

# 8 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR POINTE



***Align Fitness***  
BY ALLIE

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**1st Edition**

**8 Ways to Improve Your Pointe**

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# Introduction

Welcome to my simple, do anywhere, no tools need: pointe improvement guide. You've downloaded this guide because you are serious about improving your skill and are wanting to excel as a dancer.

I have worked with dancers for 15+ years, getting emails and Direct Messages every day that ask for ways to improve strength and flexibility. I wish I could be all over the world to work with all of you, but for now I reside in Huntington Beach, CA and am working on ways to assist you from afar.

Dancers demand the most out of the body out of any sport I have worked with, and on top of it have to look refined, graceful, strong, elegant, playful etc...

People like to ask,

*"How do you do that with your feet!?"*

*"OMG how do you stand on your toes like that?!"*

*"Did you have to break your foot to make it shape like that?"*

We've all heard them, and we all giggle a little inside, but the truth is having the "perfect pointe" takes work.... And to be honest, some people do not have the ability (bone shape+strength+arch) to have that "ideal" pointed foot.

BUT!

You CAN make the very best of what you have and work your tail off to improve it. As dancers, a pointed foot is possibly the most recognized symbol of a dancer and something we work so hard to achieve. As with everything in the body, there are many components that go into making something function correctly and exceed expectation.

There are MANY ways to stretch and improve your pointe with therabands, bought accessories, and partner stretches. There is NO way for me to get them all in this book for you. So, here are 8 exercises you may not be doing regularly to improve your pointe.

Cheers to Pointed feet!

**Allie**

# 1. Achilles Pull

Your Achilles is the tendon that runs along the back of your ankle, from your calf down to the heel.

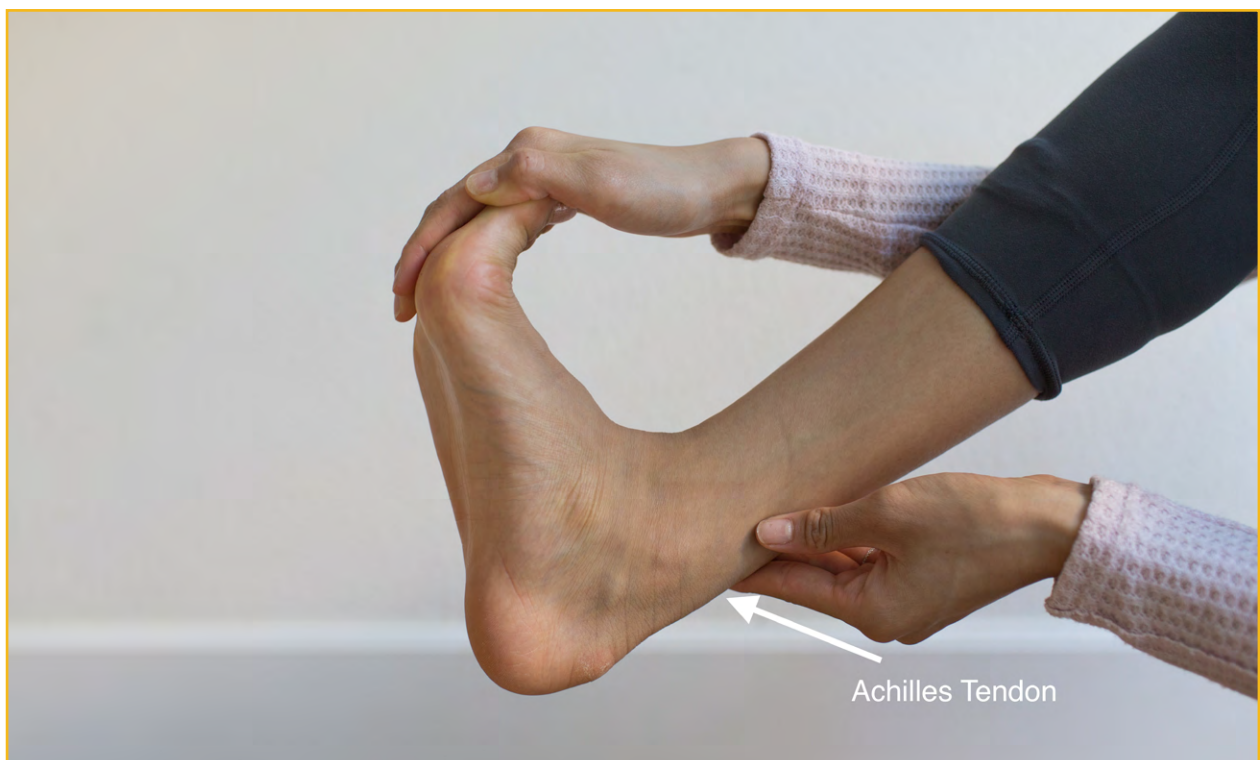
The very first thing I want you to do, is stop jamming your Achilles Tendon up towards your calf! Scrunching the Achilles up in hopes the top of your foot will point more is not going to work AND you're going to injure yourself.

