

# THE DANCEWITHSYANNE GUIDE TO BALLET



Basic ballet feet & arm positions, terminology index, helpful tips, ballet gear shop recommendations & theatre trip ideas included!

## Ballet – A Treat for the Brain and Body

Originating in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, ballet is one of the oldest dance forms. Yet when it was first performed in the Renaissance Courts of Italy, little did the dancers know that they were creating an activity that boosts physical, mental and emotional health.

Today's micro stresses, rushed timescales and the "no time to exercise" feelings often result in many of us not being able to enjoy the many benefits of regular exercise, but ballet could be the key to bringing your life back into balance.

### Full Body Workout

Ballet is a full body workout, often without even realising. Within a class you will find yourself targeting multiple different elements of fitness including balance, posture, agility, endurance, flexibility, joint mobility, and joint stability.

Taking the time to learn ballet enhances many areas of daily life. For example, a key focus within ballet is posture and balance, two things that go hand in hand. With beautiful posture and awareness of your body alignment comes improvement of balance and will aid in everyday activities.

Unlike gym workouts where it targets one or two muscle groups at a time, ballet allows you to work your entire body whilst also introducing cardiovascular health benefits. And whilst this is all happening, you get to enjoy wonderful music, concentrate on learning and perfecting new moves, and discover new ways to challenge your body through all planes of movement.

### Brain Power

It's no secret, learning a new skill such as ballet is challenging! After all, you're teaching your body to move in a brand new and often unnatural way. However, challenging yourself in this way boosts cognitive performance, by stimulating your brain to understand coordination techniques and communicate your movements to align with musical signals.

Music is an incredibly important part of dancing. Within a ballet class you'll spend a lot of time working on musicality and focusing on how the tempos within the music encourage and prompt a movement. Before you know it, it will feel natural to be tapping your foot to the beat of any piece of music that you hear (and maybe your TikTok career will begin!?)

### Smile on your Face

The emotional benefits of dancing outweigh any other form of exercise. Dance inspires happiness by releasing what is known as the "happy hormones," - such as endorphins. Completing a ballet class will leave you with a feeling of achievement. You will have challenged your body physically and mentally, whilst prompted by beautiful and emotive music. You get to share these special moments with others during what is a social activity, with people who come together through the joy of dance to laugh, learn, and move together.

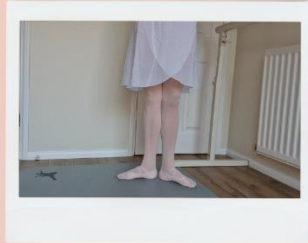
DanceWithSyanne classes encapsulate all these elements. Adult ballet classes run live in-person in Hemel Hempstead and Leighton Buzzard, whilst are also hosted online for anyone who would prefer to "dance like no one is watching" at home. As a teacher, I take pride in providing sessions for adults that are informative and professional, yet friendly and approachable. All levels are welcome to join these classes. My aim is to deliver sessions that allow you to modify and personalise to your needs. Above all else, these classes will leave you feeling energised, toned, and uplifted, with an eagerness to return for more.

*Article posted to YourHealthHub, 2022*

## Ballet Feet/Arm Positions

Here is a demonstration of the basic feet and arm positions that we use in class:

### Positions of the feet



1st



2nd



3rd



4th



5th

### Positions of the arms



Bras bas



1st



2nd



3rd



4th



5th

## French Terminology Index

À terre	On the ground/floor
Adage	Slow, soft, sustained, and controlled movement
Arabesque	A position on one leg with the other behind either à terre, or en l'air (up to 90 degrees)
Assemblé	To assemble, to join
Attitude	A position standing on one leg with the other bent at an angle behind, en l'air
Battement	To beat (a movement with a closing action)
Chaseé	To slide
Coupé	To cut
Croisé	Crossed to the audience (front)
De coté	To the side
Demi	Half
Demi-detourné	Half turn (towards the back foot)
Derrière	To the back
Devant	To the front
Developpé	To develop or to unfold
Echappé	To escape
En croix	In the shape of a cross (front, side, back or back, side, front)
En dedans	Inwards (towards the supporting leg)
En dehors	Outwards (away from the supporting leg)
En l'air	In the air
Fondu	To melt (a melting action)
Frappé	To strike (like lighting a match on the floor)
Glissade	To glide (a sliding movement from 5th to 5th)
Jeté	To throw
Pas de bourrée	Small/tight running steps
Pas de chat	Step of the cat
Passé	To pass

Petit	Small
Pirouette	To turn
Plié	To bend
Port de bras	Carriage of the arms (a controlled movement of the arms)
Posé	To step (onto a straight leg)
Relevé	To rise
Retiré	To draw up (the supporting leg)
Rond de jambe	Round of the leg (circle the leg like a protractor on the floor from 0 degrees to either 90 or 180)
Sauté	To spring
Soubresaut	A single jump (without changing the feet)
Soutenu	To sustain (a turning action revolving the feet, either traveling or on the spot)
Sur le cou-de-pied	On the neck of the foot
Temps levé	To hop (a jump taking off and landing on the same foot)
Tendu	To stretch

These are some of the most used terms from my classes.

