

“Ballet 101” Terms

(in order of appearance)

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Warm-up: Doing exercises that stretch and loosen the muscles to prepare your body for dancing.

Barre: A horizontal wooden hand rail that runs around the wall of a ballet studio.

Alignment: The lining up of parts of your body to make a balanced and graceful line.

Posture: The position and carriage of the body.

Pointe: A position of the foot in which your heel is held up, your big toe is stretched down toward the ground, your leg is turned out, and your foot is in line with your leg.

Positions of the feet: Five different positions in which your weight is evenly distributed over your feet no matter what position your body is in, with your legs turned out from the pelvis.

Port de bras: Carriage of the arms. Set movements of the arms from one position to the other.

Plie´: An exercise in which, standing erect and with back straight, you move down and up with the bend of the knees.

Demi-plie´: A half knee-bend. Nearly every step begins and ends with a *demi-plie´*.

Grand plie´: A full knee-bend with heels off the floor.

Eleve´: A movement in which you rise up high on to the balls of your feet. A similar position is also referred to as *Releve´*.

Coupe´: A position of your foot, lifted and held flexed, tight against your ankle.

Battement: A generic term which describes the various movements in which the leg makes a beating motion.

Battement tendu: An exercise in which you stretch your foot along the floor and end in a point.

En croix: In the shape of a cross (front, side, back)

Degage´: An exercise similar to a *tendu* that finishes with the foot lifted from the ground in a point.

Rond de jambes à terre: Circle of the leg, on the ground (*à terre*). An exercise in which you mark out a semi-circle on the floor with your pointed foot.

Balancé: Rocking step. This step is very much like a *pas de valse* and is an alternation of balance, shifting the weight from one foot to the other.

Centre Practice: a group of exercises similar to those *à la barre* but performed in the *centre* of the room without the support of the *barre*. These exercises are usually performed with alternate feet and are invaluable for obtaining good balance and control.

Passe: A movement that resembles a pass.

Arabesque: A position in which you balance on one straight leg (or bent leg) with the other stretched out behind you.

Grand Battement: Meaning large beats. An exercise in which you raise your pointed foot high off of the ground keeping both legs straight.

Allégro: An Italian musical term meaning quick and lively. In ballet, **allégro**: steps are completed in fast tempo without your arms flapping about.

Petit Allégro: Small jumping and turning steps.

Glissade: Gliding or sliding steps. A traveling step in which you glide your foot along the floor with your front knee bent and you transfer your weight. During the moment of transition, your legs are fully stretched.

Demi-pointe: Half point, meaning standing on the balls of your feet.

Bourrée: A linking step in which you rise up on the balls of your feet (on to your half point) and glide across the floor with quick, tiny steps.

Pas de Bourrée: A small stepping movement, executed on the balls of the feet or on pointe, in which the you either skim smoothly across the floor or transfer the weight from foot-to-foot three times as a transition into another movement. A pas-de-bourrée consists of bending both legs, extending one, then stepping up, up, down, finishing with bent knees.

Pas de chat: A traveling step-of-the-cat in which you bring one foot up along you leg to the knee, and transfer your weight to the other leg with a spring in the air, landing with your feet in 5th position.

Routine: In dance, a term meaning a sequence of steps.

Marking: Going through the movements of a dance routine without dancing them fully, in order to familiarize yourself with the steps before performing.

Finale: The concluding part of a performance.

Grand Allegro: A combination of large traveling steps and jumps.

Pas Marche: The graceful walk to center stage to take a curtsey or bow.

Curtsey: A movement by the female dancer (**ballerina**) that acknowledges the instructor at the end of a class, or an audience at the end of a performance.

Bow: A movement by the male dancer (**danseur noble**) that acknowledges the instructor at the end of a class, or an audience at the end of a performance.

Reverence: A movement, generally made by the sweep of an arm to acknowledge the rest of the ensemble cast (**corps**), the instructor, the choreographer, and/or the orchestra.