

# Dance Terminology

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**Arabesque** – One of the basic poses of ballet. A position of the body, supported on one leg, which can be straight or demi-plié, with the other leg extended behind. The forms of arabesque are varied to infinity.

**Attitude** – A pose in dance derived by Carlo Blasis from the statue of Mercury by Giovanni da Bologna. A position on one leg with the other lifted in back (or in front or side), the knee bent at a 90 degree angle and well tuned out so that the knee is higher than or level with the foot.

**Axel** – A jumping movement pushing from and landing on the same leg. The free (working) leg performs a rond de jambe while the supporting leg pulls up to a tuck as the dancer makes a full rotation in the air.

**Ball change** – A transitional weight change that pushes to ball of the working foot and returns to the supporting leg. Can also be performed in a stepping-through motion.

**Battement sauté** – Brushing and stretching the working leg (as in grand battement) while pushing to a sauté with the supporting leg. Done as a preparatory exercise for several other leaps and jumps.

**Cabriole** – A step in which the extended legs are beaten in the air. The working leg is pushed into the air and the supporting leg follows. The landing is then made on the same supporting leg.

**Chainés** – Literally, chains or links. Series of turns performed in releve usually moving across the floor. The term is actually an abbreviation for “tours chainés deboules”.

**Chassé** – Meaning “chased”. A step in which one foot literally chases the other out of its position. Can be done in a series or used singly as a transition step. Chassé should glide along the floor making sure that the feet “kiss” in the air.

**Clip turn** - A half turn executed by crossing the working foot behind the supporting leg and simply untwisting the legs leaving the body facing the opposite direction.

**Degagé** – Disengaged. The pointing of the foot by brushing along the floor until the foot leaves the ground and extends fully. May also be referred to as battement glisse, gliding off the floor.

**Dig** – A position where the working foot is placed directly beside the supporting foot at the arch.

**Drag turn** - A pirouette movement performed with an inside turn. Usually in plié/releve on the supporting leg while the working leg trails while physically dragging the floor either to the side, behind or diagonally back. A very stylized turn.

**Fouetté a terre** – The term “fouetté” means literally “whipped”. In this case the supporting leg is placed in tendu to the front or back while the supporting leg raises the heel as the body rotates over that leg by turning through the hip socket. The body ends up facing the opposite direction while the foot/leg in tendu has remained in the same place.

**Fouetté rond de jambe en tournant** – The fouetté most commonly referred to as just ‘fouetté’. Literally, whipped circle of the leg turning. A popular turn in which the dancer executes a series of turns on the supporting leg while being propelled by a whipping movement of the working leg. The working leg should pass through the fourth position before being raised to hip level in the second position and then into the passé position to complete the turn. The closure at passé may be beaten or left to a simple close.

**Fouetté, a la seconde** – Like the other popular fouetté, this turn is usually executed in a series. The leg is supported in second position at hip level for the completion of the turn instead of being pulled in to passé.

**Fouetté, sauté** – The same basic motion as the fouetté a terre, but executed out of a chassé (or another traveling step). The working leg begins with a grand battement as the working leg pushes off the floor to fully extend under the body. The whipping motion rotates leaving the working leg in the air and then landing again on the same supporting leg as leaving the floor.

**Grand battement** – The working foot brushes the floor pointing at separation and continuing in altitude with a straightened and tightened knee and foot. The body should remain calm with the leg being thrown only to the maximum height allowed without disturbing the body placement. The leg is closed back into the position in which it originated.

**Grand jeté** – In this step the legs are thrown to a split in the air. The front leg should leave the floor as in grand jeté.

**Grapevine** - A series of steps moving side to side. Executed by stepping to the side (2<sup>nd</sup>), crossing back (or front) and then continuing in the same direction stepping out to the side again. Can be finished with a variety of steps including a dig or a touch out to the side that would then take you into a reverse performance of the movement.

**Jeté** - Throwing step. A jump from one foot to the other in which the working leg is brushed into the air and appears to have been thrown.

**Pas de bourrée** – Though there are many variations, the most commonly used versions are a combination of steps which move the feet in the pattern of “back, side, front”. In the jazz variation, the pattern is amended to move “cross back, open second, lunge out”. The pattern can be performed in either direction and is usually applied as a transitional step.

**Pas de Chat** – literally, ‘step of the cat.’ A ballet jump in which the feet are lifted, one after the other, to the level of the opposite knee in a turned out position.

**Pas de Chat, Russian** – A leap which moves with the leading leg extended to second position at hip level and the supporting leg pulled underneath in a turned out position. Landed on the leading leg.



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**Passé** – Passed. Literally, the step would have the foot leave fifth position in front (although other positions may be used) and pass the knee joint to finish in the fifth position in back. Also performed in reverse. This term is most commonly referred to as the position where the toes connect to the leg just below the knee to perform pirouette.

**Penché** – Leaning or inclining as in penché arabesque. Keeping the body in the same angular proportions while tipping either forward or back.

**Pencil turn** – A turn performed in either direction on one toe while keeping the other leg very closely paralleled.

**Piqué** – Pricked or pricking. Stepping directly onto the pointed leg (at the demi-point) while lifting the other leg to a variety of positions. Can be used with arabesque, passé, etc.

**Piqué turn** – A piqué performed in the passé position while turning to the inside. Usually done in a series.

**Pirouette** – Whirl or spin. A complete turn of the body performed on one foot. May be performed in many positions of the working leg to include passé, arabesque, attitude, a la seconde (second position supported waist level) and fourth position.

**Pivot** – A step that changes the direction of motion. Place right foot forward and transfer weight. Flip the shoulders to face back by turning over the left shoulder. Can be reversed.

**Plié** – Bent or bending. A bending of the knee or knees.

**Port de bras** – Carriage of the arms. In general, the use or movement of the arms through either specified classical positions or as they are placed in choreography.

**Rond de jambe a terre** – Round of the leg on the ground. The circular movement of the leg, originating in the hip. Both legs must be kept straight while the toe of the working leg traces a circular pattern on the floor. Can be performed with the movement beginning as a tendu in front or directly behind the body.

