

CDT Ballet notes for first-timers



Your first class can be a big step (pun intended) but you don't have to worry. CDT wants to share the love of dance in a supportive and enthusiastic space so we encourage, not criticise.

Read the FAQs page on the CDT website about what to wear and how to enroll. Please pay attention to the level of the class. You don't want to try an advanced class when you are a first-timer. You wind up confused and the class won't get the standard they are looking for.

Ballet (Classical)

Adult ballet can be an amazing life experience if you prepare yourself with a little knowledge. There is no need to feel insecure if you're new to ballet, but check the class level definitions on the CDT website at https://canberradancetheatre.org/our-team/adult_ballet

Adult ballet class is where you learn the basics of ballet, including the five basic positions of feet with corresponding arm positions. The purpose of an adult ballet class is to offer instruction without the pressure of pursuing a professional performing career. Ballet class consists of three parts: **barre**, **floor**, and **center**.

The first part of ballet class is spent at the barre. The barre is a long wooden or metal bar fixed to the wall. If the class is large, the teacher may bring out free-standing barres to the middle of the room, so no one feels cramped. Since the body is not ready to perform elaborate movements across the floor, barre work is considered the warm-up portion of class and can last anywhere from 30-45 minutes. Students start by placing their left hand on the barre, since the first exercises are always carried out by the right side of the body, then the left. The teacher then provides a series of exercises designed to systematically warm up the muscles. Besides promoting circulation and stamina, the purpose of barre work is to practice technique that will be executed later in the class without the support of the barre.

The second part of ballet class is floor. Students leave the barre and gather at the middle of the room. From here, the class can go two ways: the teacher may instruct the class to sit down and begin a series of stretches, or they may directly move into technical combinations. These exercises can be a challenge since students no longer have the support of the barre. For example, students may be required to stand on one leg, and maintain their balance without falling over. Floor exercises are also divided into two categories: *adagio*, slow movements that require balance and control, and *allegro*, quick, precise movements that emphasize agility and speed. Students start with slow combinations that help build their strength, and progress to faster footwork.






The final section of ballet class is centre. Now, students have the opportunity to perform combinations across the floor and really dance! The teacher assembles steps that accelerate into what is called *grand allegro*. This combination may include skips, jumps, leaps, and turns. Most adults are reluctant to perform across the floor because they are afraid they will mess up or look silly. Don't be shy!

Positions and Terminology



Many ballet terms are actually French terminology. You can learn more about the terms with pictures at www.balleshub.com. www.balletforadults.com is another good resource for learning 'ballet class 101' and the etiquette of standing at the barre.

The Five Standard Foot Positions

	<p>First Position The first basic position requires the feet to be flat on the floor and turned out (pointing in opposite directions as a result of rotating the legs at the hips). Heels together, and toes going outwards.</p>
	<p>Second Position The feet point in opposite directions, with heels spaced approximately twelve inches apart.</p>
	<p>Third Position One foot is placed in front of the other so that the heel of the front foot is near the arch.</p>
	<p>Fourth Position There are two types of fourth position: open and closed. In both cases, one foot is placed approximately twelve inches in front of the other. In open fourth position the heels are aligned, while in closed fourth position the heel of the front foot is aligned with the toe of the back foot. There are two variations of each type of fourth position, determined by which foot is in front.</p>
	<p>Fifth Position Fifth position should form two parallel lines with your feet. The heel of the front foot should be in contact with the big toe of the other, and the heel of the back foot should be in contact with the last toe of the front foot. (Poorly demonstrated in the picture provided)</p>

Some Basic Ballet Terms

Turn-out - The dancer turns his or her feet and legs out from the hip joints to a 90-degree position.

Plié (*plee ay*) - means bent, bending - of the knee or knees.

Tendu (*ton dew*) - stretched or held - brush foot along the floor until pointed, from a closed position to an open position

Frappé (*frap ay*) – to strike with the foot

Relève (*rell eh vay*) – to rise on tiptoe

Sauté (*sew tay*) – to jump

Port de bras (*por deh bra*) - carriage of the arms - arm movements

Pirouette (*peer o wet*) - a rotation or spin - a complete turn of the body on one foot, on point or demi-pointe (half- pointe).