

Classical Ballet 4



Classwork & Teaching Suggestions
for the Ballet Teacher of Advanced Students

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Registered Teacher, **Royal Academy of Dance**

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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 4

Artistry & Technique

All About Feet

Correct Ballet involves a precise, complete, use of the feet. Stretch feet for jumps, stretch feet for pointe work.

Shapes the foot can make:

1. A terre, flat, standing on it.
2. Relaxed, i.e. picked up off the floor, maintaining the same shape as in #1; as for original shape for frappé (relaxed, same as a terre just picked up).
3. Lifted or extended on the floor and flexed, pulled upward at the ankle, and kept in alignment with the knee (as in demi plié).
4. Picked up or extended on the floor and stretched or arched with toes pointed as in petit retiré (stretched foot).
5. Picked up or extended on the floor and arched with toes bent upward as in demi pointe; arched with toes flexed.
6. Relaxed point at the ankle, as for petit battements, not wrapped.

(A wrapped foot is by definition out of alignment with both ankle and knee, and can therefore contribute to injury. That is why it is not included here as one of the shapes the foot can make for ballet.)

“Your first and most important job as a dancer is to have correct alignment of your feet at the ankle joint. All of the time!”

Feet must learn to relax in order to maintain this correct alignment during movement! Feet must learn to relax if they are to learn correct use of muscles, and to maintain proper centering of the dancer's weight (balance).

About Barre Work

Avoid tension at the barre:

Pull body up, not in.

Pull up the stomach muscles.

Pull up the backs of knees, and legs

Pull up the head.

Pull up a bit more when closing the feet to fifth, more than on the extensions.

Pliés

For artistry. Hold backs steady, fill the music with continuous movement, use correct muscles.

1-4	Plié in 1st.
5-8	Plié in 2nd.
1-4	Plié in 5th.
5-8	Rise with port de bras to 5th, balance, lower on ct 8, arms 2nd.
1-4	Plié in 4th.
5-8	Rise with port de bras to arabesque, lift leg, balance.

Optional ending: fondu, pas de bourrée to other side and continue.

Battement Tendu

For being aware of the turnout from the hip socket. Face barre, from 1st, 3rd, or 5th:

1	Extend to tendu devant.
2-3	Turn leg in, turn leg out.
4	Close.
5-6	Tendu devant, carry to 2nd.
7	Feel equal turnout in both legs.
8	Close 1st or derriere.
1-8	Repeat with other leg
1-16	Repeat derriere, closing front.

Battement Tendu for Artistry

&1	Battement tendu devant.
&2	Tendu devant with demi plié arm 1st.
&3	Straighten, rise arm 2nd.
&4	Lower, arm bras bas.
5-8	Repeat to the back, arm arabesque.
9-16	4 tendus 2nd, demi plié, straight, rise, detourné to other side.

Battement Glissé

For Centering Weight: Keep hips perfectly square and lifted, posture pulled up, knees firm. When going derriere think of moving the thigh back.

Do 2 each way closing with demi plié.
Increase speed as ability improves.

Rond de Jambe a Terre in 5 Points

Using 5 points of the circle encourages a stretched circle at all parts of the rond de jambe. This helps to make adage movements smoother, especially grand rond de jambe en l'air. Do 4 each direction.

1	Tendu devant.
2	Rond to the front diagonal.
3-4	Rond to 2nd, hold.
5	Rond to the back diagonal.
6	Rond to derriere.
7-8	Close 1st, hold.

Rond de Jambe Variation

To sense the hip socket and turnout; to be aware of what is happening. No hip movement—none. Face barre, use alternate legs.

1	Retiré.
2-5	Turn knee in, out, in, out.
6	Lower to 1st with weight equal.
7-8	Dégagé derriere, hold.
1-3	3 tiny Russian rond de jambe jetés (attitude devant, rond to attitude in 2nd, rond & straighten to dégagé derriere).
4	Brush to degage devant.
5-8	Reverse Russian rond de jambes.
1-8	Repeat all.

Battement Soutenu in 5 points

Intro:	Prepare arm to 2nd.
1	Fondu and extend leg devant.
2	Rond to front diagonal in fondu.
3	Rond to 2nd, in fondu.
4	Rond to back diagonal in fondu.
5	To derriere, still in fondu.
6	Straighten and close derriere.
&7-8	Hold, while arm moves bras bas, 1st, 2nd.
1-8	Repeat in reverse.

Battement Frappé

To challenge memory, placement, and arm coordination.

