

# FITTING A BALLET SHOE

*pointe dance boutique*

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Ballet began as an art form during the reign of Louis XIV. Although interpretations of ballet have evolved into various new dance disciplines, including modern dance and lyrical, it is still the place to start for all serious dancers. Ballet teaches exact form and technique.

It builds strength and develops poise. The ballet shoe is one of a dancer's most significant tools. It provides support and comfort. It also allows the dancer to feel the floor, making the fit of a ballet shoe extremely important. To achieve correct fit, follow these guidelines:

Remember you have more than just two feet to consider. You also have two points of view—the dancer's preference and those of the dance teacher. Confronting two different sized feet is common as well. Always apply the following procedures to both feet.

1. Make sure the dancer is wearing tights while trying the shoes on.
2. Place the shoe over the toes and gently slide it over the heel.
3. Ask the dancer to stand flat in the shoe. Make sure the toes do not curl or overlap. If they do, you must go to the next size or width.

4. Crisscross the drawstring and pull gently so the shoe conforms to the foot. It must fit like a second skin and must not allow for growing room. However, stretching sometimes will occur with use.
5. Ask the dancer to point his or her foot. The back of the shoe should stay on the heel, and there should be no gapping in the width of the shoe.
6. If one shoe fits better than the other, and there is no left or right shoe, try switching the shoes.
7. Experiment with another size or width to be sure the shoe fits properly.

There should be little or no room at the toe. A ballet shoe that is too large may cause a dancer to curl his/her toes in an effort to keep the shoe on while dancing. Improperly fitted shoes also make it more difficult for the dancer to learn technique. A dancer's toes must reach the front of the shoe or he or she cannot feel the floor and articulate the foot to pointe.

The pleats of the shoe are designed to be the same length as dancer's toes. This enables them to fan their toes for balance and is important in positions like demi pointe. A loosely fitted shoe may place the toes behind the pleats, which renders them ineffective.



## Sewing on Elastic

The elastic should be positioned high on the instep to ensure a good fit at the heel.

1. Fold down the heel of the shoe until it is flat against the socklining.
2. Place a pencil mark where the fold creases closest to the binding.
3. Stitch only one side of the elastic onto the binding right below the drawstring. Be careful not to sew the elastic over the drawstring.

4. Put the shoe on the dancer and gently pull the elastic strap over the instep where it is the most comfortable.
5. Place a pencil mark where the elastic meets the binding.
6. Stitch the elastic below the drawstring.
7. Repeat steps one through six for the other shoe.