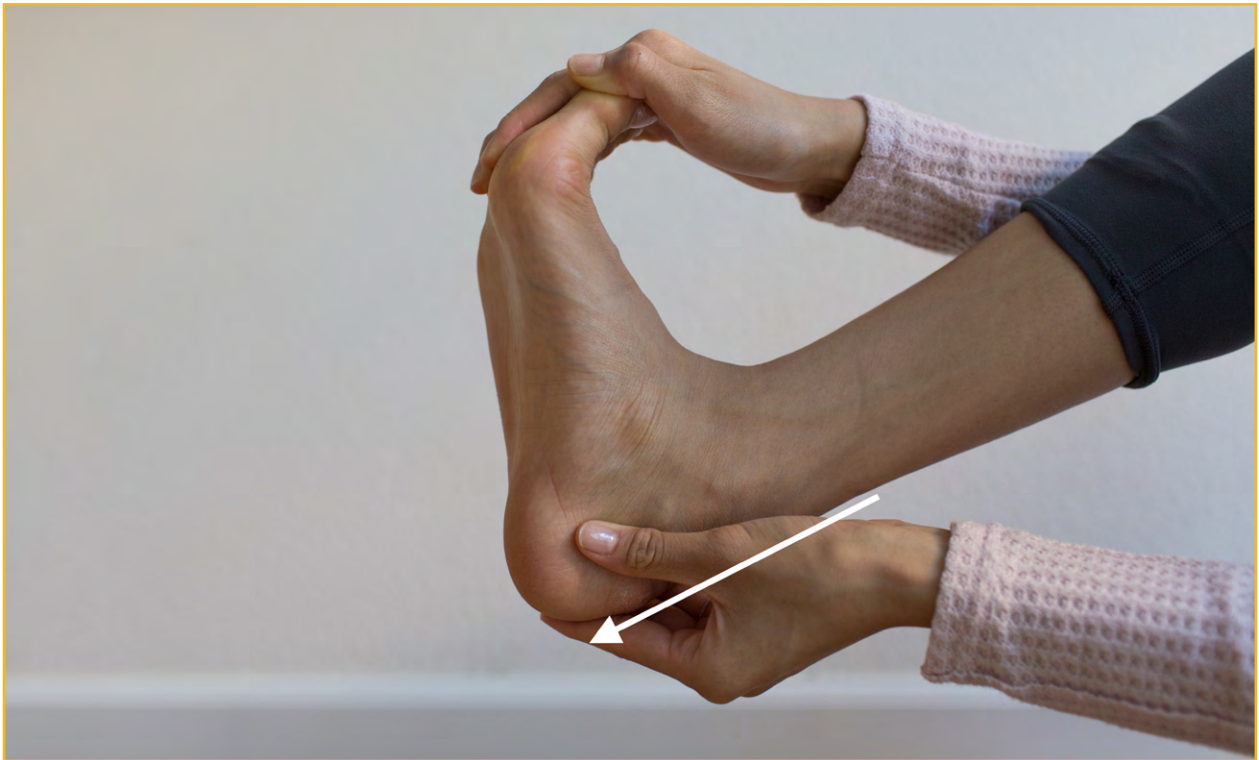
You want a long Achilles as you point your foot and stand in your pointe shoes.

## Step-By-Step

- With your Right Hand, pull your Right Toes back into a flexed ankle
- With your Left Hand, Pinch at the bottom of your calf
- Keeping consistent pressure, run your pinched Thumb and Pointer Finger, down your Achilles Tendon until you get to the tip of your heel
- As you run your fingers down your Achilles, pull lightly on the ball of your foot, to make a greater flex in the ankle
- In between each pull, let the ankle return to a neutral ankle
- Repeat 4 times each foot

You want to apply a good amount of pressure. It should feel like a deep tissue massage you can handle.





