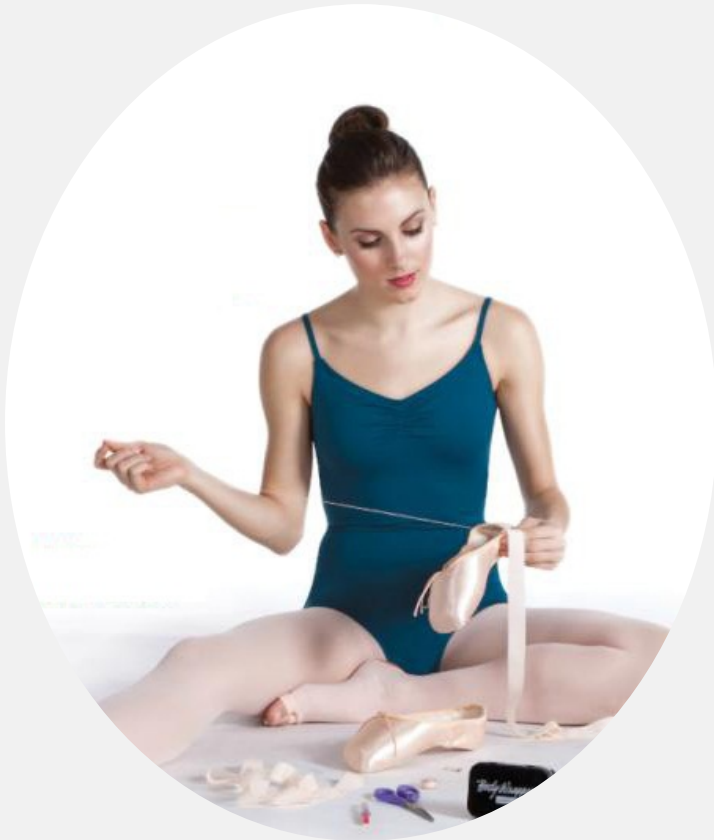


NEW POINTE SHOES AND FOOT CARE

Tips and tricks on caring for your shoes and your feet



- How to sew ribbons and elastics on pointe shoes
- How to take care of your feet inside your pointe shoes
- How to take care of your new pointe shoes
- Pointe Shoe FAQ

Thank you for choosing The Shoe Room for your pointe shoe fitting!

We pride ourselves on our knowledge of pointe shoe fittings. All of our pointe shoe fitters undergo an apprenticeship for a minimum of 6 months consisting of in depth training on our products and the dancer's shoe requirements. Pointe shoe fittings are conducted one on one with our highly trained fitters to ensure we find the perfect shoe for each dancer. Wearing the right pointe shoes can change a dancer's career and make their pointe work more enjoyable. We are thrilled that we get to share this experience with you so enjoy every moment!

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HOW POINTE SHOES ARE MADE

Cutting

First, several layers of satin and canvas are cut at once on a large cutting press. These cut out fabric pieces are now the vamp and quarter sections of the pointe shoe known as the uppers. Large sheets of fibreboard and leather are cut using a heavy press and cookie cutter shaped blades. These cut out shapes are now the insole and the outer sole. A large apparatus is used to cut a channel into the outside edges of the leather outer soles. This channel will become the stitching line later in the assembling process.

Lasting

A leather outer sole is stamped with the appropriate size and width of the shoe and nailed onto a foot form called a last. Each size, width and style of shoe has its own unique last which determines the contours of the shoe.

Once sewn and assemble the satin uppers are turned inside out and stretched onto the last. Here an employee uses a little metal pincer to make the pleating on the bottom of the shoe, under the platform. Each pleat has to be as flat and as symmetrical as the next. The shoes are then taken to a large stitch machine. The uppers are stitched to the sole with waxed tread in the precut channels.

Shaping the block and the platform

The pointe shoe can now be removed from the last and turned right side out ready for the block to be added. The block is formed with triangle pieces of burlap that are folded into the contour of the pointe shoe. The burlap is molded into shape using a thick glue paste. The base components of the paste are flour and water but all manufacturers have their own secret ingredients to make the block both firm and flexible.