**Rond de jambe, grande** – The same movement described “a terre” but executed at 90 degrees.

**Russian** – A popular leap that travels through the air in the same manner as grand jeté and saut de chat, but with the body open to the audience and the legs extended in second position on both sides.

**Russian, switch** – Executed in the same manner as the basic switch leap, but with the body opening into the open second position in the air.

**Saut de basque** – A traveling step in which the dancer turns in the air with one foot drawn up to passé or coupé. Completed by gliding out to perform the step in a series or to transition. A chassé tour (turning) is an appropriate beginning movement to acquaint the dancer with the basic movement. The turn is then executed in fifth position with a chassé into and out of the turn.

**Sauté** – Jumped or jumping. When this term is added to the name of a step, the movement is performed while jumping.

**Soutenu** – A turn performed by stepping onto a straightened leading leg, crossing the trailing leg in front at the knee and then releasing the leading leg as the turn untwists. The leading leg is then free to reach again from fourth position to repeat the turn in a series. Can also be used singly as an accent or transition.

**Spread eagle jump** – Also referred to as a star jump, X jump and several other terms by region. Begins in parallel first position, jumps to legs in a wide second in the air with arms in a high V. Returns to the parallel first to finish.

**Switch leap** – Begins as a grand jeté. Throws the leading leg to the back while the supporting leg throws to the front to complete a full split in the air. The switch leap should complete a split on both legs before landing.

**Tendu** – Stretched. Movement is initiated in the heel by pushing forward until the foot is forced into the fully stretched and pointed position. Can be performed front, side and back.

**Three step turn** – Performed by stepping to second position right, turning over the right shoulder to step left, and then turning again over the right shoulder to return to the right foot. Can be reversed. The movement should turn the dancer in the same direction for all three steps.

**Toe touch** – A very popular jump that may also be called a straddle jump. The jump begins in a parallel first position, springs to a very wide second position in the air with the arms traditionally extended over the toes. The jump may return to parallel first or a variety of other positions.

**Tour jeté** – Shortened from grand jeté dessus en tournant. Literally, large jeté over and turning. Begins as a grand jeté with the leading leg throwing to grand battement. As the supporting leg pushes to the air, the shoulders flip and the supporting leg is thrown as in grand battement to the back. The jump is landed on the leading leg, thus changing the support.



# Guard Terminology

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## Flag

**27 points in space:** space around the body that can be identified with numbers and geared towards a cleaning tool

**Wrist rotations:** a motion designed to loosen the wrists and control timing

**Slams:** identifying solid stops and starts to 45 degree angles and gaining control of bent verse extended arm

**Drop spins:** this is a tool that initiates a “pull motion”, then is used to work timing and isolation

**Double time:** this is a quickened version of drop spins with slightly different grabs positions

**Butterflies:** is a version of two handed wrist rotations that deals with a lower space

**Carves:** deals with upper and lower space moving through 45 degree angles

**Throw a ways:** starting in a slam position, this is designed to work timing and to make the wrists stronger and more flexible

## Tosses

**Toss:** defined as a piece of equipment leaving the immediate contact of the body and traveling through space freely

**Parallel:** a toss dealing with the horizontal space

**Single:** a toss in the vertical space that rotates 1 time from the start position

**Single and a half:** a toss in the vertical space that rotates 1 1/2 times from the starting position

**Double:** a toss in the vertical space that rotates 2 times from the starting position

**Forty-five:** a toss that leaves any starting position and travels through the 45 degree plane

## Rifle and Sabre

**Wrist rotations:** a motion designed to loosen the wrists and control timing

**Spins:** this is a tool that initiates a “push motion”, then is used to work timing and isolation

**Tracks:** this is designed to work timing and to make the wrists stronger and more flexible

**Short stops:** designed to isolate the strengthening of starts and stops

**2 plane singles:** designed to isolate starts and stops through single rotations using both plie and first positions

**2 plane back hand exercise:** designed to strengthen and make the wrists more flexible while staying in the O-O and spin dot space, utilizing the first and plie positions

## Tosses

**Spin toss exercise:** evolves the spin exercise to a prep in a continuous toss exercise

**5-7 setup:** a preparation tool that utilizes the principal; time, space and energy

**Double:** a vertical toss rotating 2 times from the starting position

**Triple:** a vertical toss rotating 3 times from the starting position

**Quad:** a vertical toss rotating 4 times from the starting position

**Five:** a vertical toss rotating 5 times from the starting position

**Six:** a vertical toss rotating 5 times from the starting position



# Twirling Terminology

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## Parts of the Baton

**Ball:** Larger end of the baton

**Tip:** Smaller end of the baton

**Shaft:** Metal middle of the baton

## Positions of the baton and body

**Craddle:** Lay baton from hand up to elbow

**Free Hand:** The hand without the baton

**Salute:** Left hand on hip, baton perpendicular to floor with right hand at shoulder and baton extended to hip

**At ease:** Feet in second position with baton resting at leg or behind back

**Attention:** Feet in parallel first with baton in cradle position and free hand on hip

## Basic Twirls

**Horizontals:** Flat spins in one hand, with ball moving over arm and tip underneath

**Verticals:** Wrist twirls and ball stays on one side of arm, tip on the other

**Figure Eights:** Ball dips on one side of arm and then the other to form a figure eight

**Reverse Figure Eights:** Ball dips on outside of arm first then inside to form a figure eight

**Front Spin:** Thumb to ball, tip to ground, flip palm up, left on top, push to right hand, and return with grabbing right on top

**Flash (flourish):** Prep before a trick, pull up, head scratcher and behind back

**Reverse Flash:** Reverse figure eight behind back

**Box:** Horizontal overhead and then under arm

**Pinwheels (butterfly):** Lunge, reverse figure eights, flash, reverse figure eight to other side

**Arm Roll:** Baton rolls over forearm

**Elbow Roll:** Baton rolls over bent elbow

**Thumb Roll (thumb flip):** A toss where baton rolls off the thumb

**Little Joe Flips:** Thumb roll flips on one side to other hand and reverse figure eight to other side to flip again

**Box toss:** Horizontal box to toss with open hand

**Headscratcher:** Straight arm loop behind head

**Airplane:** Dead stick cradle turn up in front, down in back and back over in front as turn

**Backscratcher:** Bent arm loop behind back

**Waist Wrap:** Horizontal swing around waist and catch on opposite side in other hand

**Backhand Toss:** Open hand toss where hand flips down to under and up

**Backhand Catch:** Any catch with hand flipped over and palm up

**Spins:** A turn done while baton is in the air

**Illusions:** Step and swing leg in fan motion over as body bows down (1/2 of a cartwheel)

**Fujimi Toss:** To catch or toss from under leg

**Blind Catch:** Any catch completed at the back of the head or "blind"

Twirls may be combined with any footwork or bodywork for maximum visual effect



# Teaching Technique to your Guard

*by Tim LeBlanc, Director, National Champion Klein High School Color Guard*

The 'swish' of the silk and the 'snap' of a firmly caught weapon are the sounds that any director/instructor dreams and fantasizes about. In order to have a strong and impressive group, technique is a must.

