



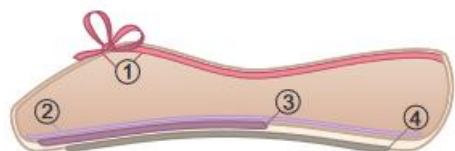
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## I. Parts of a Pointe Shoe

- A. Box
- B. Wings
- C. Pleats
- D. Outer Sole/ Shank
- E. Back Seam
- F. Waist Seam
- G. Heel Section
- H. Vamp
- I. Platform

Each part of the pointe shoe serves a particular purpose and contributes greatly to the style and the fit of the shoe. The attached diagram pinpoints the specific sections of the pointe shoe referenced during the fitting process.

# Shoe Parts



- 1 drawstring
- 2 insole
- 3 shank
- 4 outer sole
- 5 box
- 6 wings
- 7 pleats
- 8 outer sole
- 9 back seam
- 10 waist seam
- 11 heel section
- 12 vamp
- 13 platform



## II. Types of Feet

- A. Tapered toes
- B. Wide foot w/ narrow heel
- C. Wide foot w/ bunions
- D. Square toes
- E. Longer middle toe
- F. Shallow foot/ low crown
- G. Full foot/ high crown

These are common issues that arise during the process of fitting pointe shoes. Each brand of pointe shoes offers several different models with width, vamp, and shank options to accommodate the specific needs of each foot type.

## III. Fit of Pointe Shoes

**Correct Fit:** When standing flat and on pointe, a correctly fit pointe shoe will hug the foot, applying pressure around the toes without causing pain. There should be no gapping or excess fabric and the shoe will stretch slightly and widen as the dancer breaks the shoes in and the shoes form to the particular foot.

**Incorrect Fit:** If the shoe is too long, there will be a large gap in the heel of the shoe due to an excess amount of fabric, and the dancer's longest toe will not be touching the platform. If the shoe is too wide, there will be a noticeable space between the top of the dancer's foot and the top of the box. If the shoe is too short, the dancer's toes will be curling at the end of the box. If the shoe is too narrow, the dancer's toes will be overlapping and the dancer may notice pinching on the side of her foot.

## IV. Pointe Shoe Accessories

### Sewing Ribbons:

1. Your ribbon usually comes in one long piece .Cut it into four equal lengths.
2. Take the shoe and find the side seams. Measure a 1/2 inch in back of this seam and mark it with a pencil.
3. Take the end of one ribbon and fold it over by about 3/4 of an inch. Fold it over again. Now the cut edge is inside the fold and will not fray.
4. Place this folded part of the ribbon on the inside of the shoe, where you marked it, satin side (shiny) facing out.
5. Use a needle and thread to sew the ribbon onto the shoe. Make sure you sew small stitches all the way around the 4 edges of the ribbon, making a rectangle. If you know how to cross stitch, this is even better.
6. Repeat this process on the other side of the shoe. Repeat on the second shoe.

Hints: As you become more experienced with pointe shoes, you may decide to alter the placement of your ribbons. Some dancers like them further back. If you do this, look at your foot on pointe. Do you see the sides of the shoe gaping at the instep? Your ribbons are too far back. Always remember that ribbons provide an important function by holding the shoe in place at the instep.

**Sewing Elastics:**

1. Find the seam that runs down the heel of the shoe. Place one end of the elastic inside the shoe just to one side of the back seam. Sew it in.
2. Put the shoe on. Stretch the elastic over and around your ankle until the two ends meet on either side of the back seam. Test the tightness by doing a demi-plie and rolling up onto pointe. The elastic should feel tight but not strangling your ankle. This is your desired length.
3. Cut the elastic to the desired length. Measure the second elastic to an equal length.
4. Finish sewing the other end of the first elastic on the other side of the back seam. Make sure you have not twisted the elastic by mistake. Your finished elastic now looks like a large loop at the heel of the shoe. Repeat with the other shoe.

Hint: Record the elastic length so you don't have to repeat the measuring process every time you sew shoes.

**Toe Pads:** There are many different kinds of pads. Generally it depends upon your teacher and/or your personal preference. Loose lambswool or lambswool pads are best to start so that you get a good sense of how to feel the floor. Other types of padding include Ouch Pouches (variety of styles and sizes), Gellows, Super Gellows, Nylon pads and Silicone pads. Other products that are available, but are not always necessary, are Space Packs/Super Spacers, Big Tips, Clear Tips and Bunion Busters. The decision to use them should be based on an individual's foot and needs. Remember that too much padding/products can cause your feet to become numb.

## V. Care and Maintenance of Pointe Shoes

### **Always:**

- \* Hang them up after pointe class. This allows them to dry.
- \* Keep track of any problems you may have had with them. This will help for your next fitting.
- \* Fold your shoes properly after each class or rehearsal. Wind ribbons flat around each shoe.
- \* Keep your shoes and ribbons clean. Since you cannot wash pointe shoes or use a cleaning agent, your only choice is to keep the shoes separate from other items that could soil them.

### **Avoid:**

- \* Leaving them in your dance bag with your toes pads inside of the shoes. The perspiration from your feet will stay in the shoes, causing them to break down quicker.
- \* Letting your pointe shoes near dogs. They are made of glue that is very attractive to dogs.
- \* Letting anyone else wear your shoes. The shoes will mold to your specific foot.
- \* Getting your shoes wet or wearing them outside.
- \* Drying shoes in an oven or microwave.
- \* Using any kind of chemicals to clean the shoes

**Foot Care:** Keep your toe nails short. Cut them straight across, never into the corners. This will cause ingrown toe nails which are very painful. Never cut them after a bath or shower. They are like your hair and will shrink after you cut them. Also, cover any blister you may get with a band-aid during class. Do not pop them but allow them to dry. Eventually, you will build up calluses to protect your feet.

## VI. Frequently Asked Questions

### ***How often do I replace my pointe shoes?***

Pointe shoes are only made to last approximately 8-10 hours. Depending on how often you are dancing, how strong your feet are, and how fast you break them in, your shoes can last anywhere from 2 weeks to 6 months. Consult your teacher or stop by Ellman's to determine if it is time to replace your shoes.

### ***What should I do when they get dirty?***

Nothing. Don't clean them. Water will soften the box and decrease the life span of the shoe.

### ***Is there a right and a left shoe?***

No. Like ballet slippers, pointe shoes have no right or left.

### ***Why do the box and the platform get soft?***

Pointe shoes are made of fabric, leather, canvas, and glue. The more you wear them, the more the glue breaks down. This is why it is so important to let the shoes dry between dance sessions. They must have the opportunity to harden again. A lot of dancers purchase at least two pairs at a time and rotate their shoes for this very reason.

### ***Why don't shoes come with ribbons sewn on?***

Where you place the ribbons is very personal. Some dancers like them further back towards the heel, others further forward. It would be impossible to standardize.

### ***Is it O.K. to buy shoes with room for growth?***

No it is not. Pointe shoes must fit perfectly. If the foot can move around in the shoe, there is danger of injury and potential long term foot problems.

### ***When is the right time to buy new pointe shoes?***

When you outgrow them or when the box, shank, or platform become so soft you cannot balance properly on pointe.

### ***Why don't pointe shoes last longer?***

Because they are made of fabric, leather, and glue (not wood). They will break down sooner or later, depending on the individual dancer and how much time she spends on pointe. The rate at which the pointe shoe softens and breaks down is also affected by the temperature and humidity. Pointe shoes tend to break down faster during the hot and humid summer months.