You can explore more at:

<https://www.city-academy.com/news/a-guide-to-ballet-glossary/>

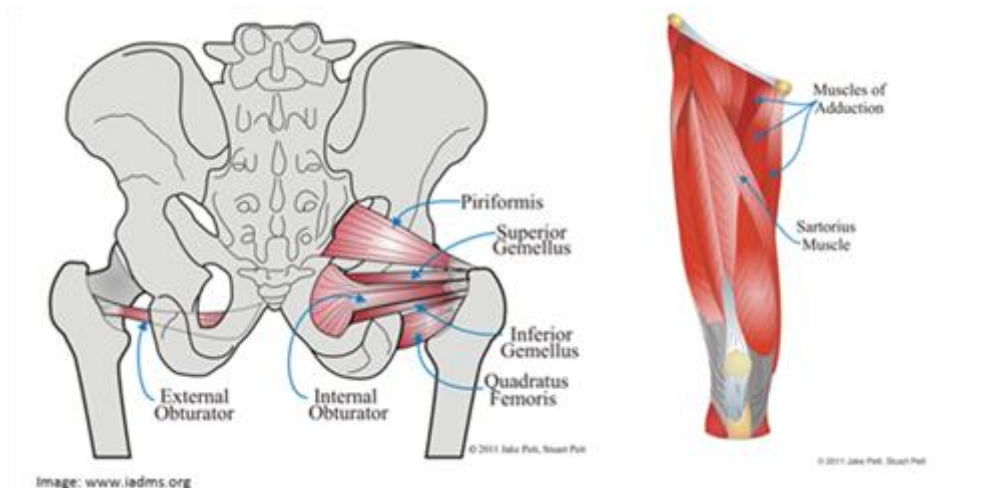
<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/a-basic-ballet-dictionary>

## Turn Out – what is it and how does it work?

Upon joining a ballet class, one of the first things you will learn is that the ballet positions all revolve around externally rotating your legs, otherwise known as turn out. It is easy to try to replicate the position you see in front of you, by just forcing your feet to face out to the side, but this often results in an incorrect use of the muscles and sometimes twisting in the joints. This stands you at risk of injury as there is pressure to the big toe joints, ankles, and knees.

It is important to understand the mechanics of holding these turned-out positions and recognise which areas of the body you should be concentrating on to gain the strength to hold (and gradually improve) your turn out position.

Look at the following diagram (from the International Association for Dance Medicine and Science):



As you can see, much of the work is from the six deep lateral rotators, buried under the gluteal muscles and deep within the pelvic girdle. These work to rotate the femur, by attaching to the greater trochanter of the femur and rotating it backwards towards the back of the pelvis.

The sartorius muscle in your thigh also works to rotate the leg alongside the muscles of adduction (your inner thigh muscles). Notice how the sartorius wraps around the thigh, which when activated alongside the deep lateral rotators, aids in rotating your leg.

There are lots of pilates based exercises that aid in strengthening these muscles. If you are interested to find out more about how you can strengthen your turn out muscles, get in touch for a 1:1 session, where we can explore ways to help you together.

If you are interested in learning more about dance anatomy, I always turn to the IADMS website for top tips and information. <https://iadms.org/resources/blog/>



## Ballet/Dancewear Shop Recommendations

Locally to Hemel Hempstead:

Razzle Dazzle Dance Supplies - <http://www.razzledazzledancesupplies.co.uk/>

Dancers Boutique, located in Amersham - <http://www.dancersboutique.co.uk/index.html>

Locally to Leighton Buzzard:

Soul2Sole Dancewear, based in Stony Stratford: <https://soul2soledancewear.co.uk/>

Online Orders:

Move Dancewear: <https://www.movedancewear.com/>

Dance Direct: <https://www.dancedirect.com/>

Dancewear Central: <https://www.dancewearcentral.co.uk/>

Planet Dance: <https://www.planetdance.com/>

Dancewear: <https://www.dancewear.co.uk/>

Fancy a day trip to London? Stop by the dance shops in Covent Garden for the full ballet dancer experience!

[Bloch Covent Garden store](#)

[Dancia International](#)

[Freed of London](#)

[Capezio London](#)



## Theatre Trip Ideas

### The Royal Ballet

Visit the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, for an exquisite evening of ballet at it's traditional finest! This year The Royal Ballet are staging their version of The Sleeping Beauty, which is an important production to the company as it is the first performance that was staged at the Royal Opera House after it reopened in 1946 after World War II.

Visit: <https://www.roh.org.uk/tickets-and-events/the-sleeping-beauty-by-marius-petipa-details>

### English National Ballet

A company close to my heart, who I have performed with many times, are staging some fantastic productions this year. Currently they are performing Swan Lake at the London Coliseum, they will then be staging a relatively new contemporary work at Sadlers Wells called Creature by Akram Kahn and following this they will be returning to the Royal Albert Hall with a special production of Cinderella in-the-round.

Visit: <https://www.ballet.org.uk/whats-on/>

### Birmingham Royal Ballet

BRB are also staging a production of Swan Lake this year, a classic that I believe everyone should experience at least once in their life. Later this year they will be staging a triple bill (which I will certainly be getting tickets for!) A triple bill includes three shorter and separately told ballet's, which don't always have storylines, but certainly lots of meaning behind the movements. Within this triple bill they will be performing David Bintley's Still Life at the Penguin Café, which is lots of fun, but with a hard-hitting message behind it. Highly recommend!

Visit: <https://www.brb.org.uk/whats-on>

### Northern Ballet

Northern Ballet are based in Leeds but are regularly touring, often performing at Milton Keynes Theatre. They are touring The Great Gatsby this year, which I saw last year, and it was a wonderful production which took you on a journey of emotions. They are also performing Beauty & the Beast later this year which I am intrigued to see.

Visit: <https://northernballet.com/whats-on>

### Sadlers Wells

If you are looking to push the boat out and see something a little beyond the traditional ballet's, I highly recommend you check out what is on at Sadlers Wells. This theatre hosts many touring companies, of all genres, and you are guaranteed a great evening of entertainment. For example, Scottish Ballet will be performing there in March, with a neo-classical version of Coppelia. One not to be missed if you are looking for a mix of ballet and contemporary styles.

Visit: <https://www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/>