leg to the back are the same ones that bend the knee!
2. The muscles that straighten the knee are the same ones that lift the leg to the front.

It takes concentration, and effort to

teach those muscles to cooperate, and lift a straight leg to the back. Thinking about stretching the backs of the knees seems to help.

### **For Pivots (Promenades)**

Turn by moving the heel and the inner thigh; the body is balanced above the supporting hip, with weight on the ball of the foot.

### **For Arabesque**

The leg is in the “open fourth” at the back—feel it with the back muscles. The leg is directly behind its own hip joint, and its own shoulder. Find and hold the correct position lying on the floor. Then try it standing up.

### **For Pirouettes**

Students learning or improving pirouettes must learn the exact placing of each part of the movement.

If more advanced students are having difficulty, go back to the beginning and retrain the muscles.

At first use the strong rise. That is, do a relevé straight up, with no displacement of the foot on the floor.

This method makes it easier to find correct placement and balance. (Research also shows that fewer injuries occur with this method.)

Boys should always use the strong rise for turns. Girls can use the relevé with a slight displacement of the supporting foot, if they can control it.

### **For Pirouettes en Dehors**

Think of the relevé devant as a “lifted 3rd”. Do a simple relevé devant, then do the turn with the same placement—this helps them find their balance.

Arms are in 1st. Move body forward into arms for the turn. Feel the body over the front (lifted) foot for the turn.

Don’t sit the plié at the end—press down into it and recover. Arms ending demi bras gives a nice finish.

### **For Pirouettes en Dedans**

Chasse en avant into the fondu. Move through the glissé position on the relevé. Lift under the seat muscles. If weight is securely over the supporting leg, the turn will be OK. Moving only one arm on the port de bras is easier to coordinate at first.

### **For Diagonal Turns**

Don’t overdo the traveling—rather try to keep the legs underneath the dancer. When worried about covering distance, they often lose placement and control of the turns.

Chaînés: On the first half turn, think of bringing the back hip around, and the back arm to 1st. On the 2nd half, spot, open arms to demi bras, bring the second hip and shoulder around.

### **Tips For Allegro**

Some tips from a professional male dancer:



- Use metatarsals in jumps.
- Turnout from hips.
- Maintain foot to leg alignment.
- Make full use of all parts of the feet.
- Use the smallest amount of force needed to produce the movement.
- Relax ankles to get a deeper plié.
- Use demi plié as a movement, not a position.

### Technical Pointers

- For the upper back: lay on stomach, and keep feet on the floor. Bring arms from 2nd to 5th, then lift upper body off floor. Have someone hold the feet down.
- The supporting leg stabilizes and controls movements. Lift off the supporting leg, stretch abdominals upward. Use adductors on closings.
- Maintain the natural spinal curves; these should be balanced for that person.
- For 2nd position extensions: find the exactly right place during the grand rond de jambe. Don't pitch shoulders back, especially when the leg is in 2nd en l'air.
- Resilient pliés are necessary for good allegro. Learn to relax the calves and use the shin muscles (anterior tibialis) when going down into a demi plié, and when landing from a jump. (This keeps the heels on the floor.)
- Grand battements should be the

same height in all three directions.

- Glissades—don't forget to stretch the second leg.
- Brisés—think of the underneath foot catching up to the front foot (brisé derriere).
- Entrechant Six de Volé—think of it as an assemblé and an entrechant quatre.
- Pas de Chat—show the two retirés in the air.
- Coupé Sauté is always jumped straight up.
- Jeté Battu beats under you, not out somewhere.
- Assemblés—height of the brush determines the height of the jump. Legs come together in the air before landing, even in petit assemblés.
- Analyze and perfect all steps early on. Limited but correct knowledge is a good beginning, even for teaching.
- For keeping weight forward in changements, hold a stick behind the back with elbows.
- To keep head from jerking back on jumps, hold hands behind head.
- Having the eye line raised slightly helps jumps to look higher.

### For Perfection

Do things in simple form to perfect them. Do movements in small pieces, then put the pieces together.

Do the step simply, by itself, not in enchainements, for a few classes. If needed, analyze the parts of the movement, and do these parts in isolation a few times, to make the dancer aware of the parts. Then put it together.

Give the muscles time to learn the new way of doing the movement. The more change you want, the more time it will take for the movement to become automatically better.

### For Artistry

Complete ballet placement must be learned first.

- Have a spiritual center; radiate outward.
- Explode upwards, lower gently.
- Rest the eyes somewhere for adage—look at something!
- There is artistic quality in the use of head and eyes—use them!

### For Coordination

Coordination arises from “movement planning”. That is, the dancer plans the movement in his or her mind, then teaches it to his or her muscles.

The teacher is a professional guide, one who can help the student to know what they need to learn to be a fine dancer. But the student must do the actual teaching of their muscles. This

begins with conscious, deliberate, movement planning.

### For All Ballet Work . . .

*Think* the result you want;  
*Concentrate*, or it won't happen.

### A Word To Students About Practice

Practice is for the muscles to become able to do a movement better—it is not for the brain, and it is not intended to entertain the dancer!

Practice simple things to make them perfect. This helps the more advanced steps to improve.

The easier movements are the foundation upon which the more advanced movements are created. If the advanced work is to be strong, it must have a strong foundation.

If you love to dance, teach yourself to love every part of it, even the practicing!



# Thank you

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