

## **Ballet Shoes**

Whether you dream of dancing "Swan Lake" with the Royal Ballet or are taking ballet classes simply for fun and exercise, you'll need ballet slippers. It's important that you find the best brand and fit for your needs.

### **Style and Fit**

If you're new to the world of ballet, buy your shoes at a store that specializes in dance shoes and do it in person. As with any other shoe, size matters. Make sure you can wiggle your toes inside the shoe. Despite what a salesperson may advise, if the shoe makes your toes curl up, don't buy that size. While a leather slipper will stretch a bit, it won't stretch that much. If you can't allow your toes to spread when in ballet positions, your balance will be affected.

On the other hand, if you're buying ballet shoes for a child, don't buy them too large, thinking your child will grow into them.

Oversize shoes make dancing difficult. Some instructors recommend shoe shopping at the same time of day as your dance class, since your feet swell during the day.

### **Materials Used for Ballet Shoes**

Ballet shoes come in leather and in canvas. Leather lasts longer and is warmer, something to consider if you'll be spending hours practicing in a drafty dance studio. Canvas shoes are less expensive, are washable and can be dyed to match any costume. They tend not to stick to the floor as much as leather shoes do.

If you take care of them, they should last almost as long as leather shoes. Men, who are heavier and create more friction between their shoes and the floor, tend to favour canvas.

Ballet shoe soles are either full or split. It's easier to point the toes in a split sole. Full-sole shoes can be less expensive. Several other ballet shoe models are available, including a leather and canvas combo. Try a few ballet steps in the store before making a final decision.

### **Securing the Shoes**

Some styles come with an elastic band attached to keep the slipper securely on your foot. Your dance teacher will show you how to adjust and attach an elastic strap to your ballet slippers. For performances, however, ballet shoes, either flat or pointe, are attached to satin ribbons that tie tightly around the ankle.

### **How To Make Ballet Shoes Last Longer**

Every parent knows the frustration that comes along with kids and growing feet. It seems like you are always buying bigger shoes to fit feet that seem to never stop growing. If you feel you are always buying new ballet shoes, follow these steps to help prolong their life. Those ballet shoes just might make it through recital this year!

1. Keep them clean.

If the ballet shoes are canvas, throw them in the washer on gentle cycle, with a tiny bit of mild detergent, and allow them to air-dry. For leather ballet shoes, spot clean with a damp cloth. For deep-cleaning, use a dab of mild detergent, wiping clean with a soft, dry cloth.

2. Only wear them to dance.

Avoid wearing ballet shoes to and from the studio. Ballet shoes are not designed to be worn as street shoes. Keep them in your dance bag and throw on a pair of flip-flops.

**3. Stretch the leather.**

If the ballet shoes are made of leather, stretching them may help them to fit a little bit longer. Place a wooden spoon inside the toe of the shoe and gently stretch the leather.

**4. Loosen drawstrings.**

Loosening the drawstrings, or removing them, will allow more space for the entire foot. The extra room may buy you a couple of months.

**Tips**

Never buy ballet shoes that are too big. It may be tempting, but ballet shoes were designed to fit snugly on the feet.

**What You Need**

Mild detergent.

Damp cloth.

Wooden spoon.

Extra TLC.