**Tip!** Try exhaling as you run your fingers down to the heel!

## 2. Flexed Ankle

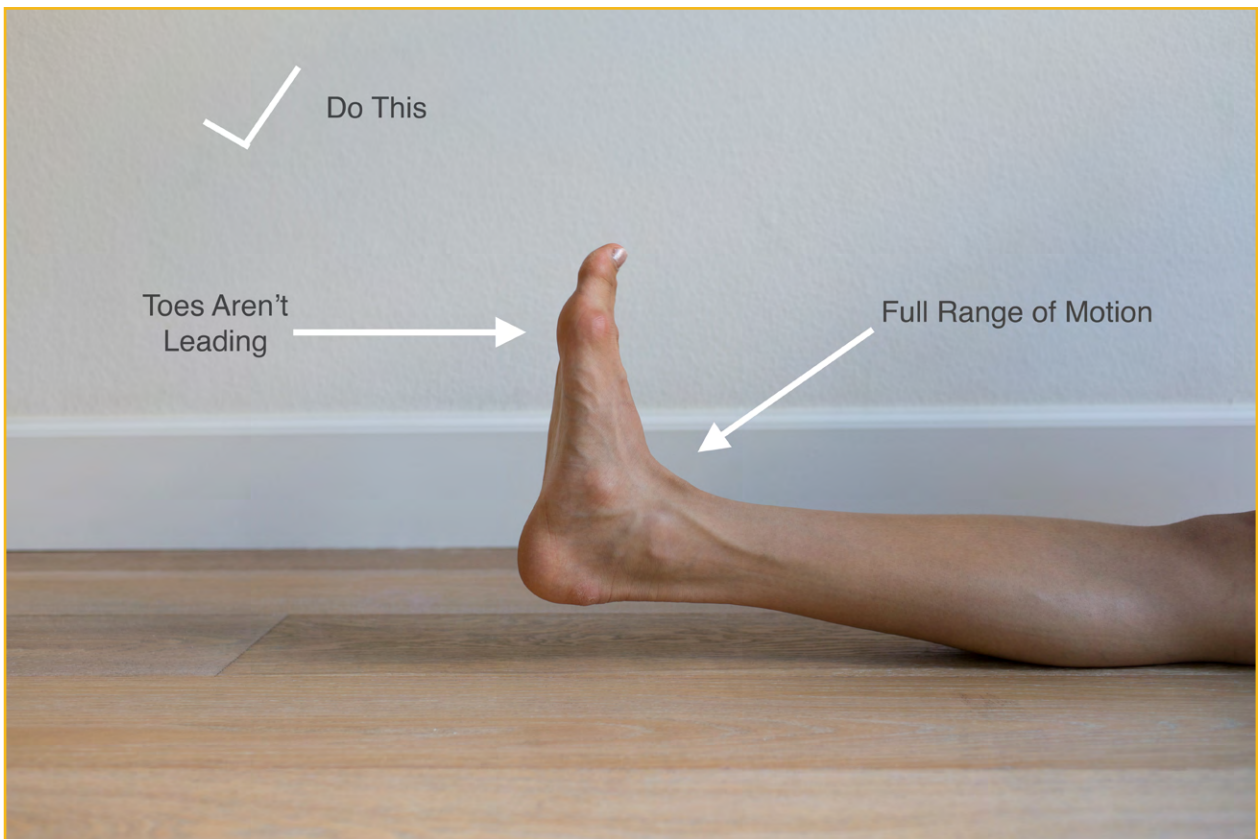
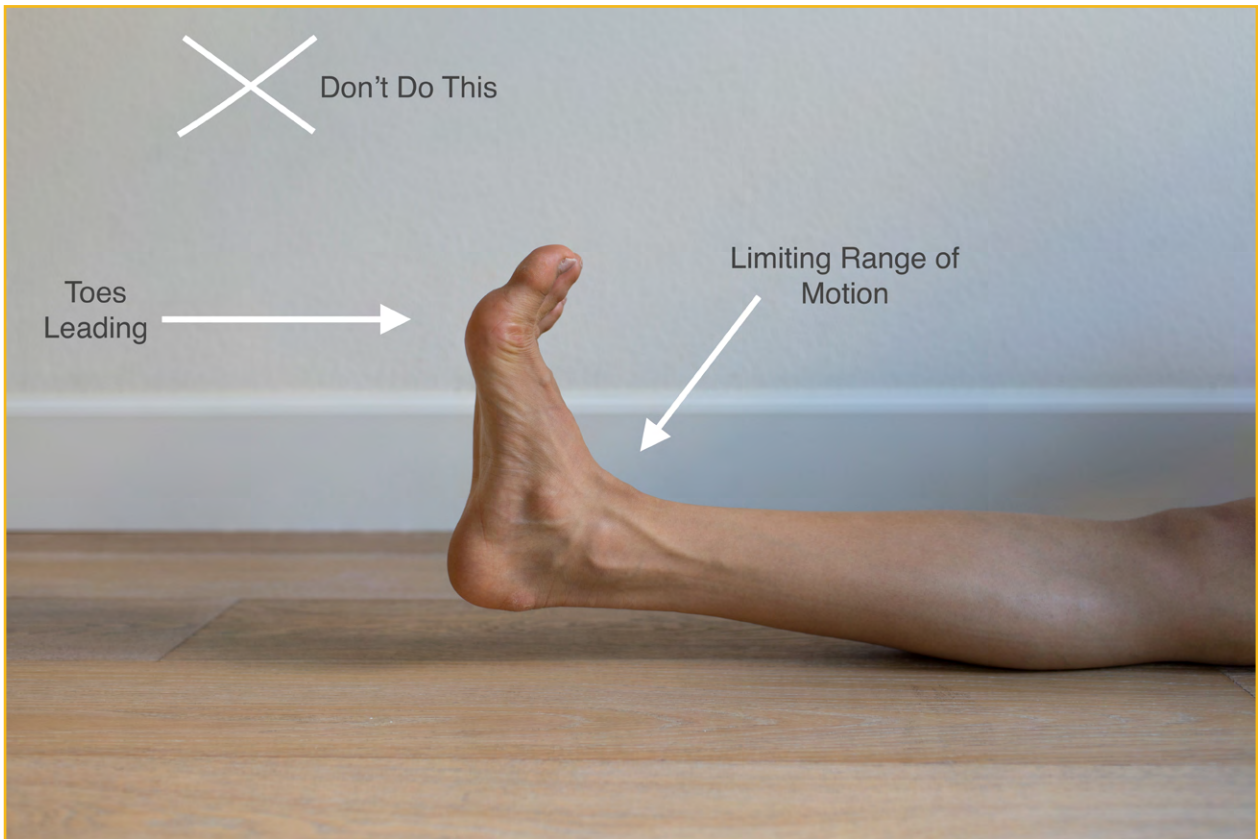
Believe it or not how you FLEX your ankle will help your pointed foot. Many times our toes start to over compensate for what our ankle should be doing (like in the first picture below)

Letting the toes pull back instead of the ankle can lead to weak ankles, bunions, and pain in your feet and knees. When the toes pull back into a small demi pointe, you actually limit the mobility of your ankles! We need a full range of movement in the ankle to allow for your best pointe.

