



# **Pointe Shoe Fitting Guide**

## **Make your customers aware:**

- **This is a guide, to help you show your customers how to fit of pointe shoes.**
- **Let your customers know that fitting pointe shoes takes time and to allow approximately 30 minutes to an hour to fit the shoes. This is not something you want to rush, and your customers should not want you to rush.**
- **Pointe shoes need to fit precisely so make sure that your customers know you are taking your time for them.**
- **The best way to avoid any confusion is to schedule an appointment so the customer knows that it will take time and you (the retailer) have set that time aside for them.**
- **Remind them to make sure that after class they remove their toe pads and place their shoes and pads into a mesh type bag that will allow air to flow through it. This will allow the shoes and pads to dry out and keep any mold or mildew from growing. Always have the mesh bags available as an item for sale as they will need them. Explain that by placing them in their dance bags with all of their other shoes and cover-ups, the shoes may not dry out completely.**

- **Before Fitting a Pointe Shoe:**
  - **Ask Questions –**
    - **How long have they been in Ballet?**
    - **What size street shoe do they wear?**
    - **Is this their first time on Pointe?**
    - **What type of shoe did the teacher suggest?**
    - **What type of toe pads does the teacher want to be used?**
      - **These questions give you the answer to what type of pointe shoe to put them in and whether or not the teacher gave them any input or direction.**

**Note: If you still are not sure what type of shoe to put them in (beginner or a more advanced shoe) have them stand on a flat floor surface, holding onto something, in First position and releve' (to rise standing on the ball of the foot and toes are flat on the ground) to see how strong their feet are.**

**Note: If the student wobbles and is not steady they are more than likely beginners. (You also have already answered this question when you asked how long they had been in ballet.) If they can stand straight and hold the pose they will be stronger.**

**Note: If the student (in releve') looks as though they are pigeon toed and is "sinking" into their baby toes this is called sickling and should be addressed as something they need to watch and get away from. It is caused by the lack of strength in the ankles.**

- **Determining What Pointe Shoe is Best:**
  - **The ability of the individual depends on the type of shoe they need –**
    - **A beginner needs a shoe that is strong enough to hold them up (because they haven't developed their muscles yet) but one that is not too hard for them to bend.**
    - **At Leo's we carry a  $\frac{3}{4}$  shank pointe shoe just for this purpose. It is style # 0053, The Inspiration Pointe Shoe.**

**Note: Pointe is a very mental form of dance especially for a beginner. If the student cannot eventually get up and over onto pointe, they may get frustrated and may not want to continue.**

- **Intermediate and advanced dancers generally need a shoe that is somewhat strong because their feet are stronger. If they need a shoe for an upcoming performance, a softer shoe would be better so they do not have to work so hard breaking them in.**
- **At Leo's we carry a full shank pointe shoe style # 0052 that would be for a classroom environment, and a Split Sole pointe**

shoe style # 0051 that would be the “Easy break-in” shoe that would be great for upcoming performances that you need a beautiful new pair of pointe shoes but that are broken in.

- **Determining the Size of the Pointe Shoe:**
  - All brands are sized differently –
    - Take a look at their feet, are they wide or narrow, long toes or short, full or shallow.
    - Determine what type of toe pads they will be using. Some are thicker than others and take up more room in the shoe so therefore you may need to go wider and longer when using thicker pads.
      - Leo’s carries several different types of toe pads for any option your customer may need.
        - Style # 1 – Foam Toe Pads
        - Style # 2 – Wool Toe Pads
        - Style # 3 – A 1 oz. box of loose Lamb’s Wool
        - Style # 4 – Soft Pointe Gel Toe Pads
        - Style # 5 – Soft Pointe Pro Gel Toe Pads
- **Fitting the Pointe Shoes:**
  - Have the student place the toe pads over their toes.

**Note:** Some toe pads are longer on one side than the other. Have them place the longer side over their baby toes.

- Have the student put on the pointe shoe by holding it with both hands, one hand each, on either side of the opening close to the toe box of the shoe.
- Have the student place the tip of the pointe shoe on a flat floor surface. As they hold the shoe with both hands, have them slide their foot down into the toe box of the shoe and you can then slide the back of the shoe up over the heel.
- Check the width of the pointe shoe by having the student stand flat on the floor in front of you.
  - If you can see gaps between the foot and the opening of the shoe, it is probably too wide.
  - If the foot is bulging over the opening of the shoe, it is probably too tight.
  - The foot should fit in the shoe snugly but you should be able to slide a finger between the vamp of the shoe and the top of the foot with a little bit of effort.
- Pull up the strings of the shoe to finish the fit around the foot. (This does not make the shoe fit, it holds the shoe to the foot.)
- Check the length of the pointe shoe by having the student hold onto a stable surface and releve’ onto pointe.

- At the heel of the pointe shoe there is a piece of binding sewn in from the top of the opening of the shoe to the wood sole on the bottom of the shoe that holds the satin together. Pinch this binding piece together on either side of the binding. You should be able to pinch no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch.
- More than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch will tell you the shoes are too big.
- Not being able to pinch any or just a little will tell you the shoes are too small
  - Make sure you check both shoes because feet can be different sizes
  - There are occasions where a student may have to purchase two different sizes of shoes to get the proper fit if their feet are significantly different in size.
- The shoe should not have wrinkles in the satin on the sides of the feet by the big toe and the little toe.
  - If there are wrinkles put both hands on either side of the opening of the shoe at the instep and pull up.
    - This may have made the length of shoe too long so recheck your length
  - If the wrinkles do not come out either try a different width or a different style of shoe.

**Note: Pointe shoes should NOT be fitted with growing room! Pointe shoes are dangerous shoes (especially for beginners) and the shoe needs to properly fit because the shoe is what is supporting the body.**

**Note: You want the shoe to look nice on the student's foot so if you have two styles that both fit – go with the one that looks the best on the foot.**