



1. Air your Pointe Shoes

Don't leave freshly worn pointe shoes crammed in your bag after dance class, airing them out ensures the sweat and moisture dries out faster and lessens the likelihood of your pointe shoes going mouldy and soft! The longer your shoes are damp, the more the shoe begins to break down and the shorter lifespan you will have before you need to trade your shoes in. If you leave your pointe shoes inside your bag between class, then the glue that holds your shoes together won't get the chance to completely dry and harden again before the next wear, compromising the strength of the shoe (NB: This is what makes our Pointe Shoe Bags so ideal, the light aerated fabric means that you can transport your shoes to and from class whilst still letting them cool down and air out)! Another tip is if you do wear any cushioning in your shoes be sure to remove it between wears, pro pads and lambswool absorb sweat, so leaving them inside the shoe after class extends the time it takes for moisture to evaporate and quickens the shoe's break-down. You should also aim to wash pro pads every couple of wears, and replace lambswool after two to three classes. If you get into the habit of airing your shoes out straight after class it won't take long before you start to notice a difference.

2. Don't get them wet!

Fact: Pointe shoes are not aquatic animals. Yes, sweat is water, and whilst a little sweat in class is fine, to extend the life of your pointe shoes avoid getting them wet under any other circumstances. Keep your shoes in a separate spot from your water bottle, keep your warm-up cozies on during warm-up and make sure you change into casual shoes before running to the car after class. Hopefully you don't need us to tell you that pointe shoes shouldn't ever be worn as a casual shoe or out and about on the street! We would emphasise though that it's just as important to take your pointe shoes off as soon as you leave the classroom, *especially* if it's raining. And no matter how tempting it might be to try washing or scrubbing off a stain, just stay away from liquids altogether. Not only will moisture damage the shoe structure, it'll also leave a big ugly stain on the satin (probably far worse than the original mark!). Instead, if you're really desperate to get rid of a blemish our Pointe Shoe Fitters recommend dusting the area with talcum powder, which will help reduce the visibility.

3. Mix it up

Most dancers have their own strong preferences about this particular step, so it's important to make the decision for yourself: one way that is likely to lengthen the life of your pointe shoes is by swapping feet between wears. As pointe shoes have no assigned 'Left' or 'Right' foot, changing shoes from one foot to the other can work different parts of the shoe, particularly if you have one foot that's stronger than the other (causing the shoe to break down faster) this can be a great way to get a little more dancing out of each pair. However, some dancers prefer to keep one shoe assigned to each foot so the shoes can mould to each foot's unique shape. Either way is fine, and the choice is completely up to you, but if you're after a longer lifespan for your shoes it's worth experimenting and giving shoe-swapping a go.



4. Before you put them on...

No doubt you're aware of the age-old tradition of 'breaking' your shoes in, which is a habit that developed out of the necessity for softening the blow of pointe shoes on the stage. Shoes that are a little worn become more comfortable, quieter and more flattering to the foot as they allow greater articulation through the demi-pointe. The danger zone occurs when dancers think that 'breaking in' pointe shoes means literally *breaking* them, and take to hammering them against walls, doors and other inanimate objects with such gusto that it sounds like a one-person percussion band. Pointe shoes must have the unique combination of being both supple and incredibly strong in order to allow us to perform the movements we do en pointe, and it's the layers and layers of fabric and glue and the support that the box and shank provide that allow us to do this. Due to this delicate balance between strength and flexibility, your pointe shoes will begin to 'break' and soften

naturally the minute you put them on, and if you've been fitted correctly and work through your feet there really isn't a need or benefit to breaking your shoes in any other way than by dancing. Weakening the shoe by bending/hitting it or standing on the box before you wear it is just going to greatly shorten the lifespan before you've even put your shoe on. As with our previous tip, this is a decision that is ultimately your choice alone, just be prepared for a much shorter lifespan if you're manipulating your shoes before wearing them.

5. Be a Disney Princess

We know that the most-asked question when your friends see your pointe shoes is 'Can I try them on!?' (right after the customary 'Does it hurt??')... and we understand that it's hard to say no to friends. However, pointe shoes aren't like you're run-of-the-mill sneaker. Actually, they're much more like Cinderella's glass slippers, in the sense that they're made specially to fit you and no-one else. The reason why is that pointe shoes are designed to gradually mould to the contours and shape of each dancer's feet, and not only that, but the exact type, size, width, vamp, strength and style of your shoe is something that was carefully determined by your fitter to suite your feet to a T! And when someone who has wider, bigger or stronger feet than you tries your shoes on, it can have an irreversible effect on the shape of your shoe. So yes, show friends your pointe shoes, let them hold them if they like, but when it comes to wearing them, they'll have to find their own pair of glass slippers, because these pointe shoes only belong on your feet, got it?



6. Fix the Fit

At the end of the day the *best* insurance against prematurely worn shoes is getting the correct fit. Nothing will make your pointe shoes deteriorate faster than having too weak of a shank, an ill-fitting box, the wrong shape of shoe for your foot type, or any of the numerous other aspects that might make your shoe a poor fit. So to be certain you're getting the most out of your pointe shoes the first step should always be to get your feet professionally fitted by one of our pointe shoe fitters so they will last you for as long as possible. If you are finding after a while that you're going through your shoes quicker than average then it may be time to come back in store and have a chat to our team. Your feet often change (and get stronger!) over time, so your ideal shoe may be slightly different than at your last fitting, in which case having a chat with an experienced fitter and letting them know what issues you're having is the best way to get the problem sorted. That way our team can assess your feet and determine what strength is going to be ideal for your next pair of shoes.

Following the advice above will not only give you more wear out of each pair of pointe shoes it will also keep them in better condition throughout every stage of their life. Remember that pointe shoes may be tough, but they're also delicate. So treat them with the love and care they deserve... and they'll do the same to your feet!

Pssst! Just one last tip to ensure the best pointe shoe experience: keep feet pointe shoe-ready by regularly trimming and filing your toenails (remember, they grow faster during the summer too!) so that they don't protrude beyond the tip of the toe. Also ensure feet are clean and dry before putting your pointe shoes on (this inhibits the growth of fungus and encourages the healing of abrasions and blisters), which will give you happier, healthier toes and enable you to dance as comfortably and effortlessly as possible.