### Step-By-Step

- Try relaxing the toes slightly and really pulling the top of the foot back towards the shin bone. Your flex should look like the picture below.
- Roll through to a pointed foot, and slowly back into flex, getting all the way back to the “good” flexed ankle. Repeat
- Now add in the thought of the “Achilles Pull” exercise as you flex and your ankle mobility will improve.

**\*Remember!** Repetition of the good movement is the only thing that can break a bad habit.



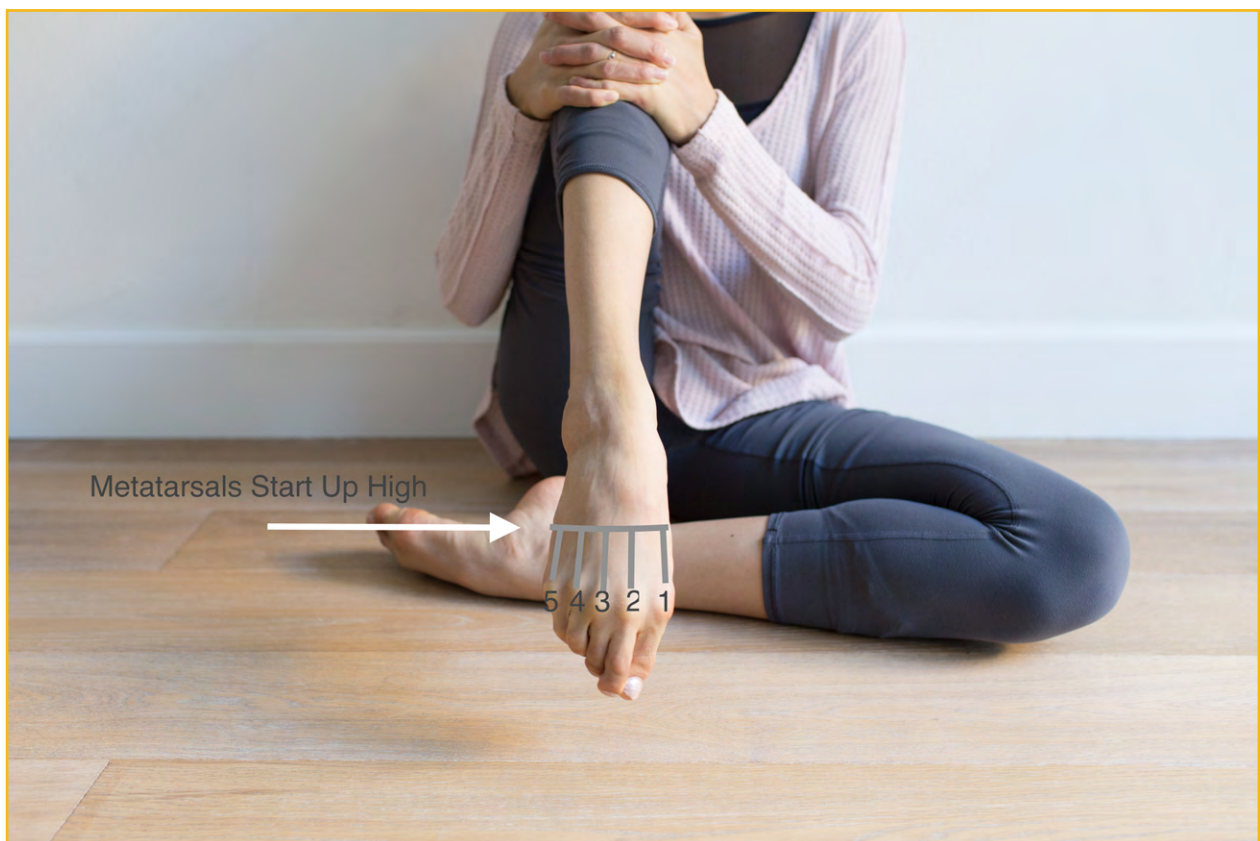
**Tip!** Practice the flex without your toes pulling back and notice how quickly your ankle strength goes up for your balances!

## 3. Metatarsal Wiggle

Our Metatarsals have developed a nickname fondly known as...toes.

Our Toes actually start a lot higher than most people think. As shown in the picture below, your Metatarsals start up in the middle of your foot! Can't believe it? Look at your hand, and imagine the skin going up to your second knuckle...that's what your feet look like!

So, we need to loosen and break up any scar tissue, stuckness, and sticky tendons that are prohibiting you from your best pointe. We are trying to loosen *in between* each Metatarsal.



### Step-By-Step

- Start by sitting on the ground with one foot crossed over your knee/thigh
- Grab on to the big toe Metatarsal with your top hand (hold above the big toe joint) and the second Metatarsal with the bottom hand
- Gently start wiggling the first and second Metatarsal in opposite directions (up and down)
- Move along each Metatarsal, repeating the wiggle



