



GAYNOR MINDEN®

NEW YORK



Pointe Shoe Fitting Guidelines

BY ELIZA MINDEN, DESIGNER OF THE GAYNOR MINDEN POINTE SHOE

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Binding: the fabric channel through which the drawstring runs

Box or Block: the stiff toe cup that encases the toes

Box liner: the soft fabric that lines the inside of the box

Girth: the measurement around the widest part of the foot, at the metatarsals at the ball of the foot

High Profile: a pointe shoe box, often cylindrical, with a relatively large space between the outer sole and the top of the box

Low Profile: a pointe shoe box with a generally flat shape and a relatively small space between the outer sole and the top of the box

Metatarsals: the five bones between the ankle and the toes. Pointe shoe fitting is especially concerned with the area near the ball of the foot

Outer Sole: the bottom part of the shoe, usually made of synthetic or leather, which is in contact with the floor when the dancer stands in the normal flat position

Platform: the part of the pointe shoe on which the dancer stands when *en pointe*

Pronation: the rolling inward of the foot so that when standing flat, more weight is on the ball of the foot than on the outside

Quarter: the part of the shoe covering the sides and heel of the foot

Shank: the stiff insole that provides support

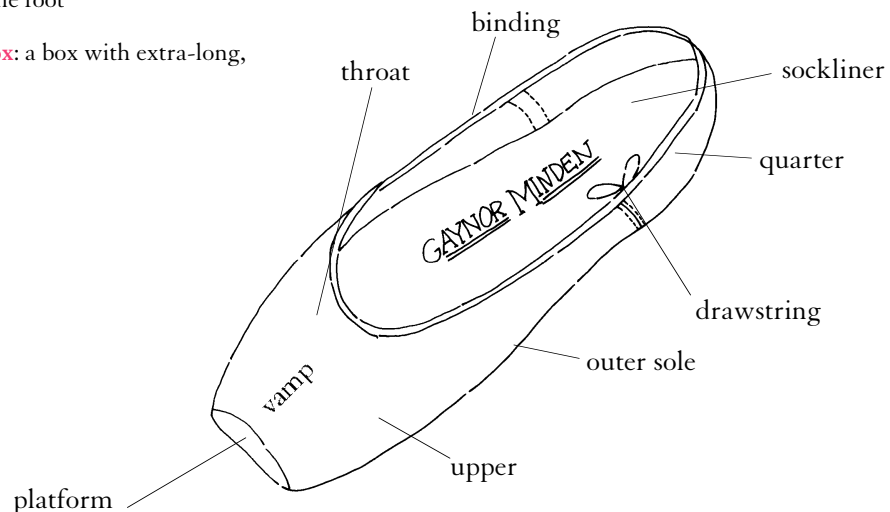
Sockliner: the soft fabric that lies directly underneath the foot and runs the length of the shoe

Throat: the opening of the shoe nearest the toes

Vamp: the part of the shoe that covers the tops of the toes and the foot

Vamp Elastic: wide, firm elastic sewn at the throat of the shoe to extend the vamp and cover the top of the foot

Winged Box: a box with extra-long, stiff sides



A pointe shoe cannot be fitted like a street shoe. Street shoes are fitted so that they are roomy and comfortable, often with “room to grow”.

THIS IS DISASTROUS IN A POINTE SHOE.

A pointe shoe should fit the forefoot like a fine leather glove: snug, yet with enough room to allow the dancer’s foot to lie flat and function properly.

Although a dancer is expected to “pull up” out of a shoe, of course she cannot do it all on her own. Her weight should be supported by the shank and box of the pointe shoe. If the shoe is too wide, it does not support the sides of the foot properly and all the body weight rests on the tips of the toes. The pointe shoe must press in slightly on the dancer’s metatarsal area because this is what prevents her from sliding into the shoe when she rises to full pointe. Conversely, if the pointe shoe is too narrow, it will restrict movement.

FITTING THE METATARSAL

In our method of pointe shoe fitting, fitting the ball of the foot (metatarsal area), is as important as fitting the length of the foot. The fitter must be aware of the shape of the metatarsal and of flexibility, or “metatarsal compression,” as they relate to the shape of the box. Once the box shape is determined, the rest of the fitting should fall easily into place.

Do not fit too wide. Pain and injury may result. It may be fashionable to wear a very square, wide toe box, but few people really need it.

Many dancers are fitted in shoes that are too short, and compensate for the ensuing discomfort by increasing the width. But a foot that is a true XXX in a Freed or an EE in Capezio is the exception, not the norm.

Shoes that are too short and too wide cause great pain. Dancers will do almost anything to alleviate it, including wearing padding that only exacerbates the problem. If a dancer has enough room for bulky toe pads or excessive lambs’ wool, the shoe is not properly supporting the sides of her feet. Although cushioning is beneficial, bulky toe pads are seldom an efficient means of achieving comfort.