The shoe is then stretched onto the last right side out. The maker rubs the outside of the pointe shoe, with the aid of smooth-edge hammer, to spread the paste out evenly and to get rid of any bumps or uneven edges and to form the pointe shoe to the shape of the last. The same hammer helps in the shaping and flattening of the platform. The employee balances the shoe on pointe to check the stability and evenness of the platform several times to ensure a consistent surface.

Drying

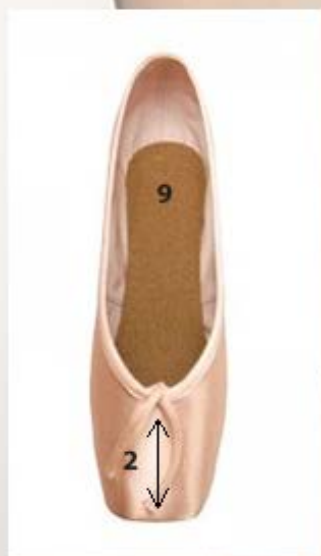
The shoes are put on a rack with several other pairs and placed in a large hot air oven to bake overnight. The shoes come in and out of the oven for several days before being completely dry.

Final Touches

The fibreboard insoles are added. They are glued in using the same paste that was used to make the block. A thin suede or cotton liner is glued over the insole for comfort. The shoe is now ready for the final stitching. The binding, which holds a cotton drawstring, is machine stitched around the edges of the shoe. After a final quality control inspection, the shoes are ready for shipping.

ANATOMY OF A POINTE SHOE

- 1 BLOCK/BOX
- 2 VAMP
- 3 PLATFORM
- 4 SIDE SEAM
- 5 BINDING
- 6 WINGS
- 7 OUTER SOLE
- 8 SIDE QUARTER
- 9 INSOLE/SHANK
- 10 PROFILE/CROWN



POINTE SHOE FAQ

Why do I need an appointment for a pointe shoe fitting at The Shoe Room?

To ensure pointe shoes fit correctly takes time and care. Ill-fitting shoes can be very uncomfortable and may cause injury. A fitting can take 20 to 30 minutes and is performed by experienced Pointe Shoe Fitters and Footwear Specialists. It is necessary to phone ahead to reserve a time. Weekend appointments need to be booked at least two to three weeks in advance of the day desired.

How should a new pointe shoe feel?

Your new pointe shoes should feel snug and you should feel some pressure at the end of the shoe. They should not feel as roomy and comfortable as regular street shoes. When standing flat or in a demi-plie position the big toe should be pressing against the end of the shoe but should not be curled or pushed back in any way. You should also be able to wiggle your toes slightly. When the shoe fits properly, it gives gentle support but does not prop up the foot. It is normal for the material at the heel to “bag” a little bit when the foot is en pointe.

Why can't I buy pointe shoes a little bit bigger so that I can grow into them?

Pointe shoes must fit very closely to the shape of your foot. It is dangerous to wear a pointe shoe that is too big and that has room for growth. Shoes that are too big do not provide the necessary support for the foot and may cause calluses, bruises to joints, and even injuries to ankles and toe-joints by letting the foot move about inside the shoe.

How do I know when it is time for a new pair?

During a prolonged period of wear the shoe will inevitably begin to crumble. While this should not occur too quickly, it is nevertheless a part of the process of wearing pointe shoes - especially those that are made of natural materials. These shoes mold to the foot quickly and break down when they are moist. Once you feel the shoe is no longer providing the necessary support (you are going too far over en pointe and you can feel the ground as though you were not wearing any shoes) then it is time to purchase a new pair. However for beginners, it is normal to grow out of a shoe before it wears out.