Teaching and using technique should start at the audition and continue throughout the entire school year. With most auditions being in May, that give an instructor plenty of time before band camp to familiarize his/her students with the technique being used for his/her specific group. This also gives the students a chance to become familiar with each other. Being that the color guard and inter guard world is ever evolving to incorporate dance, it is not only important to have technique on equipment but also in dance. Having a well-defined technique regiment can prove beneficial when it comes time for cleaning and preparing for your contests. Having your students doing the same thing at the same time is one thing, but having them approach a certain movement or phrase with the same technique and effort is another.

Going through the summer without seeing your students until band camp is usually not beneficial to you and your group. Meeting a couple times during the summer and having a technique regiment will prove very beneficial in the long run. As band camp approaches and it becomes time to teach your students their contest program, you will have a strong feel of the difficulty level your students can handle in order to be successful.

Once you reach the school year and the regular rehearsal season, continuing your specific technique regiment is very important to the success of your group. As the instructor you should use your time wisely in rehearsal to go over technique and the current show choreography. Without technique your choreography will not be on the level you might wish it to be. After all, your choreography should consist of parts of your technique exercises, but not limited to them, for there are many ways to interpret the music with choreography.

There are many places and resources that can be found and used if you are unsure of a specific technique you wish to use. There are a wide variety of interpretations of technique when it comes to handling equipment in the color guard world. Just be sure that you are clear when you decide on what you will teach.

The importance of technique throughout the year is not only key for a successful show, but also for strength and discipline. Preparing the right technique regiment for your group may take time and effort, but in the long run will prove to be beneficial for your group.

## Examples of everyday technique exercises:

### Flag

100 drop spins (both sides)  
figure 8 / carve exercise (both sides)  
push - hit exercise (both sides)  
blue devils and red devils (both sides)  
slams  
tosses

### Rifle and Sabre

100 spins (both hands)  
start and stop exercise  
double time  
backhands  
flourish exercise  
tosses

### Dance

Stretches  
Tendu exercise  
Releve and plie exercise  
Degage exercise  
Across the floor combination

## Sources for Technique Videos:

[www.ugi.org](http://www.ugi.org)  
[www.mccormicksnet.com](http://www.mccormicksnet.com)  
[www.bandshoppe.com](http://www.bandshoppe.com)



# Movement for Color Guard

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by Scott Chandler

*'Learn the basics, expand them, learn new lessons, use the music, and most of all, let the hard work be fun!'*

With a rich history based in military procession and precision pageantry, the evolution of color guard has included the influence of every art form imaginable. With the diversity of motion and manipulation of flags as well as changes in the size and shape of weapons and props, one consistent player has remained...the body. It has been a natural progression for movement to evolve in color guard especially when one considers the motion of equipment or props manipulating themselves at random in the performance arena. Obviously, this would be impossible. As designers and instructors have continued to search for new ways to communicate the intent of the music and the messages in their performances, it seemed inevitable that advancements in movement would parallel that of equipment and show design. Each aspect plays an important role in the development of the performer's communication with the audience. Thus, at the foundation of all skills, is the performer's ability to control and express through the body.

It is imperative that the performers understand the philosophy behind movement training, its potential and the commitment involved. Quite often, young performers are over eager to develop their equipment work skills rather than concentrate on body movement. It is important that these performers understand the role that movement plays in color guard. You need to reassure them that once they start to become more comfortable with their own sense of motion, the possibilities for dynamic choreography will increase exponentially. Your approach in dealing with the attitudes of your performers will vary with each personality although most of them will experience the same insecurities and growing pains that we have all felt at one time or another. Try to tailor the movement program to meet the specific needs of your performers' mental and physical abilities to create a 'comfort zone' for them. Also, ensure that you provide a 'safe haven' practice area so that your students can develop their confidence. You want to avoid areas where other groups are practicing or ones that other students use to congregate. Once your performers are comfortable with their equipment, bodywork, and movement, they will not mind and might even relish the opportunity to practice in front of peers not involved with color guard.

It is important to establish a consistent rehearsal procedure that should always include preparing the body for the work ahead in the choreography. The most effective warm-up time should concentrate on flexibility and technique. Use exercises such as plies to warm the body and work on a sense of alignment at the same time. Incorporating 'across the floor' exercises will create a practical application for performers who are on the move for the majority of your program. It makes sense to utilize warm up time to develop the skills needed in the traveling process.

Developing a vocabulary for the program should be based on the information that needs to be communicated to the performers. The music and the intent or theme of the show provides this information and gives a basis for the character of the performer; this in turn helps the show designer discover how that character should move. Personally, I want my students to know how to jump, run and kick. If they have that knowledge, they have a good springboard through which to interpret. I also work with 'effort changes' that involve release work 'hard to soft', 'bound to light', 'sustained to motion', etc. The dynamics of the music and the character give the message depth and any style of program, from the humorous to the dramatic, can be successful within this framework.

The body is the vehicle through which the art of color guard comes to life. Mastering the performance through movement will enhance every aspect of the color guard performer's experience.