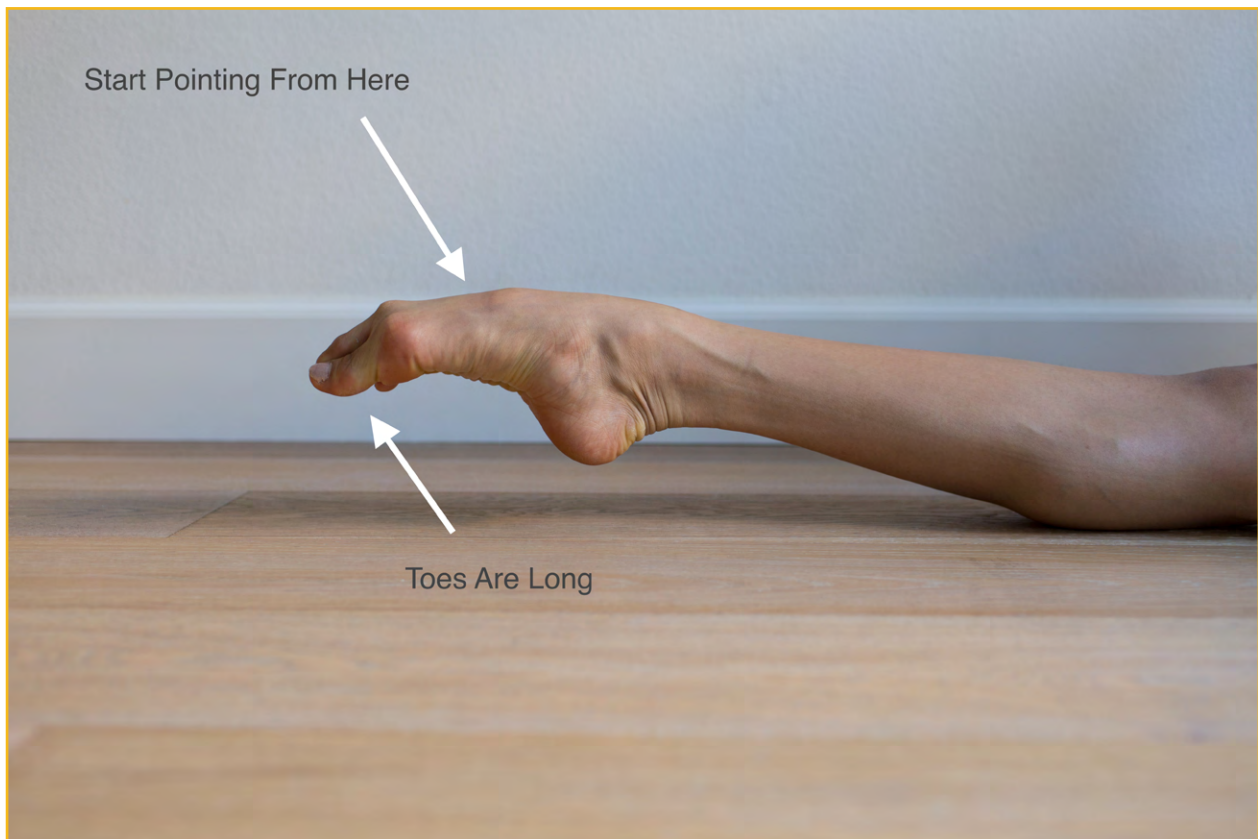


**Tip!** Really try to wiggle the top and the bottom of the Metatarsal up and down. Not sure what to do? [Click here](#) for a video on the Metatarsal Wiggle

## 4. Toe Spread

This exercise is to be practiced ALWAYS while dancing.

Thinking about the fact that our Metatarsals start higher on the foot, this can totally change the look of your pointe if you practice! Every time you hear “Pointe Your Toes!” I want you to think in your head, “Pointe Your FOOT!”



I often see dancers scrunch their toes up in effort to make their pointe look more dramatic. Having long, spread Metatarsals while pointing will save you from ankle and knee pain, while improving your contact on the floor. This will make for better balances, jumps, and longer lines! All from changing the way you think about pointing your toes.

### Step-By-Step

- Practice rolling from a flexed foot to a pointed foot WITHOUT scrunching, crossing, or gripping the toes.
- Try to spread your toes as wide as possible. Imagine what your hand and fingers would look like spread wide, and try to do that with your toes.
- Go back and forth from demi pointe to full pointe (like you would with a theraband) trying to “fold” the toes over and down

When the toes are scrunched, you won't give the underside of your foot a chance to strengthen. When your toes work too hard, they take away the work in the arch and the ankle. We want the arch of the foot to be nice and strong for all of your foot work.



**Tip!** If you can't point your toes without them crossing over each other, you might choose to wear spacers in your pointe shoes between your big toe and second toe. This can also help with bunions!

## 5. Toe Scrunching

This simple exercise is for strengthening the bottom of your feet. This really should be called “Arch Scrunching” because you are strengthening the arch of the foot by pulling the toes in.

### Step-By-Step

- Get a thin towel and lay it on the floor
- Sit in a chair and put your foot flat on the towel
- Trying to leave your toes flat and connected to the floor, pull the towel with the tip of your toes
- This will scrunch up the towel under your arch
- Release your toes and repeat until the towel is completely scrunched under your arch



