

Keystone Ballet Academy Criteria for Pointe Work

1) Must be at least 11 years old, in good health and normal weight range.

The bones of the feet do not fully develop and harden until approximately 13-15 years old. A dancer's legs and core must be strong enough to protect the bones before they are fully developed. Beginning pointe too young can permanently damage immature bones. If the student frequently needs to rest because of illness or injury, she is not strong enough for the extra demands that pointe work requires.

2) Has at least 3 years consecutive training in ballet and in Level B2 / Level C.

3) The student must be taking a minimum of 2 ballet classes (3 hours) a week on a regular basis for two years before starting pointe class.

4) Demonstrates body awareness of the following:

- Understand alignment of torso, hips, arms.
- Remembers corrections and applies them.
- Standing legs are fully straight on two legs and when the other leg is lifted high in extensions. (Flat feet and demi-pointe)
- Feet point fully especially in extended lifted legs and jumping.
- Understands weight shifting and keeping weight towards front part of foot.
- Can jump high enough to clear a pointe shoe box.
- **Promenade in arabesque and attitude**

5) Able to hold correct turnout while dancing from foot flat to demi-pointe.

Correct turnout starts from the hips, not from the feet and knees. In the turned-out position, the foot is in line with the kneecap and hip joint.

Correct turnout should be easily maintained in demi-pointe. Heels forward, weight centered towards the big toe mound with heels forward (no sickling), and knees straight.

6) Maintains a strong, straight trunk without any tilt in the pelvis.

A straight trunk is held by both the back muscles but more importantly by the lower abdominals. Core exercises are performed correctly by the student.

A weak trunk will throw the student off balance while en pointe and will make it difficult to do ballet steps. This also puts the dancer at risk for injury.

7) Performs and uses a **correct demi-plié position for all transitions.**

Performed with turnout from the hips, maintaining the kneecap in line with the 2nd toe (No pronating), and without allowing the heels to pop up.

Effectively uses plié – does not collapse the knee but can press and control plié. Leg muscles are actively working.

8) Fully pointed feet and correctly pointed feet.

- **Able to fully pointe the foot in all steps without “sickling”.**
- **Has enough of an arched instep to stand on pointe.**
- Strong pointed foot with lifted leg extended and when jumping.
- Proper execution of tendu: Using the floor to point builds correct muscles in the feet and ankles: Tendu with articulation of the metatarsals.

9) Pique passé with straight leg.

Student should have enough strength to push onto demi-pointe keeping the leg straight. This step is harder to do en pointe and a bent leg is usually a sign of weakness or improper step preparation.

10) Perform 16 single-legged relevé without stopping: straight and with plies.

Strength in the calf muscle is vital for pointe. The student must also go up as high on half-pointe as she can, since pointe work demands this ability. A student who keeps her heels very low to the ground is not preparing her calf muscles adequately and will not have the strength for pointe work.

11) Perform 8 sauté on one leg in the center without stopping.

Strength for pointe work is achieved by repeating exercises. Single-legged sauté building up thigh and calf muscle strength, which is vital for strong relevé in pointe work.

12) Be able to hold a passé balance on half-pointe (15 – 30 sec)

The student should be well-placed (hips square, back straight, legs turned-out), and have the strength to balance on half-pointe. This pose is more difficult to correct en pointe, as the surface area for balancing is smaller and the strength requirements are greater.