Allow enough width for demi-pointe. Pointe shoes must not be too narrow. Tight fitting shoes or shoes that are too tapered can promote bunions and cut off circulation. If a shoe is too tight, the metatarsals and toes may be constricted and unable to move properly. This can compromise fine control of the forefoot.

The weather can greatly affect the fit of the shoe. In extreme heat and humidity, dancers may need a longer size. The opposite is true in very cold weather: the dancer may find that her regular size feels big and unsupportive. It is not in the dancer's best interest to be fitted or to change brands at these times.

It is best to fit pointe shoes in the afternoon or evening, after the dancer has taken at least one technique class - but not if she has had a full day of dancing. In the morning, before dancing, the foot has not yet had a chance to expand; however, after the longest rehearsal day it may be swollen. Avoid fitting at these times. Dancers who have not been on pointe because of lay-offs, injuries, etc. and who suddenly resume intense rehearsal schedules may find their feet especially swollen.

Gaynor Minden pointe shoes themselves are affected by temperature. They will be slightly stiffer when cold, and slightly more flexible when warm. However, if the shoes are kept at room temperature (i.e., don't leave them in a car overnight), the dancer should not notice any change.

GAYNOR MINDENS ARE DIFFERENT

Gaynor Mindens will not break down, mush in, or stretch out like other pointe shoes. They must never be fitted anticipating those types of changes.

It is of the utmost importance that pointe shoes NEVER be fitted with "room to grow."

Try to avoid fitting with toe pads. Large, bulky toe pads and excess lambs' wool compromise a sleek fit and deprive a dancer of the essential "feel for the floor." Should the dancer decide she must wear toe pads anyway, you may need to fit her in a slightly longer and/or wider size to accommodate the padding.

1. Measure and select initial size.

Measure both feet on the Brannock device. Note compressibility (see below). Select a length a full size longer than the length indicated on the Brannock device – OR – in the absence of a Brannock device, select a length a full size longer than the dancer's street shoe size.

Assess compressibility by gently squeezing the sides of the dancer's foot at the metatarsal and noting how easily the bones can be moved in toward each other. A compressible foot will probably require a narrow box and/or a boxliner.

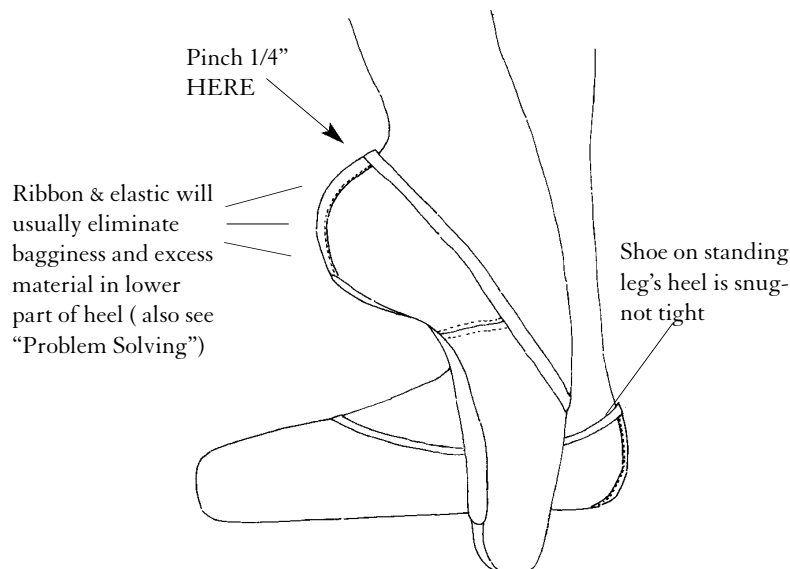
2. Plié in second.

Be sure the dancer's toenails are neatly trimmed. Be sure the drawstring is properly pulled and secured (see Drawstring). There is no need to tie the ribbons yet.

Ask the dancer to stand in second position and grand plié. This will put the foot in its longest position - as in landing from a big jump. The grand plié should be lower than what is normally performed in class. The dancer should not be concerned with turnout or perfect technique. If the toes are just barely touching the end of the box, without feeling crunched or smashed, then the length is correct. Check the length in Step 3.

3. Pinch at heel.

Ask the dancer to set her foot en pointe with no weight on it. Because Gaynor Minden's do not break down or stretch out as other pointe shoes do, they should be fitted with a little extra material at the heel when the foot is in this position. The fitter should be able to pinch 1/4" at the top of the heel near the drawstring casing to ensure that there is enough room for the toes when rolling up through pointe and when standing flat.

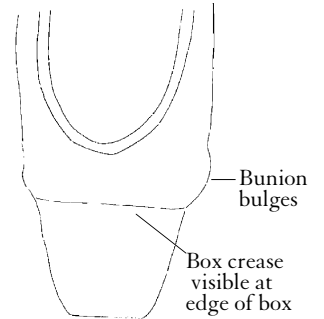


If you can fit a whole finger in the back of the shoe it is too long. If you cannot pinch any material it is too short.

