

When does my daughter need a new pair of pointe shoes?

Because they fit so precisely and provide such important support, pointe shoes must be replaced more frequently than street shoes. Your daughter needs a new pair when:

- Her feet grow so that the shoes are uncomfortably tight.
- Her foot shape changes so that she is no longer supported properly and comfortably.
- Technical development changes her needs in the shape or shank strength of the shoes.
- The shoes begin to lose their supportive qualities.

The feet and other parts of the body can be damaged when a dancer wears shoes that are too tight, no longer match the shape of her feet, or no longer provide proper support. Signs of worn-out shoes include lack of support, or squashy softening, in the toe box or platform and over-flexing in the shank. Appearances can be deceiving; shoes might look almost new but be structurally worn out, or appear dirty and worn but still be fully functional. Your daughter's teacher or fitter can help determine if they are still wearable.

With only a short time on pointe each week, many beginners can wear a pair of shoes until they are outgrown, and they may need only a pair or two in the first year. At the opposite extreme, many professionals wear each pair only once! Pre-professional students typically need one or two pairs per month, so parents of serious dancers should be prepared for frequent replacement.

How long do they last? Is it possible to make them last longer?

You can usually expect about 12-15 hours of wear from a pair of pointe shoes. To get the most out of that lifespan, follow some basic care principles. Because they are made of natural materials, most pointe shoes break down when wet. Encourage your daughter to use a mesh bag outside her dance bag to carry her shoes after class. (Some dance bags come with external mesh bags for this purpose.) She should also remove toe pads immediately after use and store them separately from her shoes. Shoes must never be squashed, and they should be set out to air-dry thoroughly between classes, ideally for at least 24 hours. When dancers wear pointe shoes daily, they often alternate pairs so that each pair has time to dry completely before being worn again.

Should my daughter wear her pointe shoes at home?

When they are beginners, dancers should not go on pointe except under the teacher's supervision. They are just starting to build the strength and skills necessary for safe pointe work. They also need a specialized dance floor that provides a smooth surface with the right amount of traction. Of course, your daughter will be excited to show off her new shoes to friends and family! But, unless her teacher instructs her to practice at home, discourage her from using the shoes outside of class during the first year on pointe.