FOOT CARE TIPS

Some dancers find that after wearing their shoes for a prolonged period of time their toes become sore and are in need of some extra cushioning and/or protection

Foot and Toe Padding

There are various types of foot pads available, remember the aim is to relieve pressure, not to fill up the block of the shoe. For this reason try to avoid padding that is too thick or bulky. Those that are made from foam or silicone gel will not allow the dancer to feel the floor through her shoes. Instead, we recommend a small amount of lamb's wool or a foot pad made of a very thin layer of fabric-covered gel. White cotton medical tape and toe pads are recommended to protect individual toes as well.

For dancers with bunions or a predisposition to bunions a gel toe spacer or separator is recommended to keep the alignment of the toe straight. This treatment addresses the symptoms of the bunion and aids in prevention but does not correct the actual deformity. A bunion is an enlargement of bone or tissue around the joint at the base of the big toe metatarsophalangeal joint.

Foot Care Tips

Nail Care

- Be sure to trim your toenails regularly, file straight across and do not file into the corners of your nails.
- Use a proper filing instrument rather than scissors or clippers. A file allows you to gently and gradually reach desired length.
- File short enough that you are able to press on the end of your toes with your finger and not feel the nails. Be careful not to file them so short it causes soreness or inflammation.

Skin care

- When cleaning your feet remove only the top layer of hard, callused rough skin. A certain amount of hard skin is necessary to create a protective layer which aids in preventing abrasions and blisters.
- Seek professional help to remove excessive callus and corns.
- Moisturize regularly.
- Soak in Epsom salts to soften skin, relax muscles and reduce swelling.
- Keep feet clean and dry to avoid bacteria and/or fungus.

CARING FOR YOUR POINTE SHOES

- Most pointe shoes are made from natural materials and are designed to mould to your foot as you sweat. Be sure to place them where they can dry naturally and thoroughly as soon as you have finished wearing them. Do not leave them inside your dance bag as they will not dry properly and do not place them in plastic bags as this tends to keep the moisture inside the shoes.
- Keep your pointe shoes away from household pets. Animals are attracted to the odor of the shoes glue paste.
- Pointe shoes cannot be washed by hand or in a washing machine. If you require “new” looking pointe shoe pancake foundation make up or camomile lotion can be applied to the outside of the shoes. Note that they will now have a matte finish.
- The life of a pointe shoe is between 10 to 20 hours depending on the style of shoe and how they are worn. If you are dancing on pointe more than 2-3 hours per week it is recommended that you own at least two pairs of pointe shoe at all times. They should not be worn more than 2 consecutive hours and you should alternate pairs of shoe regularly to allow them to dry out thoroughly.
- To prolong the life of your shoes a thin coats of shellac or pointe shoe hardener (Jet Glue) can be applied to the inside of the block and to the insole to resist any further absorption of moisture. This should be done only when your shoes are dry and “broken in” to your satisfaction.
- Be sure to not to wear your pointe shoes when they are “dead” or ill fitting. This can cause bruising to the toe nails, abrasions and in some cases serious injury. If you are concerned with the fit of your pointe shoe speak to your teacher right away.

BREAKING IN YOUR POINTE SHOES

It is important to listen to your teacher's advice when breaking in new pointe shoes, but here are a few recommendations that you can follow:

- New pointe shoes are not shaped to a right or left foot. This happens gradually as you wear the shoes. It is helpful to label the shoes (right and left) and wear them on the same feet each time. After several classes, you will be able to see which shoe belongs on which foot.
- New shoes should be “broken in” very carefully. Do not be tempted to copy professional dancers who only need to make the shoe last one performance, e.g. slamming it against a brick wall, crushing the block in a door, almost bending the arch in half. Any of these techniques will shorten the life of the shoe and could prove dangerous to the dancer. Do not wear your pointe shoes at home before your teacher has seen them. If our instructor has any concerns, the shoes can only be returned in “mint” condition.
- We recommend that you “break – in” your new shoes using some of the following procedures:
 - To identify where your natural arch “breaks” in the shoe, try doing some tendus to the side, leaning heavily into the foot en pointe. After several repeats of this, remove the pointe shoe and following the shape your arch has made, gently mould the shoe with your hands. Repeat this on both sides.
 - The block can be softened slightly by doing rises through the foot onto demi-pointe then continuing to full pointe while holding onto the barre. Repeat this exercise several times.
 - Heat and perspiration from the foot will continue to mould the shoe as you dance.
- If you feel pressure from one part of the block, you can apply small amounts of water or rubbing alcohol on that area of the shoe to soften it.

