

The Ballet Blog

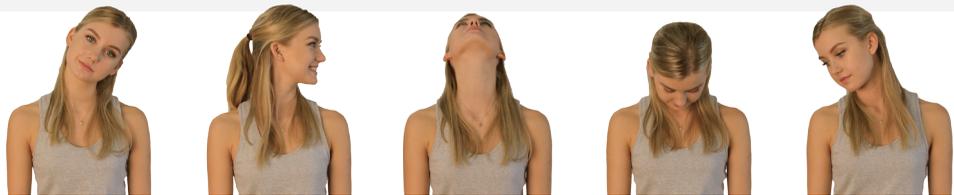
Dancers' Warm Up

To dance at your best and avoid injury it is essential to do a thorough, specific warm up before every class or performance. Many people stretch before class, however, if you hold a static stretch for more than 20 seconds you can actually lose power and strength in that muscle which obviously not ideal before dancing! When we dance we use all parts of our body so it is essential to get everything moving in your warm up, not just your legs and feet.

This warm up is more dynamic and focuses on mobilising your muscles, joints and most importantly your fascia. Fascial mobilising exercises aim at loosening the connections between layers of muscles and are often far more effective than normal stretches. Start by gently moving into the stretch and then releasing the tension with control. Repeat each mobiliser 8 times on each side.

Neck

Take care to go slowly with your neck stretches and never push into pain. Focus on lengthening the neck on the open side, rather than compressing the shortened side.



Upper Back and Shoulders

Loosening the upper back can have a huge influence on the flexibility of the whole body. Make sure to make all of the movements fluid and continuous, rather than stopping in each position.



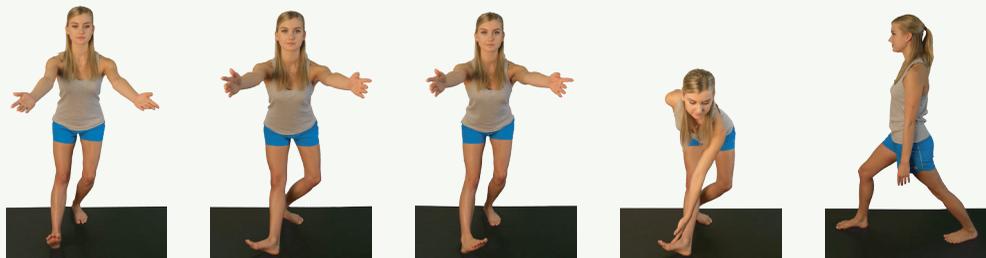
Lower Back and Hips

Many people try to simply push their knees out, or crack their hips to get more turnout range. However this can damage the joints. Far better results can be achieved by mobilising the hips and lower back as shown here.



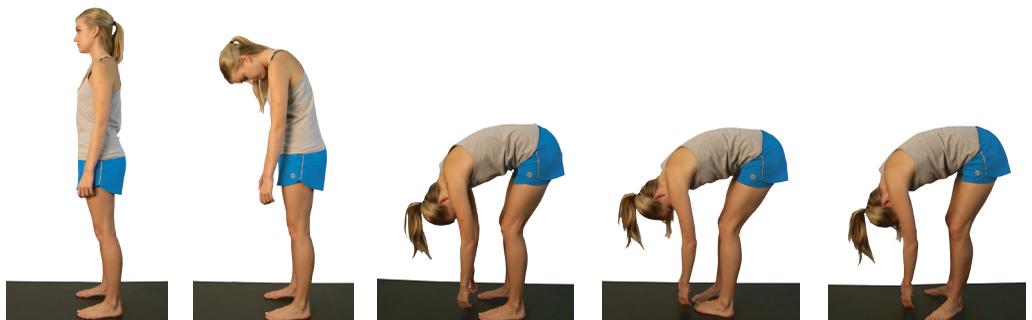
Hamstrings and Calf

These mobilisers are great to get your mobility back to full capacity after a few days off, or to increase your range if you are struggling. Try doing a roll down before and after the set to see how it affects you.



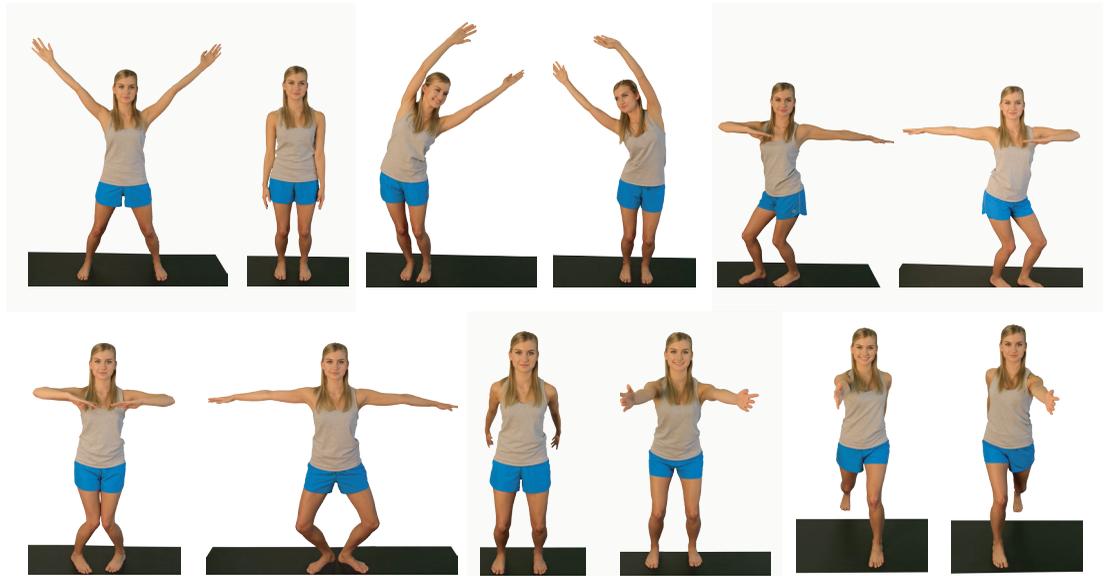
Roll Downs

It is important to get each vertebrae moving in relation to those on either side of it to get full mobility in your spine. Make sure that you do your spinal roll downs slowly and deliberately. Feel for any points of tension and then use other exercises to release these spots. It is great to do this after class as well. Repeat with feet turned in and turned out.



Cardio

Jumping Jacks are a great way to get your heart pumping and blood flowing to all of the muscles that you will be using in your dance class or performance. Mix it up with variations to challenge your coordination and involve your whole body. Make sure to use supportive running shoes if you have any issues with your feet, as the repeated jumping can aggravate some tendon issues. Also try to jump as quietly as you can to really warm up your feet!



Splits

When you have warmed up the rest of your body you can start to move into the splits if this amount of flexibility is required in your routine or class. Remember not to hold the stretch for more than 20 seconds as this can stop the muscle from being able to work at its full strength when you are dancing, and may increase your risk of injury.



Cool Down/Sun Salutations

An effective cool down is just as important as a warm up. When you move into your cooling down phase you want to release any tension that has built up in the class so that you are not too tight the next day, and simple yoga sun salutations are great for this. After you have finished dancing for the day you can move into more static stretches to increase your flexibility. Remember to stretch all parts of the body including your neck, shoulders, back, hips and legs.



The Ballet Blog is dedicated to health and well being of dancers. For more information and videos on how you can train more effectively please visit:

www.theballetblog.com

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