*Scott Chandler  
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Director, Blue Devils of California  
Director, WGI Champion Logan HS Winter Guard  
Guest Choreographer, TDEA State Convention  
Guest Instructor, performance groups in Japan  
25 year MA Veteran Instructor and Adjudicator*



# Top Ten Technique Tips

*by Jennifer Johnson, Director, National Champions Taylorsville High School*

Every dance team uses technique. It is always there—in practice, in performance, and especially in competition. Each dance move requires technique: turns, leaps, kicks, extension, etc. Good technique is essential for a competitive team. It is nice to have a team with basic technical skills, but if that is not the case, use the following tips to improve your team's technique.

- 1. Focus on the Basics:** Pointed feet, straight legs, arm placement, head placement, etc. Remember beginning ballet?
- 2. Practice Every Day:** Choose specific technique on which to focus each practice. Monday, Wednesday, Friday work on turns. Tuesday and Thursday work on leaps and extension. Choose your team's focus and set up a specific schedule.
- 3. Use Technique in Warm-ups:** Start practice with a jam. A quick, heart rate increasing, 32 count warm-up. Focus on placement and strength.
- 4. Set a Technique Goal:** Want flexibility? Each practice, have your team sit in the splits for one minute on each side. Then use flexibility stretches as a team. Choose your goal and work on it each day.
- 5. Partner Up!** As a coach or captain you cannot see everything! Have team members partner up to work on technique or watch one another perform routines.
- 6. Require Technique in Try-outs:** You can get a basic idea of technique in a try-out. Choose what you want to see: kicks, leaps, fouette turns, splits, etc. Then choose your team accordingly.
- 7. Practice in Front of a Mirror:** If you have access to a large studio mirror, use it! If you do not use a mirror everyday, there is an advantage to using it every once in a while. Students can see what they are doing right and wrong.

**8. Video Tape:** Video practices and performances. Have your team watch the tape and pick out trouble spots.

**9. Technique Scoreboard:** Make it fun! Choose 5-10 technical skills and let your team members pass them off. Keep track, display the results, and reward your team members for their hard work.

**10. Make Corrections Immediately:** If a team member makes a mistake, correct him/her right then. Do not let him/her practice technique incorrectly.

Technique is something every team needs. Do not become overwhelmed by the big picture. Work on the basics everyday. Use what you know and make it work for your team!

Brainstorm some other technique building activities:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



# Pilates Conditioning

by Helen Wild-Norris, Certified Pilates Instructor and Test Administrator

Joseph H. Pilates believed that physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness. His interpretation of physical fitness as “the attainment and maintenance of a uniformly developed body with a sound mind fully capable of performing varied tasks with spontaneous zest and pleasure” is now a widely popular philosophy that has largely changed our approach to conditioning. Dancers and various other athletes are drawn to the regimen of specific sequencing that incorporates six essential elements that serve to not only condition their body with incredible results, but discipline their mind for improved neuromuscular command. The focus on stretching, strengthening, and balancing the body has proven the Pilates Method is not only an invaluable fitness endeavor, but an important aspect of professional sports conditioning and physical rehabilitation.

It is essential to schedule a private session with a certified reputable professional that will properly introduce the Pilates Method to your body. Compensated movement, irregular breathing patterns, and poor posture are just a sample of the areas your instructor will correct for you to achieve maximum benefit. Once you understand the basic concepts, more affordable group classes are available so that you may continue a regimen of two to three times a week.

The three main categories of exercises are the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Lines. All new students, regardless of prior fitness ability, begin with the basic line and systematically build upon this foundation. This ensures a safe and effective transformation of your body. It is important to remember that patience is key! Strengthening intrinsic muscles of the body (including deep core muscles) and adapting to new and healthy habits of posture takes time and effort to be lasting and effective. Pilates allows you to not only reap the benefits of exercise, but enjoy the process of transformation!

Here’s how to get the most out of your Pilates experience.

If taking a group mat class for the first time:

- ✓ Arrive on time for class. If you are new to the facility, arrive a few minutes early to complete the medical waiver and to pay for class.
- ✓ Tell the instructor you are new to the class.
- ✓ Inform the instructor if you have any injuries or restrictions.
- ✓ Wear comfortable clothing and no shoes.
- ✓ Be sure to drink plenty of water after class.
- ✓ Expect the instructor to verbally cue you rather than demonstrate exercises.
- ✓ Expect feedback and corrections on your exercise form. This is what you’re paying for!

## SIX BASIC PILATES PRINCIPLES

- ❖ *Centering: The main focus of Pilates. The center is the “powerhouse” of the body.*
- ❖ *Concentration: Exercises are executed with focus to center the mind with the body in action.*
- ❖ *Control: Work from the center to control movement. Habits must not take over.*
- ❖ *Precision: Each exercise has a precise goal to reach the full benefit of every exercise.*
- ❖ *Breath: All exercises are done with the rhythm of the breath with the an emphasis on exhalation.*
- ❖ *Flow: There is a minimum of movement for a maximum flow.*



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Many Pilates studios offer group equipment classes that use the Reformer, Cadillac, Tower, and Wunda Chair as an affordable alternative to one-on-one instruction. You should use caution when enrolling in these classes and only do so after at least three private sessions. It is essential to be familiar with the apparatus before exercising in one of these group sessions.

*Questions to ask when choosing a Pilates instructor:*

- 1. Where were you certified? You want to select an instructor that has been through a rigorous training process that required at least 600 hours of apprentice work.*
- 2. Why did you choose that certification program? If you are not familiar with the many certifications available today, just having someone explain why they chose the program can alert you to the type of instructor they are. DO NOT select an individual that based their decision on how easy or fast the program was to complete.*
- 3. How long have you been teaching Pilates? It is best to choose an instructor that has been teaching for at least two years.*
- 4. What is your background? Instructors that have experience and education in physical therapy, dance and other fields related to kinesiology, tend to be acutely aware of alignment and are able to explain the changes in execution that need to be made.*

If taking a Pilates group equipment class for the first time:

- ✓ Arrive on time for class. If you are new to the facility, arrive a few minutes early to complete the medical waiver and to pay for class.
- ✓ Tell the instructor you are new to the class.
- ✓ Be familiar with the specific equipment you will be using. Arrive a few minutes early to class if this is a new studio.
- ✓ Inform the instructor if you have any injuries or restrictions.
- ✓ Wear comfortable clothing and no shoes. Socks are recommended for equipment work.
- ✓ Expect the instructor to verbally cue you rather than demonstrate exercises.
- ✓ Expect the instructor to manually cue or spot you to assist you in your execution of exercises.