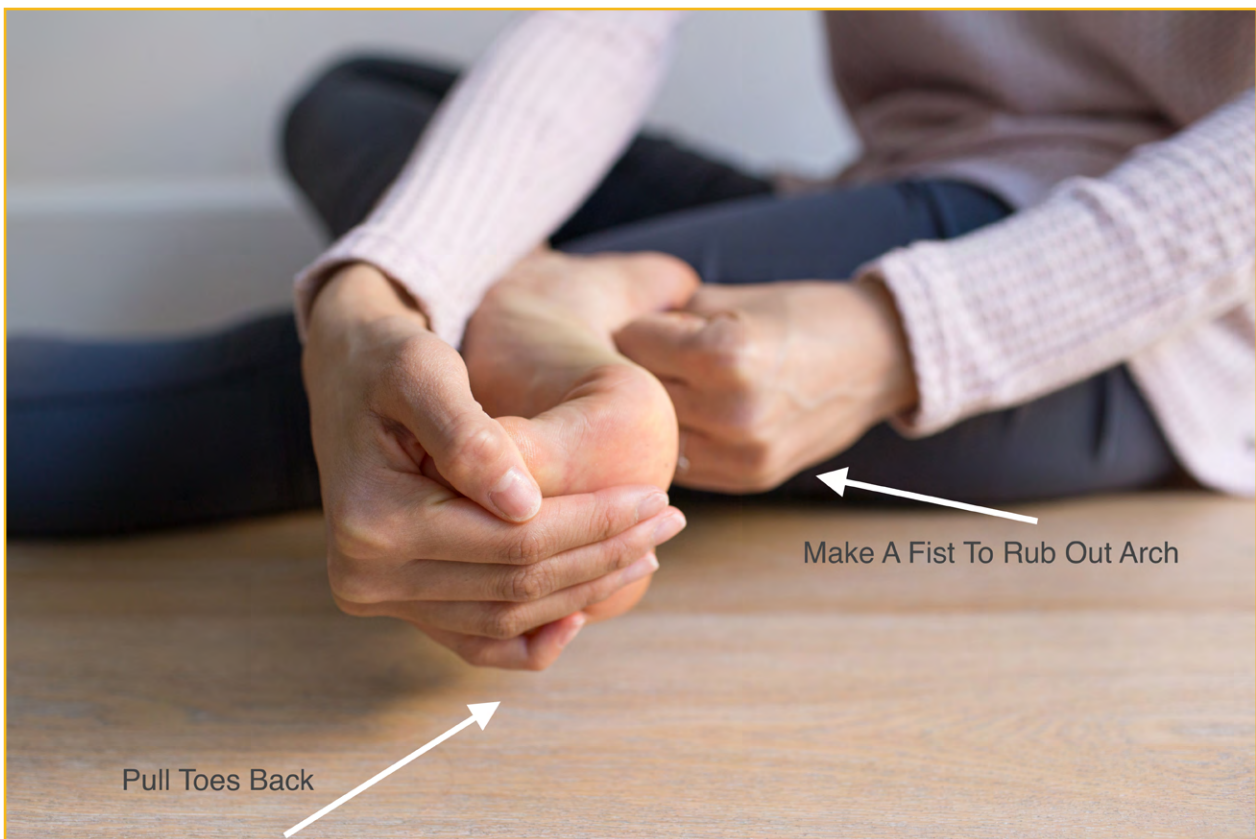
**Tip!** Try to leave the tip of your toes on the floor and make above your knuckles the highest point. This is very challenging to do.

## 6. Kneading The Foot

This one feels like a treat and you will want to do it all the time. Our feet work hard to hold us up, and like the “Metatarsal Wiggle”, we want our feet to be pliable and mobile for the beautiful work you are doing in rehearsal.

### Step-By-Step

- Sitting on the ground, pull your Left Foot back into a flex with your Left Hand
- With your Right Hand, make a fist and start kneading the underside of your arch
- Use your knuckles to apply a good amount of pressure and massage all over



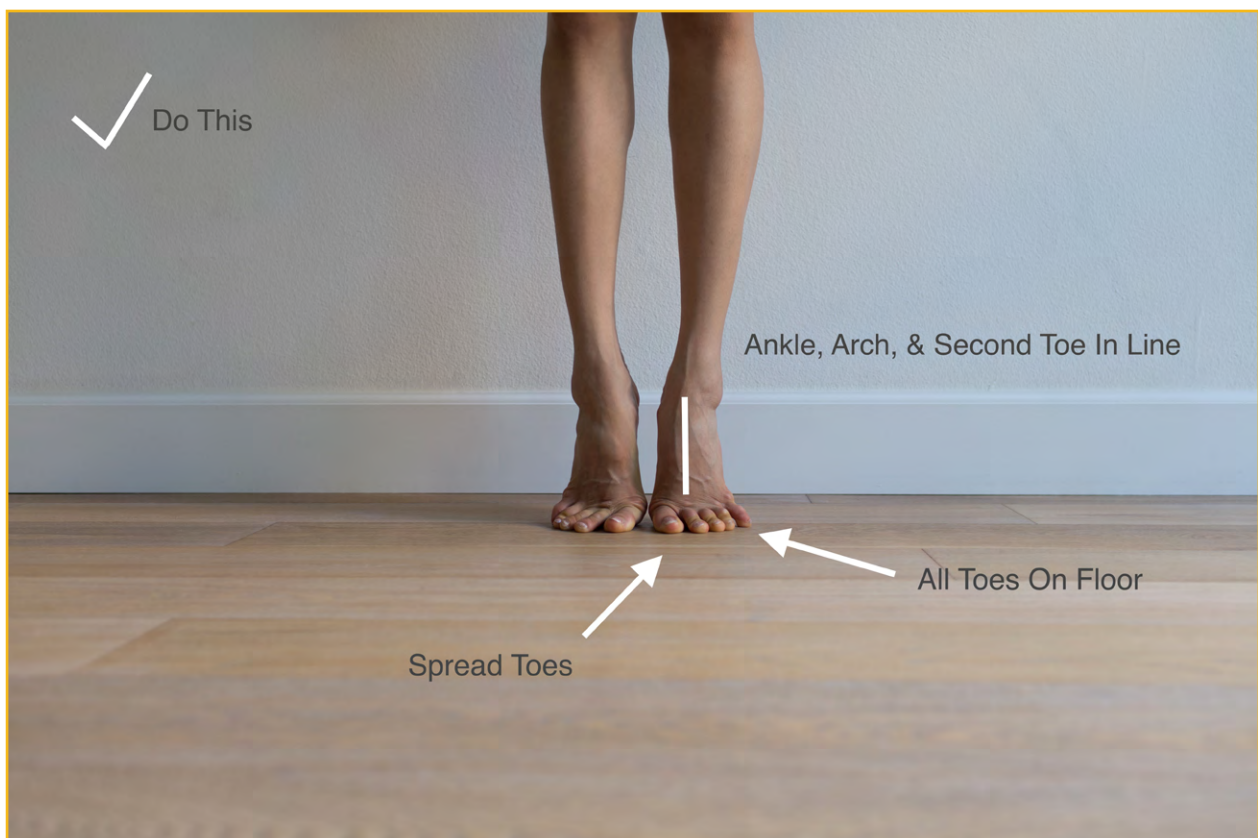
**Tip!** Get those tight “cord” feeling tendons that run from the ball of the foot to the heel. Make long strokes from the heel to the ball of the foot.

