

This Month's Focus: Feet

It can be helpful to have students remove their shoes while performing these exercises. This can allow you to see that they are using all of their feet correctly, including their toes.

1. Foot Exercise #1. Have students sit tall with their legs stretched straight in front of them and their feet flexed. They'll move their feet through demi pointe, pointe, demi pointe, flex. Repeat for a total of 8 times.

As your students do this exercise, go around the room and make sure they are each pointing fully through their ankles (and not just with their toes). Make sure they are not sickling either.

2. Foot Exercise #2. Have students sit tall with their legs stretched straight in front of them and their feet flexed. They'll move their feet through demi pointe, pointe, demi pointe, pointe, demi pointe, pointe, demi pointe. Circle the ankles four times en dehors. Repeat the entire set, circling en dedans. Repeat both sets again.

As students perform the pointe-demi pointe-pointe-demi pointe part, they should only be moving their toes. They should also be keeping the toes long and not curling them as they point them.

3. Foot Exercise #3. Using a small exercise ball, have students point their foot with their arch and toes long over the ball. Have students do 8 reps of alternating between pointe and demi pointe. Repeat with the other foot.

This exercise helps students keep their toes long when pointing them.

4. Shaping the Foot. Using a small exercise ball, have students sit with their legs stretched straight in front of them, turned out. The outside of one ankle rests on the ball. Students should point their toes and reach them down toward the floor (in a "winged" shape). Relax. Do a total of 8 reps with either 4 or 8 counts for each point then relax. Repeat with the other foot.

This exercise helps with sickling.

5. Rises for Foot and Ankle Strength. Students should stand in parallel with a small exercise ball between their ankles. Slowly rise and lower for a set of 8 reps. Repeat another set, adding a demi plié on rise while keeping the ankles in place (like you would in pointe hops). Repeat another set, allowing the ankles to push forward over the toes in the demi plié on rise.

This exercise may be done at the barre or center. It helps to strengthen the feet and ankles. It can help to reduce wobbly ankles.