

Breaking in Pointe Shoes

Breaking in a new pair of pointe shoes will make them more comfortable when you wear them. When a ballerina breaks in her pointe shoes, she is actually molding the pointe shoes to the shape of her feet. Remember that a perfectly molded pointe shoe begins with a pointe shoe that is precisely the correct size and type for your foot. If you are buying your first pair of pointe shoes, it is extremely important to be fitted by a professional. If you begin with the wrong size, achieving a perfect fit will be nearly impossible. Once you have the perfect shoes for your feet, here are a few things you can do to break them in.

Soften the box

Gently massage the sides of the toe box with your hands. Some dancers soften the box by standing on top of their shoes or by slamming their shoes between a door and its frame. However, great care must be taken to avoid "breaking" the toe box. Please note that softening the box is not always necessary. Some dancers prefer a stiff box.

Soften the shank

The shank is the stiff midsole that presses underneath the arch of the foot. Gently massage the demi pointe area of the shank, or the area that bends while on releve. Walk on demi pointe. One of the best ways to break in pointe shoes is to simply put on the shoes and walk around in them. Try rising onto demi pointe and walking, forcing the shoes to conform to your own arches.

Do roll-throughs

Starting in first position, bend your right knee and press your right foot up to full pointe, pressing through the top of the toe box. Repeat on the left side.

Work at the barre

Performing exercises at the barre is enough for some dancers to break in their pointe shoes. Try lots of plies, concentrating on rolling through demi pointe, all the way up to full pointe, then down flat again.

Tips:

1. If you are breaking in your first pair of pointe shoes, ask the advice of your dance instructor.
2. Never bend your shoes in half or pound them with a hammer, as doing so may break them.