

Where should we buy pointe shoes?

Pointe shoes should be purchased only after a professional, personal fitting that takes into account the dancer's individual anatomy, strength and technique. Professional fittings are offered by many specialized dance stores; you might ask your daughter's teacher or other teachers and dancers for recommendations. If you're unsure of what a store offers, consider observing fittings there before making an appointment. This *Guide* can help you evaluate what you see. Fitters vary in their styles and particular methods, but the basics of a professional fitting explained here should be in place.

What should we expect at the first fitting?

Allow up to an hour for the first pointe fitting and purchase. Many stores offer appointments, especially for the first fitting, to provide the necessary time and attention. The fitter will probably start by looking at your daughter's bare feet in order to choose a **pointe model** to match her foot shape. Your daughter may be asked to **plié** and rise to demi-pointe to demonstrate her technique and the strength and development of her feet.

Then, the fitter will choose a model and size to try. In some cases, this "first try" shoe will fit the dancer. More frequently, it is just a starting point. In each pair of shoes she tries, your daughter will be asked to place her feet in various positions, on pointe and **on flat**, to show how the shoes fit and work with her feet. She will also be asked questions about how the shoes feel, and her answers are very important. It takes patience to find just the right pair, but it is worth the effort because of the dangers and discomforts associated with an imperfect fit.

Words to Know

on pointe Standing and dancing on the tips of the toes; also called en pointe ("ahn pwent").

pre-pointe Special exercises and guidance that target the technique and strength needed for pointe work; may be offered within ballet class or as a separate class, using ballet slippers or demi-pointe shoes (see page 19).

core strength Muscular strength throughout the torso, including the abdomen, back and pelvis.

pulling up Coordinated usage of muscles throughout the body to elevate, not sink, for proper technical development and reducing strain on the muscles and joints of the back, legs and feet.

demi-pointe Standing and dancing on the balls of the feet; also called half-pointe.

barre Handrail for balance during ballet exercises; to be held lightly, not gripped or leaned on.

platform The tip of the pointe shoe, where the dancer balances.

pointe model Pointe shoes are made in different models to accommodate different foot shapes. For more about models, see pages 14-17.

plié Bending the knees with correct ballet posture.

on flat Standing and dancing with the entire sole of the foot or shoe on the floor.

To learn more about pointe readiness, please see page 20 for expert guidance from podiatrist and dance specialist Dr. Lisa Schoene.