1-4	Four frappé devant with R foot, & port de bras to 2nd.
&	Pivot to face the barre.
5-8	Four frappé second with R, L arm port de bras to 5th.
&	Pivot to face the second side.
1-4	Four frappé derriere R, L arm lowering to arabesque.
&	Coupe under.
5-8	Frappé L en croix, (one each way), arm lowering to bras bas.
Repeat all starting on second side.	

Rond de Jambe en L'Air

For the sartorius muscle. This muscle turns the leg out from the hip joint, and lifts the turned out leg to the front and to the side.

&a1	Lift 2nd, single en dehors.
2	Close derriere.
&a3	Lift 2nd, single en dedans.
4	Close devant.
&a5,6,7	Lift 2nd, 3 doubles en dehors, rising on count 7.
8	Lower & close derriere.
1-8	Reverse.

II. Center Artistry

Have a spiritual center; radiate outward. Explode upwards, lower gently. Rest the eyes somewhere for adage—look at something! Have quality and expression in the use of head and eyes. It is needed to make the work come alive.

The dancer is
a total picture.
We don't dance
in pieces! Fill
your space, don't
just stand there!
Love to dance!
Communicate
your love of dance.
Stand and look
beautiful.



Epaulement Note: For ballotté of adage, epaulement is away from extended leg.

For Arabesque Line: Arabesque line never crosses legs, arms, or eyes. Extend exactly forward & back only.

Turning Steps

For Awareness of the Use of Backs

Discuss the 3 areas of the back—all must be held in place for turning steps (and for most ballet work).

a. For Upper Back—Lay on Stomach

1-2 Bring arms 2nd to 5th.

3-4 Lift, hold.

5-6 Lower to floor.

7-8 Bring arms down to sides.

b. For Lower Back—Lay on Back

1-2 Bring knees up.

3-4 With arms, hold one close to chest and straighten other leg.

5-6 Straighten both legs & lower to floor.

7-8 Rest.

c. For awareness of back in port de bras, lay on back, do port de bras

d. Do pirouette position lying on back, to feel the alignment.

To Help The Balance in Pirouettes

a. Relevé to pirouette position, fondu, as if ending the pirouette. Lower & straighten to 5th derriere and repeat with other leg.

b. Center the weight accurately on the preparatory tendu and keep it there for the turn.

Soutenu Turn

Move arms through a low 1st rather than bras bas. This helps to keep the back from arching.

Chaînés

a. Helps to get the turns in a straight line, and to establish the spotting more accurately on the second half turn. For a challenge, vary the arm positions.

Practice 1/2 chaîné turns:

1 Step R to 2nd.

2 Half turn R.

3-4 Lower in 1st.

5-8 Repeat with L to finish the turn.

- b. Do 8 regular chaînés, finishing the series in 5th. After ending in 5th, run to a position at center back. Each dancer adds a pose to the picture as they arrive.

Allegro

Temps Levé

To get up into the air: Use pressure from the thigh, stretch underneath the leg.

Echappé Sauté For Beats

Echappe sautes, holding position on the way up; builds control for batterie.

Coupé Sauté Practice

For stretching feet quickly!

From L lifted derriere: under, over, under, over, under, over, under, temps levé passé; repeat immediately starting with other leg.

Jeté Ordinaire Derriere

Use thighs to get up in the air. Think about the lifted foot—where is it? Place it, pointed, on the back of the other calf, don't let it just dangle. This is for arm control:

1-8 8 jeté ordinaire, arms 3rd (change on each one).

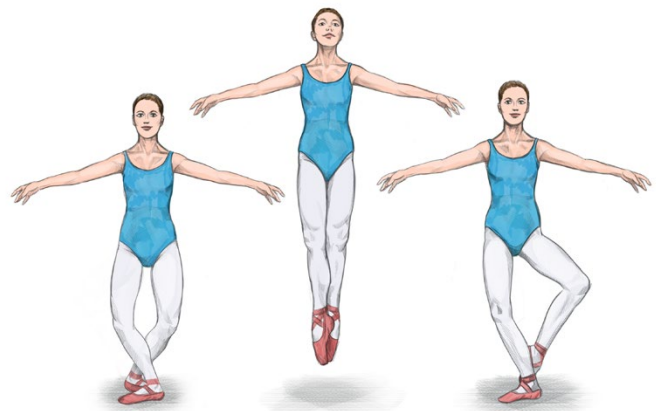
9-12 4 with arms demi bras (open 1st, this is harder than it sounds).

13-15 3, arms bras bas, 1st, 5th.

16 Assemblé over, arms end 2nd.

Also practice devants and assemblé unders.

