

Dear Absolute Beginner Ballet Student,

Welcome! I'm excited for you to take a ballet class that is designed for adults who want to learn or relearn the fundamentals of ballet technique. Take a look at this letter to see if this two-weekend immersion experience is for you!

By the end of this 4-session series, my goal for you is to have a good understanding of:

1. How to prepare yourself for ballet class
2. Basic positions of feet, arms, body: en face, croisé, effacé, downstage and upstage
3. Introduction and practice of the following elementary positions and movements: pliés, tendu, jeté, rond de jambe à terre, passé, retiré, élevé, sous-sus, cou-de-pied, ronde de jambe en l'air, cambré, développé grand battement, échappé, pas de bourrée, balance, attitude, arabesque, glissade, sauté, changements, reverence
4. Execution of elementary combinations incorporating the above positions and movements.
5. Ideas on how to get the most out of going to the ballet.

To accomplish this in 4 sessions – **plan on attending all 4 classes.**

- Saturday, September 21st 5:30–7:30pm (arrive 5:15pm). Stay after class for questions/discussion
- Sunday, September 22nd 11:30–1:30pm (arrive 11:15). Stay after class for questions/discussion
- Saturday, September 28th 5:30–7:30pm (arrive 5:15pm). Stay after class for questions/discussion
- Sunday, September 30th 11:30–1:30pm (arrive 11:15). Stay after class for questions/discussion

Come to class ready to work both physically and mentally – be consistent and commit to experiencing ballet class for 2 weekends!

Give yourself plenty of love as learning ballet technique is not easy or quick. After this series you will be better prepared to enter a beginning adult ballet class. However, you will still have much to learn and you cannot get impatient with yourself. Ballet technique is much like learning a musical instrument or language and it requires time and repetition. Some things will come easily, and others will be more difficult. If you stick with it and work hard – you will begin to connect the dots and then – it's fun and dancing ballet is very gratifying!

Ballet Shoes

You should have ballet shoes for the first class. I recommend you get fitted for your first pair of ballet shoes. One option is going to SF Dance Gear near SF Ballet (information below). Make a 30-minute shoe fitting appointment at www.sfdancegear.com. I suggest canvas Bloch split-soled, canvas ballet shoes.

SF Dance Gear

551 Hayes St.
San Francisco, CA 94102
store: 415.901.3491

Getting Started

We will start by having a conversation about the importance of coming to class at least 10 minutes early, placing your hair away from your face and off your neck (headband, and/or ponytail or updo). Wearing ballet shoes (tuck or cut any strings!), suitable dance clothing (tights, yoga pants), and how you can prepare yourself with an individual warm up for class.

During the first class we will briefly sit on the floor and talk about rotation and lengthening of the legs and pointing feet. Next, we will stand at the barre and begin to learn elementary ballet technique (positions and movements).

Throughout the class and after each class you will have a chance to ask questions and get clarifications.

A few important ballet class “tips”

- When your teacher demonstrates the combination, watch carefully (it’s ok to move away from your place at the barre to better see the demonstration) and give 100% of your attention to learning the sequence as well as the technique (the **how** to do). At this moment, you are not “doing” the exercise – you are “learning” the sequence and technique of the exercise.
- People learn and commit the exercise to memory in different ways. Dancers often commit combinations to memory by “marking.” This means “indicating” the steps with your feet or hands. **Again, at this point you are not fully executing the combination – you are learning the combination.**
- Try hard to commit the exercise to memory so you can concentrate on your technique. You will start to see familiar patterns (such as en croix which is doing an exercise to the front, to the side to the back and again to the side) which will help you learn combinations.
- When a teacher coaches you graciously accept the feedback and keep dancing (do not stop). If you have questions, ask after you have finished the combination or after class.
- Try to plan so you do not have to leave class to use the restroom. If you leave, return quickly and quietly. For my class you do not need to ask permission.
- Generally speaking, in class, you should never sit down to rest or watch. Once you sit down for any length of time your muscles cool and it’s not a good idea (nor is it polite) to go in and out of class.
- If you must leave class early, are injured, or need to sit down for any reason - let the teacher know. Once you have sat down or “left” class you are encouraged to watch the rest of class, **but you may not rejoin the class.**
- **If you are late** – depending on how late you are to class – you may or may not be able to join. Don’t take it personally – it’s for your safety as well as a courtesy to the other students. At the very least stand at the door and make eye contact to see if the teacher thinks it’s ok for you to join. If you are allowed into class be thoughtful where you stand. For example – don’t stand in front of someone who has come on time to get a spot in front of a mirror.
- **In the center** – if you know the combination stand in front. If you need to watch others to remember the sequence do NOT stand in the front unless you have been instructed to do so by your teacher.

Watch these basic *Ballet In Form* videos on You Tube (each at least 10 times 😊)

- Engaging your Turnout - with Susan Jaffe
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVSB8FdsOWw&t=42s>
- Correct Ballet Alignment- with Cheryne Busch from Houston Ballet Academy
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lon1p_pUxZ8
- Plié Tips from Margaret Tracey
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAK0o6vbDxU>
- Tendu - To Stretch! with Dana Hanson & Addie Tapp
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_AvurpQwy8
- Correcting the arms in second position – Jeff Edwards
<https://balletinform.com/correcting-arms-second/>

There are many more videos for you to watch. The value of a video (assuming it’s a good quality video) is to watch it several times so you are familiar with the purpose of the exercises and what the form should look like.

After class please ask questions, make comments, and give feedback.

See you Saturday, September 21 no later than 6:15pm. I look forward to dancing with you!

Email questions/thoughts/comments/learnings/etc. to: Ceceliasballetclass@gmail.com

Cecelia