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## ***An introduction to Pilates mat:***

### ***The Hundred (Basic):***

1. Lie on your back and pull your knees into your chest. Inhale deeply and sink your chest and abdomen into the mat beneath you.
2. Reach your arms long at your side, reaching for the wall in front of you as you bring your chin up to your chest and focus on your belly.
3. Stretch your legs up to the ceiling and squeeze your buttocks and inner thighs as you lower your legs to an angle.
4. Pump your arms up and down from the shoulder while constantly pulling your navel to spine.
5. Deeply inhale for five counts and exhale for five counts. Repeat for one hundred counts.

### **The Roll Up (Basic):**

1. Lie flat on your back with your arms extended overhead and pull your navel to spine. Squeeze your buttocks and upper inner thighs together and flex your feet.
2. Reach your arms up to the ceiling and pull your head through your arms (as though your framing your face with your straight arms). Continue to pull your navel to spine as you roll up and forward staying round. Do not flatten your back as you reach for your toes.
3. Initiating from your belly, pull your navel into the lower back as you pinch the bottom and roll down one vertebrae at a time. The arms stay shoulder height as you roll back and then reach up for the ceiling and finally back over your head.
4. Inhale to come up, exhale to reach for your toes. Inhale to roll back, exhale from the waistline to the mat.

### **Single Leg Circles (Basic):**

1. Lie flat on your back with the arms extended down by your sides, navel to spine, with one leg straight up to the ceiling.
2. The leg then makes a small circle crossing over the body first (counterclockwise). Keep both hips and shoulders anchored to the mat at all times.
3. After five circles in one direction, reverse and then bend the leg in and stretch it long.
4. Repeat on the other leg.
5. Breathe naturally.

### **Rolling Like A Ball (Basic):**

1. Sitting up, bring your bottom down to your heels bending your knees and grabbing your ankles.
2. The head is rested on the chest in between the knees. Feet are slightly off the mat and slightly pointed.
3. Use your navel to initiate the rolling back and rolling forward staying in a ball position.
4. Keep your heels glued to your body the entire time with your shoulders depressed and chest relaxed.
5. Inhale as you go back and exhale as you go forward.

### **Single Leg Stretch (Basic):**

1. Lie flat on your back with the right leg bent into the chest. Put your right hand on your ankle and your left hand on your knee. (This will keep your leg in proper alignment with your hip).
2. Lift your chin up to your chest, focusing on your belly. Extend your left leg out at an angle reaching as far to the floor as you can while still maintaining navel to spine.
3. Inhale as you pull the right knee to your right shoulder twice and exhale as you switch and pull your left knee in to your left shoulder. (Hand placement on left leg should be left hand on ankle and right hand on knee).
4. Repeat five to ten times and pull both knees to chest.



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### Double Leg Stretch (Basic):

1. Lie flat on your back with both knees bent to chest, grabbing your ankles with both hands.
2. The chin is lifted to chest and remains there as you inhale and reach the arms and legs long and strong in opposite directions and hold the position.
3. The arms scoop around to the sides and back down to grab your ankles hugging them into the chest as you exhale. Remember to keep the navel to spine and lift your legs up at the angle as high as need be to protect the back.
4. Repeat five to ten times and pull both knees to chest.

### Single Straight Leg Stretch (Intermediate):

1. Lie flat on your back, navel to spine and chin to chest.
2. Stretch your right leg straight up in air as you grab your right ankle with both hands. The opposite leg is stretched out at an angle, hovering slightly above the mat.
3. Keeping the elbows out, pull the right leg toward with a pulse then switch the legs keeping them straight the entire time. Inhale one leg and exhale the other.
4. Repeat five to ten times.

### Double Straight Leg Stretch (Intermediate):

1. Put your hands behind your head, lift your chin to your chest, and bring your legs together at a ninety-degree angle in slight first position (Pilates stance).
2. Squeezing your bottom and inner thighs, lower both legs to the floor as much as possible while still maintaining a flat back and inhale.
3. Drawing your navel deeper to the spine, exhale as you bring the legs back up to the start position.
4. Repeat five to ten times and pull; both knees to your chest.

### Criss Cross (Intermediate):

1. Lie flat on your back with both hands behind your head, drawing your chin up to your chest.
2. Put your left elbow to your right knee as you extend the left leg out at an angle just above the floor. Look behind you as you pull your right elbow to the back wall.
3. Switch and pull your right elbow to your left knee as the right leg extends out.
4. Inhale one set and exhale one set. Repeat for five to ten sets.

### Spine Stretch Forward (Basic):

1. Sit up with your legs extended straight in front shoulder width apart with flexed feet. Extend both arms out in front of your shoulders.
2. Starting from the top of your head and drawing the navel to spine, roll down and forward one vertebrae at a time as your arms continue to reach forward. Exhale as you roll into a "C", never flattening the lower back to the floor.
3. Squeeze your buttocks as you inhale and roll up, stacking one vertebra at a time and initiating from the navel.
4. Repeat 5 times.

\*\*\* Remember that Basic does not mean easy but rather the first exercises introduced that are essential for the process of transformation.

For additional information: [www.pilates-studio.com](http://www.pilates-studio.com) [www.pilatesmethodalliance.com](http://www.pilatesmethodalliance.com)



# The Discipline of Technique

by Kelli Woodruff

Clean lines, injury prevention, effortless movements, body awareness, strength of movement, and ability to execute a danced dance skills are all reasons to focus time and energy on dance technique. The desire to perfect these strengths motivates dancers to focus both time and energy on basic key elements of mature technique. In my opinion there is nothing more beautiful than a dancer who performs movements with clean lines and looks as though his/her body is being elongated beyond the finger tips and toes. Hyper-extended arms, flexed feet, hunched shoulders, released abdominals, bent knees, and lifeless hands are all body alignment issues in dance that ruin the beautiful clean lines a dancer is working to achieve. Also, when the body parts mentioned above are not properly aligned the execution of dance skills seem laborious where as the goal is to make dance seem effortless.