## 7. Perfect Releve

One of the best ways to improve the look of your arch is to hold your foot correctly in a releve. This exercise, and the next, “Forced Arch Plie” go hand in hand, and should be practiced together.

### Step-By-Step

- When in releve, we’re looking for a straight line from the center of your ankle, through the arch of your foot, and down to your second toe (note the first picture)
- We want to avoid rolling OUT onto the pinky toes too much, and rolling IN or beveling too much.
- Practice rolling up and down in the mirror with your ankle and second toe lined up



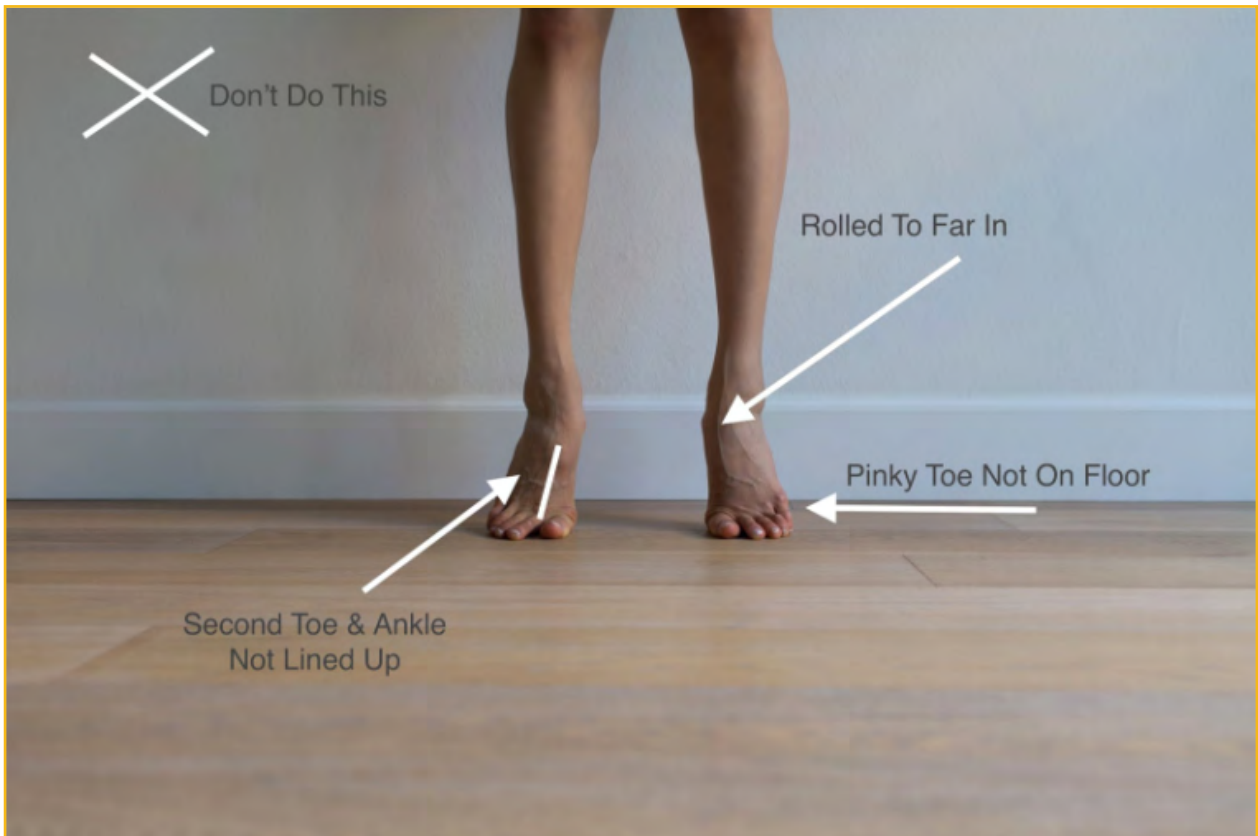
**Tip!** Try putting three dots on your foot to help you visualize the correct placement.

**[Check out this video to see how!](#)**



In this picture, she has more weight into her pinky toes. Most dancers recognize this is not proper alignment for your foot.