Sissonnes



All sissonnes go up like a soubresaut.

"All of you are to go home and repeat everything we do in class. Otherwise the value will be lost."

Sitting on hips and thighs will overdevelop the muscles. They need to be stretched up, and lengthened, to develop a smooth, long line.

Backs of Knees

Use them to hold standing leg up. Use them to fully extend legs on relevés and rises. Use them to fully extend arabesques

Technical Pointers

- Use adductors on closings.
- Work on 2nd position extensions, find it during the grand rond de jambes.
- Have quality in the use of head and eyes—it is needed—use them!
- Lift off the supporting leg (thigh) keep groin flat, stretch front thigh ligament.
- Have natural spinal curves, should be balanced in the person.
- Don't pitch shoulders back, especially a la seconde en l'air.
- Develop resilient pliés for allegro.

Head Exercises

- a. Stretch forward (down), erect, back, erect.
- b. Incline left, erect, incline right, erect.
- c. Spot right, spot left.
- d. Single & double shoulder rolls—both ways.

Battements Tendus

To relax feet.

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 1- | Parallel, stretch foot gently forward. |
| 2- | Lift off floor. |
| 3-4 | 2 ankle circles en dedans. |
| 5-6 | 2 ankle circles en dehors. |
| 7- | Lower to tendu. |
| 8- | Close. |
| 1-2 | Demi plié. |

3-4 Straighten.

5-6 Rise

7-8 Lower, turn out to 1st.

1- Stretch foot forward to demi pointe.

2- Stretch toes to tendu.

3- Relax toes to demi pointe.

4- Close foot, relaxing it.

Do all en croix. Turn and repeat with other leg. Face barre & repeat to back, both legs.

What Will Correct “Popping Heels”?

Here are three exercises to try, that should help, and won't hurt those who don't need it: Heels pop up off the floor when landing from jumps because of incorrect muscle use. The calf muscles are contracting when it should be the shin muscles that contract in a demi plié.

Strengthening the shin muscles should help:

- a. Frappés with a flexed foot, (not wrapped) will help build a better balance of strength in the lower leg muscles. The frappé was originally done this way to teach, practice and strengthen muscles in the way that the leg and foot should work in a sauté.
- b. Battement tendu with ankle movement:

1. Extend to the tendu position.
 2. Stay, flex the ankle, pulling the toes directly towards the knee.
 3. Stretch to the tendu position again.
 4. Close the battement tendu.
- c. Demi pliés with toe lifts. Helps train the shin muscle to do its job when landing from jumps. In first position:

1-2 Demi plié and stay down.

3 Lift toes slightly off the floor.

4 Lower toes to floor.

5-6 Lift toes, lower toes.

7-8 Straighten knees, keep toes as relaxed as possible.

Do this four times at the end of the barre. This forces the calf muscles to relax, and the shin muscles to work. This is what is supposed to happen when landing from a jump.

To check for improvement: Do one sauté in first position, hold the demi plié and check if the heels are on the floor, and toes relaxed, not clenched. Straighten knees. Repeat.

Warming Up and Cooling Down

Why Warmup?

There is a pattern of traditional ballet exercises done at the barre. Most teachers these days are also giving some “pre-barre warmup exercises” to their students, as a result of recent studies in the area of sports and dance.

Most students do not enter the ballet classroom sufficiently warmed up to do the traditional ballet barre. They need some gentle, appropriate warmup movements first.

Grand pliés are the only exercise that physical therapists and orthopedics have specifically said needs to not be done until the dancer is well warmed up. Some ballet schools have attempted to solve the problem by putting a different barre exercise first, and saving the grand pliés until later.

However, it is not just the pliés, but the entire technique of ballet for which the student needs to be warmed up in order to safely perform at their best.

Rearranging the barre exercises will not solve the problem.

The content of the pre barre warmup varies. Most include flexing and extending the ankle joint, demi pliés with the feet parallel, and some relaxing, non stressful bending of the torso. Some are having their students do some ballet movements while lying on the floor.

Some are using other forms of movement such as Yoga or Pilates for the warmups.

I wonder if the pre barre warmups

have simply been “lost” in the last half century? When I was a student in the 50’s, we always spent a few minutes doing a series of warmup exercises before starting the traditional ballet barre.

After the warmup, the next exercise was composed of demi pliés, battements tendus, rises, and port de bras. Then and only then, several minutes into the class, did we do the grand plié exercise.

With the knowledge of muscles and joints that is now available, it becomes obvious that appropriate warming up is needed for all physical activities.