Because ballet is said to be the foundation of all dance, it is imperative to incorporate at least the fundamentals of ballet into dance training. It is very difficult for a dancer to perform an advanced dance movement if he/she does not have an understanding of correct alignment and placement in basic dance movements. If a dancer can grasp the basic concepts of movements such as a plié or tendu, and learn how to execute them properly, then the dancer can move on to more difficult movements and execute them accurately.

Two dance basics that are beneficial in working on dance technique are plié and tendu. A plié is so important to be able to perform well because it is the beginning and end of many movements.... pirouette prep, prep for a grand jeté or other leaps. A plié also allows for ease of recovery or landing from many movements and a soft recovery will protect joints from being jarred and stressed, thus extending the dancers' career and protecting the dancer from knee and ankle injuries.

A tendu is important for the dancer to learn in order for the foot and leg to be shaped properly when leaving the floor. The leg should stretch from the hip all the way to the end of the toes. Toes should not rest on the floor as a tendu is being executed. As the leg is moved from a closed position to the stretched (tendu) the leg remains straight. Performing tendus repetitively trains the leg not to bend as it begins to leave the floor. So, when more advanced movements such as grand battements or high kicks are taught, the leg is automatically used to not bending as it leaves the floor. Performing tendus in derriere is effective in training the back leg to extend in a grand jeté instead of being bent. Students frequently fail to straighten their back legs in leaps, but going back to the basic tendu in warm-up helps to remind dancers of how it feels for the back leg to be straight and foot pointed before their leg ever leaves the floor.

As a dancer becomes more aware of the mechanics of a small movement as a plié or tendu then the body becomes more aware of how it should move while executing more difficult movements. Thus injuries are less likely to occur as the body is now aligned and able to execute a movement more efficiently.

A dancer who has a strong dance technique back ground will make even a grand jeté look more effortless and beautiful than a dancer who has not been trained on the fundamentals of dance technique. A dancer with strong dance technique will dance with more control because she will understand how her body works and how to proper align and execute a movement. Also an understanding of dance technique will allow a student to be able to move on to more advanced choreographical elements that might require the dancer to move off her center of gravity. Once a dancer can execute basic dance technique movements properly, he/she can then move on to more difficult movements and are able to perform them with correct body alignment.

## Plié

[plee-AY]

Bent, bending. A bending of the knee or knees. This is an exercise to render the joints and muscles soft and pliable and the tendons flexible and elastic, and to develop a sense of balance.

## Tendu

[tahn-DEW]

Stretched. A tendu is an exercise to force the insteps well outward. The working foot slides from the first or fifth position to the second or fourth position without lifting the toe from the ground. Both knees must be kept straight. When the foot reaches the position pointe tendue, it then returns to the first or fifth position.

Dance technique, however, should never be sacrificed for height in leaps or kicks. It is also better to execute fewer turns properly than to constantly work for multiple turns performed incorrectly. The more the body is trained to align properly the stronger the dancer will become as the muscles remember the correct alignment position. When crunch time for contest season comes a round, continue to incorporate dance technique into the cleaning process of dances. If pirouettes are not being executed properly, then have students practice the turn as a balance. Repeat the turn section without the turn several times just working on placement. Then repeat the turn section several times with the music in order to execute this section with precision. Critique each student on the mechanics, and have the students critique each other. It is difficult to see what each student needs to work on, which is why it is helpful to have dancers watch each other. They learn a great deal from watching especially if a weaker dancer is paired up with a stronger dancer. Try not to let a movement in a dance go by without working on the proper technical execution.

It is a slow process having to go back to the basics, but it is definitely important, especially if a dancer has not received prior proper training. With the advancement of dance skills being performed with dance teams today it is worth the time and energy to go back to the basics and train the body to align properly. Many injuries will be prevented and your dancers will be less frustrated once they know how their body works.



# Dance Fundamentals

## – Basic to Advanced Skills

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by Kelli Woodruff

I am a strong advocate that dance technique begins in the center during warm-up, not through progressions across the floor. If a dancer does not know the basics of how the foot should leave the floor or how the body should align, a pirouette, kick, leap or other movements will not be executed with proper dance technique and more advanced movements will not be achieved. I also feel it is imperative that dance directors should incorporate dance technique into as many rehearsals as possible. Scheduling time each day for dance technique is essential for dancers to develop strength and skill to perform advanced movements. If a detailed schedule is used during each practice you can find time to incorporate dance technique into practice. Utilize time during spring training and summer practice to teach basic technique combinations that you expect your dancers to execute. Keep the combinations simple, focusing on dance technique instead of choreography.

I have developed a center barre warm-up that has helped my team increase their dance technique and allowed them to be able to learn more difficult dance movements and execute them with efficiency. I start in the center because I want my dancers to focus on alignment of their body and have their muscles remember how to align properly before executing more difficult skills.

During summer practice I teach the center barre warm-up and do it almost every day for 2-weeks of summer practice. It is a set center barre so that once the dancers know it, they do not have to think about memorizing combinations -only focusing on their body alignment. Once school starts it is often difficult to incorporate a long technical warm-up into practice, but I schedule it in at least once a week. I also have my officers incorporate sections of it on their warm-up days. Besides describing center barre, I have broken down several basic dance skills for you, such as pirouettes and jets. Again, I go back to the basics during summer training to make sure everyone knows the mechanics of each movement instead of jumping right into the movement. Also, once the combinations are taught for center barre, the officers can lead the movements and demonstrate, leaving the teacher free to walk among the dancers to correct alignment.

Dance technique can be taught many ways, but this is what works for me and I have seen very positive results. I am constantly revising my warm-up and learning new ways to train my dancers and strengthen their dance technique. Some of the combinations change, but the structure of the warm-up stays pretty much the same. (Pre-warm up to wake up the body and get the blood pumping, isolations, standing stretches, center barre, and floor stretches.) You will find that dancers get a much deeper more efficient stretch after doing the center barre because their bodies are VERY warm! Then I move the students across the floor for progressions. I alternate turn days with kick/leap days. I do continue to throw more advanced skills at the team even if I know they will not be executed properly because students NEED to have a challenge.

