

Dancing en Pointe: Questions and Answers



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Pre-Pointe and Pointe Classes

For MDA Students Eligible and Interested in Dancing en Pointe

What is “en pointe” ?

Dancing “*en pointe*” means dancing “*on the tips of the toes.*” Dancing en pointe requires a special shoe made of a wood shank and a box for the toes which allow dancers to be supported on the tips of their toes. A special, and usually intense fitting is required to find the right fit for each student.



What is pre-pointe class?

MDA's pre-pointe class is a pointe preparation class for serious ballet students interested in dancing en pointe. It is a 30-minute class that meets weekly, usually before or after the student's ballet class. The class is taken barefoot. A portion of

the class is spent doing foot/ankle exercises and stretches on the floor. Students also do strenuous core strengthening exercises. A portion of the time will be spent at the barre doing repetitious, strength-building exercises. Pre-pointe is a prerequisite for being considered to dance en pointe at Mongan Dance Academy.

When can I take pre-pointe?

Each upper level ballet student will selectively be given permission to join pre-pointe. All students who take ballet seriously are considered for pre-pointe. We strongly urge students to be enrolled in multiple ballet classes weekly. Student must be nearing age 10, sometimes later if the student is not ready, possibly earlier if the student has danced with Mongan Dance Academy for several years and have demonstrated proficiency and strength in her regular ballet classes. Two years of prior ballet classes are required.

What are the requirements to dance en pointe?

- The student must have taken a minimum of two years of ballet, and one or more years of pre-pointe.
- The student must be at least 12 years old, or have special approval from the instructor.
- The student must be enrolled in multiple ballet classes weekly at Mongan Dance Academy.
- The student must demonstrate a serious attitude towards ballet, and must be devoted to her craft.
- The muscles in the ankle and foot must be strong enough to demonstrate certain exercises flawlessly.
- The student must have a strong core and turnout ability.

The instructor will evaluate each student individually. Some students advance right away, some students may need to repeat pre-pointe for several years. Advancement depends on both attitude and physical ability. Each student's body is unique and will be assessed accordingly.

Is dancing en pointe dangerous?

Dancing en pointe *before* the student is ready provides risks for the dancer. It is extremely important to take the advice of the instructor. When in doubt, wait a little longer. Pre-pointe is good for the dancer, whether dancing en pointe or flat. If the student is ready, risks are not great. There are risks, however, when dancing en pointe, as there are risks in any sport and physical activity. However, if the instructor and student are well-paced and in tune with weight placement over the shoe and body alignment there should be no great affect. If the dancer looks wobbly or feels abnormal strain in the foot or ankle, she will need to be evaluated and might be asked to dance en demi pointe (not fully on the tips of the toes) until ready to go fully en pointe. Each foot is different, and each dancer may be prone to various soreness and/or minor injuries, if at all. Again, each student will be assessed and addressed individually.

“The most essential thing in dance discipline is devotion.”
~Merce Cunningham

What happens after pre-pointe?

Each student will take at least one year of pre-pointe class. If the student is not completely ready to dance en pointe, the instructor will have the student stay in pre-pointe until the student is demonstrates proficiency. If the student advances to pointe, the instructor will advise the student regarding where and when to purchase pointe shoes. The student will continue to work on basic pre-pointe exercises while wearing pointe shoes. The instructor will gradually increase the exercises at the barre to lead the student into full en pointe exercises.

"To dance is to be out of yourself. Larger, more beautiful, more powerful. This is power. It is glory on earth, and it is yours for the taking." ~ Agnes De Mille

Can transfer students dance en pointe immediately?

Students who were trained to dance en pointe at another dance studio and transfer into Mongan Dance Academy will be evaluated by MDA instructors in both ballet and pre-pointe classes prior to acceptance into our pointe class. The student must meet all requirements to dance en pointe, including foot, ankle, and core strength, technique, attitude, and devotion. Transfer students who

do not meet MDA's criteria for pointe readiness may be required to take a minimum of one year of pre-pointe classes and additional ballet classes, or even postpone pre-pointe and pointe for a year or more. If transfer students are approved to dance en pointe, they will be required to take multiple ballet classes weekly.