HOW TO MAKE SOFT BLOCKS

Soft Blocks (also known as demi-pointes, soft pointe shoes, deshanks, and pre-pointes) are recommended by many teachers as training tools to assist dancers in the transition from ballet slippers to pointe shoes. A dancer's centre of balance will change and traction on the floor will feel different with the change in sole and shape of shoe. It is easiest to use an old pair of pointe shoes for this process.

You will need: a pair of old pointe shoes, a hammer, possibly a pair of pliers, a rag cloth or towel, and white glue.

Step 1: Remove Sock Liner

The first step to making your old pointe shoes into Soft Blocks is to remove the inner liner. The cloth sock is glued to the insole of the shoe, and with a strong tug should be easy to remove. Set them aside. You will want to put them back in at the end of the process.

Step 2: Remove Insole

Next, remove the insole (sometimes referred to as the shank). Be careful, there will be one or two small tacks or staples holding the insole in place. Depending on what style of shoe you wear, the tacks will be found at the end of the heel, at the midway point and/or closer to the toe. You may need the assistance of the back of a hammer or a pair of pliers to remove the tacks.

Step 3: Hammer Blocking

(Please note: adult supervision is recommended)

After discarding the insole, shake any glue that has come out into the garbage. Now cover your pointe shoe with a cloth, towel, or plastic bag to protect it from any scuff marks or dirt. Hammer the block of the shoe until it feels soft, and is easily manipulated. Be careful that the shoe does not lose its shape completely. For most exams Soft Blocks must still look like a pointe shoe. In order for the shoe to still appear to be a pointe shoe leave the platform in place. After you have hammered the block, empty the loose glue into a garbage can. It is best if the lining is opened so that the excess glue may fall out. If the canvas lining was pulled up when the insole was removed, this will be very easy to do. Also, any hard pieces can then be removed with your hands.

Step 4: Replace Sock Liner and Voila!

After you have softened the block to your preferred feeling, put the sock liner back inside the shoe. Try moving in the shoes, see if there are any adjustments that need to be made. Then use some white glue to replace the sock liners permanently. Once they are dry, you are ready to go!

HOW TO SEW RIBBONS

Determining Ribbon Placement

To check exact positioning, fold the heel down towards the toe. Draw a line with a pencil to mark the angle you have created from the back seam toward your thumb. This line is the angle to which you will sew and where the back edge for the ribbon is.



Sewing the Ribbon

It is important to remember the ribbons are attached to secure the whole heel of the shoe against the foot and not just the sides of the shoe. Therefore ribbons should be stitched from low down inside the shoe, taking care to attach them to the lining only - do not sew through the satin, and avoid catching the drawstring. Pinning the ribbon in place while you sew is helpful. The whole ribbon should now be angled slightly diagonally forward for comfort and support as the ankle flexes. As you get more experienced in sewing ribbons, you may want to adjust the position slightly depending on how your arch breaks.



HOW TO SEW ELASTICS

Sew the Elastics

Most teachers prefer that beginners do not sew elastics on the heel of their shoes until they determine if it is really necessary. If the elastic is sewn on too tightly there is a chance the soft tissue around the ankle could be harmed.

If you do need elastics it is better to choose one that is about $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide. The elastic can be sewn on either the inside or outside of the shoe depending on comfort and teacher preference.

They should be sewn a centimetre away from the back-seam and should be angled slightly away from the seam. It is beneficial to sew one side first and carefully measure the length required to hold the heel of the shoe firmly to the foot without too much tension.



NOW YOU'RE READY TO DANCE!



NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Please feel free to contact our staff with any questions you may have.

CONTACT US

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