Working on dance technique might seem impossible each day with the need to clean choreography, but if you schedule it in to each practice you CAN make it happen, and you WILL see an enormous improvement in your dancers. The benefits ARE worth it!

### **PRE-BARRE WARM-UP:** *Initial Warm-up to increase heart rate and wake up the body*

#### **HEAD CIRCLES & ROLL DOWN**

- 8 Head circles R 2 X (2nd time add the upper body)
- 8 Roll down 1-2, Plié 3-4, Stretch 5-6, Roll-up 7-8
- REPEAT LRL

#### **SIDE STRETCH – keep it moving**

- 8 Lateral stretch 1-2, Flat back 3-4, Combré back 5-6, Flat 7-8
- 8 Bend L leg 1-2, Straighten 3-4 Drop Swing all the way down to the floor and up center 5-8
- REPEAT LRL

#### **PULSES IN SECOND – inner thigh strength & shape of foot in forced arch, prevent sickling**

- 8 Plié 2nd with arms 1st 1-2, plié 2nd arms to 2nd 3-4, plié pulse 2nd 5-8
- REPEAT MANY TIMES
- 8 Stay low and pulse progressively getting lower
- 8 Hold plié 2nd – lift R heel off 1 and down 2 continue LRL (MAKE SURE STUDENTS DO NOT SICKLE FOOT AS THE HEEL LIFTS)
- 8 In plié 2nd – lift both heels off and replace every 2 counts
- 8 Hold heels off Straighten knees to demi pointe



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**ISOLATIONS:** *Learn to move one body part independently of others*  
Head, Shoulders, Ribs, Hips

**CENTER STRETCH:** *Runner's Lunge Combination (hold the stretch for longer if desired)*

- 8 Runner's Stretch – R leg back, R elbow down L arm reach to ceiling
- 8 Switch for L hand on floor & R arm reach to ceiling
- 8 Center & Stretch back sending back heel to the floor and knees straight
- 8 Flex front 4cts, Back heel 4cts
- 8 Flex front turn out and lunge with elbows down
- 8 Return center and push back to yoga Down Dog – Feet together
- 8 Tread RLRL
- 8 Ponché R & pulse the leg up
- REPEAT TO THE OTHER SIDE
- 8 Walk feet together parallel stretch
- 8 Bend R – 4 cts, L - 4cts,
- 8 Bend in 2 cts RL, then alternate RLRL
- 8 Tuck – stretch over the feet for the arches
- 8 Stretch and roll-up

(Sometimes I add in abdominal exercises at this point in the warm-up in order for the dancers to feel where their center is located and are able to hold it correctly while performing center barre)

**CENTER BARRE**

**BREAK STEP**

(Use as a breather step, to stretch the back, and work on turn-out)

- 8 In turned out 1st, Circle arms back and arch 1-2, Stretch over legs nose to knees 3-4, hold 5-8
- 8 Plié 1-2, Stretch 3-4 Roll up 5-8

**FOOT ARTICULATIONS – Parallel & turned out 1st**

(Strengthen the foot and learn how the foot should leave and return to the floor)

- 8 R foot - Ball 1, point and take the toes off the floor 2, ball 3, heel down 4, Repeat L 5-8
- 8 REPEAT R&L
- 8 Push the foot off the floor to a point 4 X R & 4 X L
- 8 REPEAT R & L

TURN OUT AND REPEAT ALL IN 1ST

**PLIÉS – 1st, 2nd, 5th R & 5th L**

(Works turn-out, alignment of leg in turn-out, strengthen legs to maintain stability in demi pointe)

- 8 2 demi pliés 1-4, grand plié 5-8
- 8 Elevé with arms to 5th 1-4, Lower heels and change positions 5-8

**ELEVÉ – 1st position**

(Strengthen the legs to maintain balance for turns, alignment of torso, begin balance transfer to 1 leg)

- 8 Curl toes 1, Flatten 2, elevé up 3, lower 4, REPEAT
- REPEAT 2X
- 8 Balance in 1st
- 8 Elevé up and down 8 Xs
- 8 Balance on demi point
- 8 Transfer weight to R & take L foot back to coupé
- REPEAT TO L

**TENDUS – 1st position**

(Works to knee straight as the leg leaves the floor, point the foot, not put weight on extended toe, balance on one leg)

- 8 Tendu, plié en croix R
- 8 REPEAT L
- 8 Tendu, flex, tendu, close en croix R
- 8 Continue R
- 8 REPEAT L
- 8 Continue L



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### DEGAGÉS 1st position

(Work to keep knee straight as the leg leaves the floor, use the brush of the foot along the floor, shape of the foot, & balance on one leg)

- 8 4 each position en croix R
- 8 Continue R
- 8 REPEAT L
- 8 Continue L

### Break Step

#### RONDE DE JAMBE – Legs in 1st, Hand on supporting hip and other arm in 2nd

(Stabilization of pelvis, rotation of leg in hip socket (prepare for fouettes), elongation of leg, shape of the foot, & balance)

- 8 2 slow rond de jambe on the R 1-4 & 5-8
- 8 1-4 R off the floor rond de jambe, 5 brush leg front to 90 degrees, 6 retiré, 7 lower 1st, 8 change hands
- 8 REPEAT ON L en dehors
- 8 Continue L
- 8 REPEAT R en dedans
- 8 Continue R
- 8 REPEAT L en dedans
- 8 Continue L

### PASSÉ WORK – parallel and turned out 1st

(alignment of body for pirouette parallel and turned out)

- 8 Coupé R parallel 1-2, bring to passé 3-4, pulse the knee up to the shoulder 4X 5-8
- 8 Passé with arms 1st 1-2, Elevé and hold 3-7, lower 8
- REPEAT LRL parallel, REPEAT RLRL turned out

### Break Step

#### FONDU, ATTITUDE, DEVELOPPÉ- from turned out 1st

(Strength in supporting leg, alignment of torso, strength in center, extension of legs, shape of foot)

- 8 Fondu en croix with R leg
- 8 Passé 1, attitude 2 en croix
- 8 Passé 1, flex foot développé 2, élevé and point 3, lower to 1st 4 CONTINUE EN CROIX
- 8 CONTINUE
- REPEAT ALL ON LEFT

**FLOOR STRETCHES:** Any of the usual floor stretches but it is also a good time to partner stretch because the dancers are VERY warm. Pretzel, Second, Parallel, Butterfly, etc....

