

Hello Parents and Dancers!

If we have not met, I am Katie Munson and am a Ballet and Pointe teacher at Seven Hills. I absolutely loved getting to know many of your students this past year, and am looking forward to teaching again this coming school year. I would like to say thank you for putting your child and their dance education in my care.

Whether your dancer has been in pointe shoes for a while now or is preparing for their first pair, I have some important information to share and consider for the future. Please read the information below carefully and thoughtfully. I have also provided some articles to help you understand the importance and significance of pointe work. I know this is a lot of information, but I hope that it will inform parents and dancers on the seriousness of moving onto Pointe. Please feel free to email me any questions, concerns, or thoughts you may have. I will get back with you as soon as possible.

Is your Dancer ready for Pointe?

<https://www.dancemagazine.com/pointe-shoes-2622511309.html?rebellitem=1#rebellitem1>

Pointe is not just a matter of reaching a certain age, but it is a matter of technique, ability, physical and emotional maturity. Some students may emotionally and technically be ready for Pointe work by age 9, however their bodies are not ready. Essentially, there is a sweet spot for bone and ankle development. The child needs to be young enough that their bones are still maturing and they can build the special flexibility required for pointe, and old enough that their growth plates are so open pointe stunts growth.

Ryan and I will work hand in hand to determine when each child is prepared for pointe. There are many physical tests that can be done and physical exercises that will be done in class to prepare each student.

Fitting Pointe Shoes

<https://bestpointe.com/en/blog/1274-wrong-pointe-shoes/>

Having pointe shoes fit is an exciting time for each new student and an important step for each returning student. First, let's remember there is a difference between the "pain" associated with exercising that builds muscles, and the wrong kind of pain! Contrary to what most believe, a properly fitting pointe shoe SHOULD NOT HURT! Not all pointe shoes are the same and the required fit is incredibly specific to each foot. Ill-fitting pointe shoes lead to injury and a lot of pain on pointe.

I have been very pleased with the fittings from *Carolina Connections*, and recommend students try there first. However, this is a smaller dance store that does not carry every pointe shoe. If students are unable to find a pair of properly fitting pointe shoes there, I suggest going to Richmond VA and making an appointment at *Ellman's Dancewear*. I know this is a bit of a trek to make, however, the cost of a drive to Richmond is much cheaper than the medical costs associated with injury.

Returning Students

I recommend that each of you are re-fit and get a new pair of shoes for the fall. First, each of you are still growing (even if not in height, your bodies and bones are still developing and maturing) which can change what pointe shoes you need. Additionally, not wearing pointe shoes for the summer can cause your feet to spread and widen, which will change your foot shape and size. Also, the heat and humidity may cause feet to change and be slightly different than the colder months.

Sewing Pointe Shoes

Previously, I know many students have been taking advantage of Carolina Connection's service to sew your students Pointe shoes for them. However, I recommend that you do not take this route. First, I prefer a slightly different ribbon and elastic placement for the level of Seven Hill's dancers. Second, it is important that each dancer learn to sew their own shoes. (Parents, don't you want your girls to pick up some hand sewing skills!?) I will be making a video of my preferred sewing method soon, and will send that out to help your students. I promise it is not nearly as difficult as it seems!

How Many Pairs should you expect/Dead Pointe Shoes

<https://www.dancemagazine.com/dead-pointe-shoes-2645036232.html?rebellitem=2#rebellitem2>

Unfortunately, Pointe shoes break down significantly faster than any other dance shoes. The same qualities that allow us to roll up and down through the shoes, also make them far less durable. The long story short is that dancing on dead pointe shoes leads to injury. (Check out the article above to see x-rays of ankle alignment difference in new and dead pointe shoes.) I will be monitoring to help your students determine when it is time for a new pair. **I suggest parents plan for 3-4 pairs of pointe shoes throughout the year.** (Depending on age, ability, foot strength, weight, and hours dancing.) One pair of pointe shoes is simply not adequate to get your student through a full year of dancing. Keep in mind, if your student is still growing rapidly, it could be even more pairs of shoes. I know pointe shoes are expensive, so my hope is that by giving you this information early, your family can prepare for the expense.

Here are some tips for extending the life of your pointe shoes!

- Avoid Temperature change: leave pointe shoes in a humidity and temperature controlled environment. Excess heat and humidity makes them break down faster. (don't leave them in the car for a week!)
- Air them out: take them out of your bag each day to dry completely.
- Jet Glue: a superglue product made specifically for pointe shoes. It can help extend the life of your shoes by one or two wears. If your student brings me the shoes and glue, I can teach where/how to glue shoes.

Spring Recital

<https://thedancestore.ca/how-to-properly-break-in-pointe-shoes/>

For the spring recital, it is imperative that your student has a great pair of Pointe shoes to dance well in! I suggest a **new pair of Pointe shoes 4-8 weeks prior the recital.** Talk to your student about how long they need to properly break in a pair of shoes. Unfortunately, shoes that are not broken in can also lead to injury. To avoid injury, **I will not allow students to dance in the recital on brand new or dead pointe shoes.** If these are the only options, they will perform in their ballet flats.

Another aspect to performing in point shoes is sewing or taping their ribbons for performance. This is a temporary stitch that keeps the ribbons from coming undone while dancing. This will be included in the sewing pointe video, however many students already gained experience with this at the last recital. (They did great!)

Foot Care

<https://www.dancemagazine.com/foot-care-products-for-dancers-2487946272.html>

Finally, there is a lot to be said about foot care for your dancers. Much of this can be covered as students have specific problems. There are lots of tricks and products that help students manage and heal any foot issues. However, the two most important aspects to foot health are properly fitting pointe shoes and foot maintenance.

For foot maintenance, make sure toenails are trimmed and not too long, feet are aired out and washed after pointe work, proactive stretching is done, and any problems are noticed and dealt with proactively. The two things that will be most common are blisters and bruised toenails, these are very normal and can be danced through when treated properly. Moreover, I recommend that pedicures are not done often or at all. First, they remove calluses which are needed for pointe work (and all other dancing.) Second, toenails often become ingrown after a pedicure and are difficult to remedy.

Some of the best products I have found are listed below:

No need to purchase ahead of time, but they may be helpful later!

- Nexcare Absolute Waterproof First Aid Tape
- Spenco 2nd Skin Squares Soothing Protection
- Fabric First Aid Tape
- Orajel (the kind for mouth sores)
- Tiger balm
- Tennis Ball (for rolling feet out)