

PIROUETTE TECHNIQUE

This information regarding best practices for the pirouette is set in a classical ballet context utilizing turn-out. Most of the technique may also be applied to performing turns in a parallel position.

HEAD

- the eyes remain level on a horizontal plane
- keep the jaw and tongue relaxed; any undue tension will affect the alignment of the spine
- spotting is a technique that helps to refocus the eyes and aids in balance
- spotting allows a dancer to produce multiple turns with precision and consistency
- know where to spot before you begin a turn
- know where to end the spot if it is different from where you started
- the spot, along with the arms, controls the speed of the turn so adjust as needed
- spot on the second step of a pas de bourrée turn

UPPER BODY

- control the rhythm of your turn with breath; initiate your turn with an exhale as you rise into relevé; this will close your rib cage to create additional force to inform your turning velocity
- joints such as the shoulders and hips should be aligned on both sides of the body for balance in your turn
- if falling to one side, think of stretching vertically; lengthen the spine reaching through the crown of the head

- slide the shoulder blades down and in to anchor the shoulder area; this counterbalance to rising in a relevé allows you to turn with greater control of your arm movements
- visualize how your arms are placed before you turn; the arms initiate the turn before the movement of the pelvis and legs
- placement of the arms will either aid or hinder the momentum in the ability to turn; consistently keep the shape and placement of the arms while turning
- at the beginning of the plié the arms are placed in third position; in relevé the arm rounded in front of the sternum opens to a demi-second before both arms close in first for the turn
- when the arms are placed in first position the fingertips remain level with the sternum
- the arms should be placed as follows: elbows are lower than the shoulders; wrists are lower than the elbows; fingers are lower than the wrists
- longer arms may need to cross while turning
- release any tension in the fingers and thumbs by simply shaking the hands vigorously

LOWER BODY

- turn-out must be maintained throughout the duration of the turn; rotating inward during the turn will result in a loss of force in the spin
- experiencing counterbalance between the working leg and the opposite hip is the key to maintaining turn-out during the pirouette; avoid pulling the opposite hip in the same direction as the working leg
- hips should remain balanced and aligned when the working leg is lifted in retiré, coupé, or any other desired position
- perform an adequate plié as relevant to the number of revolutions in your pirouette
- stretch behind the knee when rising into a relevé

- remain in relevé during the entire revolution of the turn
- finish your turn with the shoulders and hips squared to the desired ending; in other words, complete the entire turn with clean placement

FEET

- place your feet in the proper preparation from which to begin the turn
- turned-out turns require a turned-out preparation; parallel turns require a parallel preparation
- in your preparation, push away from the ground with equal effort from both feet
- shift your weight forward over the toes in a three-quarter point to balance in relevé
- balance with equal weight distribution between the big and little toes
- visualize yourself turning on a vertical axis pressing through the ball of the foot
- keep the toe connected to the ankle in coupé and to the knee in retiré during the entire revolution; actively engage in a firm placement between the foot and the desired location to sense this connection