❖ **PIROUETTES** – Break down each element of a pirouette before performing the turn and definitely go back to the basics when more advanced turns are looking sloppy.

- **Balance in passé** – effective to use partners, 1 person balances in passé with the arms in 1st while the other holds under the fore arm and corrects alignment of the person balancing
- **Spotting Exercise** – Beginning dancers often do not understand the concept of turning the head and focusing on a spot.
  - ◆ Have the dancers stand in first parallel focusing on a spot on the wall.
  - ◆ Combo: 1-4 Take 4 small steps to the R positioning the feet to the back while holding the focus, 5 whip the head around “spot”, 6-8 catch the feet up to the head before repeating.
- **Beginning the rotation of the turn** – (balance, -, -, whole)
  - ◆ Combo: 1&2 Kick ball change into pirouette prep, 3-4 Balance hold in passé, REPEAT 4 X
  - ◆ Add four 1/4 -turn to the balance 4Xs
  - ◆ Add 1/2 turn to the balance 4Xs
  - ◆ Add full pirouette single with balance 4Xs
- **Pirouettes across the floor**-- cross ball change 2X, prep, pirouette (oldie but goodie)
- **Add to the simple combo more advanced elements**
  - ◆ Change the pirouette to a coupé turn, pencil turn, leg grab turn, etc...
  - ◆ Perform only 1 cross ball change to the prep, perform a pirouette then plié releve into another type of turn: attitude 2nd, turned out passé with different arms, 2nd turn, fouetté, etc....
- **Group work for pirouettes:** Group work is wonderful to be able to concentrate on balance, strengthening, and turning all at the same time with no one waiting for their turn. Very efficient use of time!



- ♦ 1 group is performing elevés at the barre to strengthen the supporting leg (could be in any position - also can focus on fouette preps)
- ♦ 1 group is practicing balancing with a partner (any position)
- ♦ 1 group is in the center working on a turn combination

❖ **JETÉS** – Break each element down into the following: strength of bottom foot to push off the floor, Front leg straight, back leg straight, height of jump

- **Chassé** - I like to start with simple chassés for beginners in order to work on toe-ball-heel action as well as momentum and height
- **Chassé Battement Sauté Combo:** Works the bottom foot to push off the floor, front leg extension, and coordination of arms to keep shoulders down  
8 1 & Chassé R, 2 Brush the L leg (it was in back at the end of the chassé) through 1st to 90 degrees and sauté so the bottom foot is pointed. (Arms 2nd 1 &, circle down and up to 5th 2).  
Continue repeating as it alternates legs
- **Piqué Arabesque Combo:** Extension of back leg, maintaining stability and alignment in torso, rolling through the foot to plié at end of a jeté  
8 4 Walks RLRL 1-4, Piqué arabesque and roll through the foot into plié 5-8  
REPEAT as it alternates legs
- **Combine the elements together into a jeté combo:**  
**COMBO IDEAS:**
  - ♦ Chassé, step, jeté – alternating legs
  - ♦ Only do 1 Chassé step jeté then continue to step jeté repetitively across the floor on the same leg – this helps with stamina for multiple leap sequences and getting the hips up
  - ♦ Step, hop in passé, 2 Runs, Jeté 2X or more

❖ **ADVANCED SKILLS**

- **Fouettes** – have students repeat many times at the barre or holding on to a partner the following prep:  
8 (Begin on relevé with R leg in passé) Plié and extend R leg to 90 to front - 1, stay in plié and open R leg 2nd - 8, bring the R leg into passé turned out 2

CONTINUE TO REPEAT (Same prep can work on 2nds just leave the leg out instead of bringing into passé)

\* Let students just go for the fouette in the center of the room doing as many as possible for a particular amount of music. I have found that the repetitiveness helps them to continue trying to correct the alignment issues that I am mentioning.

- **AXLE**
  - ♦ 2 Steps pick up to passé and lower
  - ♦ Chainé passé step prep (Kick bottom leg up the next time)
  - ♦ Chassé, plié rond de jambe to passé
- **CHAINÉ, PIQUÉ, SOUTENU, LAME DUCK**
  - ♦ Teach each of the above traveling turns individually without having the students perform the rotations. Then perform each turn individually with the rotations going across the floor. Third, work toward adding all four of the turns together. Practice without the revolutions in order to work on placement and alignment then add the revolutions.
- **LEG GRAB & LEG TURNS** (traveling across the floor)  
8 Step L 1, Kick R front 2, step R 3, kick L front 4, step L and turn to the front 5, kick R to second facing front 6, step R 7, half turn and dig the L foot 8  
8 Walk LR 1-2, Lunge on the L leg to prep for a R leg grab or leg turn 3-4, Brush R leg up for leg grab & hold 5-7, step 8  
REPEAT 2X with just a leg grab / REPEAT 2 times with a leg turn
- **RUSSIAN** – tombé pas de bourre Russian, step back and turn out of it
- **REVERSE JETÉ** - 2 runs & reverse



# Modern Dance Improvisations

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*by Roxanne Gage*

## **Improvisation and Partnering:**

Start with an introduction in small groups of 6 or 8

Name and Gesture

Gesture pass game

Babble for 30 seconds w/ partner

I could tell a story about...

## **Fun Games**

Mirroring—in 2's changing leaders

Follow the leader—in 4's changing leaders

Conversations—Tell story w/ movement, stop and other responds

Flash Dances—Call out random words for dancers to express

## **Moving Through Space:**

Far Apart, Close Together

Follow and Leave

Forming Duets and Trios

Guiding Someone & Changing Directions

Lowering to the floor, Assisting up

Levels and Shapes

Shape Tag

Trust Walks straight across floor--eyes closed

Guiding partners around the floor --eyes closed

Walking in trios connected

Pushing/Resisting Across the floor

## **Taking and Giving Weight, Balance and Counterbalance**

Sitting Back to Back

On all fours

Standing lean away

Creative lifts

Hand to hand partnering (never release)