**\*Remember!** Our ideal releve is in a straight line.



Notice in this picture her pinky toes are not on the floor. You want to have ALL of your toes on the floor and supporting you.

I know it's tempting to think, "the more bevel, the better!" This is so far from the truth. Think about it this way. ALL of your body weight is sitting on a piece of the foot that is 3-5 inches wide...that's nothing! You want the most support possible and an ankle that is centered is going to look and feel strong and perfect for ballet class.

If a centered ankle feels weak or hard to hold, you know you have some work to do. That simply means you've been using your feet incorrectly and it's time to fix it! Yay!

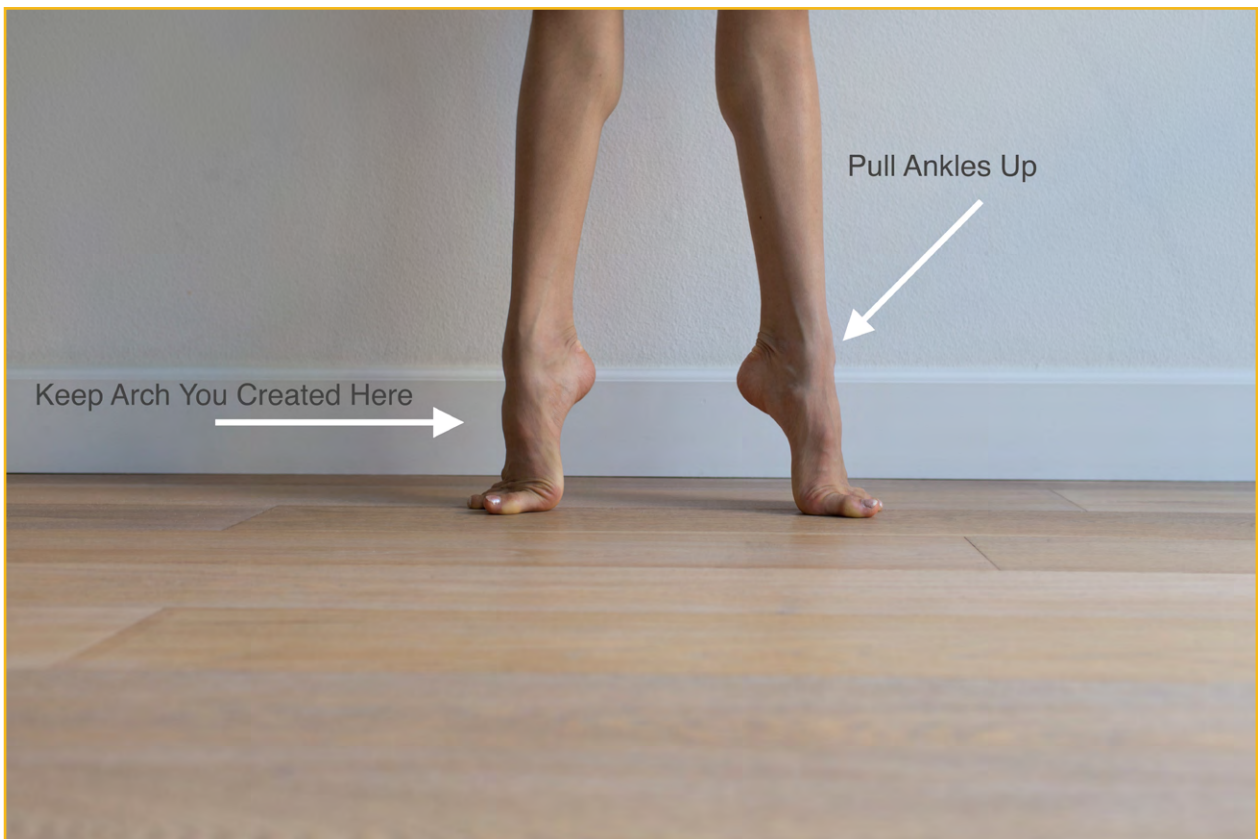
## 8. Forced Arch Plie

We now want to take the mobility you are creating in your foot and combine it with strength. What's the point of having a beautiful foot if you can't use it?

### Step-By-Step

- Standing in your best releve, plie (on releve) and push the arches out over your second toe
- As you slowly straighten your legs, do your best to keep the pointed arch you just created.
- Think of pulling the ankles away from your foot, to give as much space as possible in the ankle joint
- Be careful of rolling too far over your big toe, or into a sickled foot. This will put stress on your ligaments and not be productive. Line your ankle up like you did in the "Perfect Releve" exercise (but in turnout)





**Tip!** As you rise back into straight legs, send your energy down into the floor through the ball of your foot.

You've made it! You have lots of things to practice, believe me! I have put these exercises together because this is what I see EVERY dancer is doing wrong at some degree. Some of these exercises might seem simple, but when applied correctly, you will see a big difference in the way your feet look AND your balance, jumps, pointe work, and lines.

## You might be thinking what's next? Don't worry!

**I have a course in TURNOUT coming soon!**

 In this 10+ video course we will answer questions like...

- "How do I increase my turnout?"
- "Is there a limitation to how much turnout I can get?"
- "Why do my hips hurt when I turnout?"
- "How do I keep my turnout while I'm dancing?"
- "What is actually happening in my hip? Why should I care?"

[sign up for the course](#)



You can also keep in touch by following me on [Instagram](#) to get your hands on tips, tricks, and motivation for your dancing life.

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