

A guide to buying your first pair of pointe shoes:

Finding a pair of pointe shoes that fit correctly is very important to prevent injury and build strength correctly in students that are beginning pointe work. Compared to flat shoes, pointe shoes come in many different shapes and styles, and the same shoe will not work for every dancer. Finding the pair that is right for you will take time and patience. In the Iowa City area, we don't have a local pointe shoe expert fitter, so we have suggested a couple options about how to find an appropriate pair of shoes. Please don't hesitate to ask questions after reading this document. We will do our best to help each student navigate all of the options and find a shoe that works for them.

How do I know if my shoes fit correctly?

Figuring out if your shoe fits correctly is hard to do when it is your first time. We would like you to bring your new pointe shoes to class so your teacher can help you decide if they fit correctly and approve the fit of the shoe. Make sure you don't do anything to your shoes before you bring them in to be approved just in case they need to be exchanged for a different size.

Don't expect your pointe shoes to fit like normal shoes, or even like ballet slippers. Pointe shoes cannot be purchased to "grow into." They fit quite snugly and should not gap around the foot. Different parts of the shoe—the vamp, heel, shank, platform—will need to be both the right size and shape for your foot. Your teacher will help you determine a proper fit in class.

Which brand of shoes should I buy?

Some brands of pointe shoes are better suited for beginners than others. We highly recommend that you purchase shoes from one of the following brands.

Approved brands:

Freed

Capezio

Bloch

Note: Avoid shoes from these brands that are described as 'hard shank' or 'strong.'

If you are getting fitted by an expert fitter, these brands are also ok:

Russian Pointe

Grishko/Nikolay

Chacott

Suffolk

Repetto

*Please no Gaynor Minden

What else should I purchase when I get my pointe shoes?

Pointe shoe ribbon – 1 inch width – any brand is ok.

- https://www.discountdance.com/dancewear/style_RPRIBBON.html?&pid=19248&Shop=Style&&skey=Pointe+Shoe+Ribbon&search=true&SortOrder=R&SID=1696785635
- https://www.discountdance.com/dancewear/style_ESPSSR.html?&pid=5543&Shop=Style&&skey=Pointe+Shoe+Ribbon&search=true&SortOrder=R&SID=1696785796
- Pointe shoe elastic – 1 inch width, skin tone or pink color. Any brand is ok.
 - One Set of Elastic:
https://www.discountdance.com/dancewear/style_ELAST.html?&pid=3400&Shop=Style&&skey=Pointe+Shoe+Elastic&search=true&SortOrder=R&SID=1696781524
 - Larger Roll of Elastic:
https://www.discountdance.com/dancewear/style_1515.html?pid=21562&shop=Style&&skey=Pointe+Shoe+Elastic&search=true&SortOrder=R&SID=1696782377
- Toe pads – we recommend Ouch Pouches, Pillows for Pointe, loose lambs wool, or trimmed sock
 - Do not purchase thick gel toe pads.
 - Size of toe pads depends on foot size. Get toe pads according to pointe shoe size (i.e., pointe shoe size is 7, get large toe pads)
 - https://www.discountdance.com/dancewear/style_BH1055.html?pid=4060&Shop=Style&&skey=ouch+pouches&search=true&SortOrder=R&SID=1696782645
 - https://www.discountdance.com/dancewear/style_BH1054.html?&pid=4059&Shop=Style&&skey=ouch+pouches&search=true&SortOrder=R&SID=1696782803
- Pointe shoe sewing supplies – you can purchase the Bunheads pointe shoe sewing kit or you can use regular white dental floss and a larger sewing needle.

As you begin pointe classes, we recommend you have the following items in your dance bag:

- Medical tape
- Band-aids
- Small sewing kit – large needle, thick thread/dental floss, scissors
- Toenail clippers
- Mesh bag to store your pointe shoes – it is important that pointe shoes dry after each use
- Jet glue (double Ziplock bagged)

Where should we go to get pointe shoes?

Here are a couple methods we recommend for getting your first pair of pointe shoes. Please let us know if these methods will not work for you. We can try to come up with an alternative solution.

1. Order shoes on www.discountdance.com. Using the pointe shoe fitting guides on their website (listed with each pointe shoe), select 3 different pairs of shoes from the list of recommended list of pointe shoe brands above (different styles of shoes from the same brand are ok). Order all three pairs of shoes. Bring them to class for your teacher to look at. If one pair fits, you can return the other two pairs. If none of them fit, you will need to return all three and try again. It is important that you do not wear those shoes at home before they have been approved by your teacher, as you cannot return shoes that have been worn. When ordering, select soft or medium shank. Avoid shoes that are 'hard shank.' Pointe shoes also have a width measurement. Do your best to select a shoe width based on the width of the balls of your feet. Your teacher can help you pick out shoes—please ask if you want some help!
2. Contact a local dance store and see if they have the approved brands of shoes available. We weren't able to get in touch with them while preparing this document to check ahead of time. If they do have these brands available, schedule an appointment for a pointe shoe fitting. Bring the shoes you select, or a couple options, to pointe class to be approved by your teacher. Make sure you hold on to the receipts and do not wear the shoes before they are approved by your teacher in case they need to be exchanged for a different size.
3. If you are travelling to a larger city within the next few months, we can help you look for a dance store with a professional pointe shoe fitter. Below are links to fitters in larger cities. You can make an appointment at this store and have them help you select an appropriate shoe. Please make sure to bring our list of approved shoes with you to the appointment. We would still like you to bring your shoes to class to have them approved by your teacher before you wear them or begin sewing your shoes. Email us and let us know where you are going so we can help look for an appropriate dance store nearby.
 - a. Mark's Dancewear in Des Moines - <https://www.marksdancewear.com/pages/pointeshoeappointment>
 - b. Chicago Dance Supply - <https://chicagodancesupply.com/>
 - c. Allegro Dance Boutique - <https://allegrodanceboutique.com/>

When should we start shopping for shoes?

We recommend that you start looking for pointe shoes as soon as possible. **We would like everyone to try to have a pair of 'teacher approved' pointe shoes that they can bring to class when classes resume in January.** If this isn't possible, don't worry, but just make sure you have communicated this to your pointe teacher. It isn't a problem for students to continue taking class in flat shoes until they have found a pair of pointe shoes that are just right. You may bring your shoes in for approval during any pointe or technique class. Just let the teacher know before class starts, so they make time to look at your shoes before or after class.

Please ask questions!

Again, we encourage you to ask questions as you go through this process. Selecting a pair of pointe shoes takes time and can be very difficult when this is your first time. Feel free to contact Aubrey Green or one of the pointe teachers (Grace (ggreer@uiowa.edu) and Audrey (ahonert@uiowa.edu)), and we can answer any questions/concerns you may have.