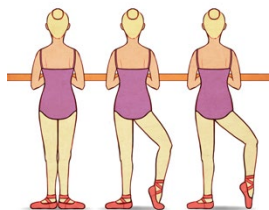
The Purpose of Warmups

1. Warming up increases circulation gradually, putting less stress on the heart and blood vessels.
2. A gentle use of the muscles—both extending and contracting—prepares the nerves and muscles for the ballet barre.
3. Warmups can wake up the special muscle groups used in classical ballet.
4. Warmups can help the body and mind to work as a single unit, a team.
5. Things to avoid during warmups:
 - a. Force
 - b. Stress
 - c. Limitation

Teachers will need to adjust the length, number, and content of warmup exercises to fit the needs and abilities of their students. Explain the purpose of warming up to your students.

Warm Up and Cool Down

From 1st position, for feet



- 1- Lift the heel and arch the foot, to demi pointe position.
- 2- Lift foot to the full pointe position.
- 3- Lower foot to demi pointe position.
- 4- Lower the foot to 1st position.
- 5- Move the foot smoothly through the demi pointe position to full pointe.
- 6- Roll smoothly down through demi pointe to 1st position.
- 7- Move the foot smoothly through the demi pointe position to full pointe.
- 8- Roll smoothly down through demi pointe to 1st position.
- 1-8 Repeat with the other foot.
- 1-16 Repeat both sides.

To Relax Shoulders

- 1 Roll R shoulder, & relax it down (forward, up, back, down).
- 2 Roll L shoulder.
- 3-4 Roll both shoulders, twice.
- 5-6 Lift both shoulders, drop them, relaxed.
- 7-8 Lift both shoulders, drop them, relaxed.
- 9-16 Repeat the shoulder exercise.

From 5th Position (5/4 music, or 6/4 and hold count 6)

- 1- Extend foot and leg to the battement tendu 2nd position.
- 2- Flex foot at the ankle, bringing foot upward, holding leg in same place.
- 3- Extend the arch to a demi pointe position off the floor, (toes still bent upward).
- 4- Extend toes to the tendu 2nd position.
- 5- Close to 5th back.
- (6-) (Hold.)
- 1-5 (1-6) Repeat with other foot.
- 1-10 (1-12) Repeat both sides.

Warming Up the Leg Muscles

Feet in parallel position, facing barre.

1-2	Demi pli� & straighten.
3-	Rise to demi pointe, straight knees.
4-	Lower heels to 1st.
5-6	Turn legs out to 1st, then in to parallel position.
7-8	Repeat counts 5-6.
1-4	Demi pli� & straighten; rise, lower.
5-6	Turn out to 1st, turn in to parallel.
7-8	Turn out to 1st and stay.
1-4	Tendu R to 2nd, turn leg in, turn leg out, close to 1st.
5-8	Repeat with L foot.
1-16	Repeat all.

Foot Circles From 1st

1	Degage devant.
2-3	Hold leg still and circle the foot 2x.
4	Close to 1st.
5-8	Repeat doing circles the other way.
1-8	Repeat with other foot.

Warmup Without the Barre

(Breathing directions are optional—don't use if it is uncomfortable for the student.)

1-2	Head lowers, looks down, then straight.
3-4	Head raises, looks up, then straight.
5-6	Head turns, looking R, then straight.
7-8	Head turns, looking L, then straight.
1-4	Relax body forward, arms & head relaxed, hanging freely.

5-8	Roll up from lower back, to standing position, head coming up last.
1-2	Arms to demi 2nd, breathing in, to bras bas, breathing out.
3-4	Arms to 1st, to 5th, breathing in.
5-6	Arms to bras bas, breathing out.
7-8	Arms demi 2nd, breathing in, to bras bas, breathing out.
1-4	Reverse port de bras up through 2nd, to 5th, breathing in.
5-8	Lower through 1st to bras bas, breathing out.

Pre-Barre Warmup

Face barre in 1st position.

1-4	One slow demi pli��, consciously relaxing the calf muscles.
5-8	One slow rise and lower, increasing the turnout a bit on lowering.
9-12	One slow, controlled cambr�� back turning head to side to avoid stressing neck muscles.
13-16	Recover.

For Turnout and Weight Placement

Facing the barre, feet parallel.

1	Rise, arms to 1st.
2	Leave weight where it is and lower heels, hands to barre if needed.
3	Turn out R foot.
4	Turn out L foot the same amount.
5	Rise in 1st position.
6	Bring arms to 1st position.
7	Lower heels, return hands to barre.
8	Bring feet parallel, ready to repeat.

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