DO NOT FIT GAYNOR MINDENS TOO SHORT!

4. Check the box and width.

The front of the shoe should be sleek and snug, but not so tight that bunions bulge or the edge of the hard part of the box digs into the bunion from underneath it. With a perfect fit the edge of the hard part of the box does not show through the satin. The shoe should be so snug that it is impossible to slide a finger into the shoe along the sides or the top of the foot.



Box too small

5. Adjust cushioning in the box.

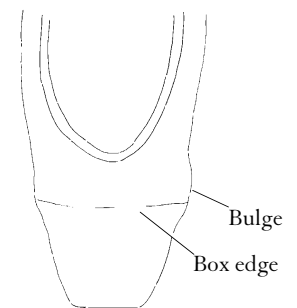
Many dancers who wear no cushioning at all in other pointe shoes may find that they need at least one of the oval or “mushroom” cushions. If these are not sufficient, she should use additional cushions from the Totally Toes fitting kit. It is also possible that she requires a narrower box to prevent the foot from dropping in too much (see Problem Solving). Cushions should be used to enhance comfort and fine-tune the fit; they should not be used to compensate for a sloppy fit. Try to use as little cushioning as possible.

If the length proves correct in Step 3, and the width is also correct in Step 4, but the dancer complains of pain or pressure on her toe(s), then more cushions are needed.

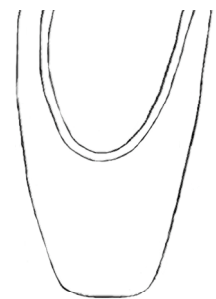
A. Put an oval cushion in the tip of the shoe. Try placing one directly on top of the other. Also try overlapping them so they will have the effect of wrapping around the big toe inside the box. Many dancers need a double thickness of cushions. The mushroom cushion is also useful.

B. If pain persists, add a third cushion. Again, experiment with position. Or try taping a cushion directly to the toe in question. Often it is the toenail that is sensitive, especially the outer corner, so be sure it is well protected.

C. If pain persists, it is most likely because the foot is sliding too easily into the box, and the sides of the box are not holding the sides of the foot. This is the leading cause of big toe pain and bruised toenails. Highly compressible feet are especially prone to it. Do not add more cushion to the toe area. You may wish to remove the third cushion in order to make room for the ones that will prevent sliding.



Still too small



**Good fit—
sleek & smooth**

Adjusting the cushions is usually the most time-consuming aspect of fitting. Often a number of arrangements must be tried before the dancer is comfortable. Every foot is different; you must experiment with different cushions in various positions.

If you find yourself using a great number of cushions and the dancer is still not comfortable, then the fit may be incorrect or the dancer's training and ability to "pull up" may be a factor.

D. To prevent sliding, try using box liners in addition to a small amount of cushioning under the big toe. The box liner may be positioned all the way inside the box, or it may be positioned closer to the throat to make the shoe more snug and sleek-looking in that area.

E. If the shoe is baggy in the area in front of the side seam, place a half sockliner in the front part of the shoe and/or use a box liner.

6. Check heel fit.

With the ribbons tied she should piqué several times, quickly if her strength and experience permit. If the heel slips off she should try a different heel height or a longer size. Keep in mind that ribbon and elastics must be correctly positioned to hold the heel on. Heel grippers are also extremely helpful (see Problem Solving).

If the shoe feels wide or gaping, she should make certain that the drawstring is pulled snug (see Drawstring). If the heel is baggy but the length is correct, she should try our Sleek Fit or a lower heel. Sometimes, however, a lower heel tends to slip off more easily and the bagginess would be better corrected by sewing ribbons and elastics in a different position, or by wearing heel grippers.

7. Check placement, vamp height, and shank stiffness.

The dancer should be "over" the platform, not held back. The arch of the shoe should conform to the arch of her foot. It should be easy and comfortable to make demi-pointe. Balancing en pointe should be wonderfully easy.

However, she must not "go over too far," sink in the box or "pop out" of the box. Often a less flexible ankle is helped by a shorter vamp, but make sure that knuckles and bunions are totally covered. In general: short toes want short vamps, long toes want long vamps.

8. Final check.

Comfort. The shoe should hug, not pinch. It should be entirely comfortable standing flat, on demi-pointe, and on full pointe. If possible, encourage the dancer to work in a sample with ribbons stitched on so that she can thoroughly check its comfort.

Appearance. The shoe should look sleek and snug, but still allow the 1/4" pinch at the heel. It should flatter the foot, enhancing its natural arch. The upper (box and vamp area) should be smooth and pretty, and not so tight that bumps, bunions, or the shoe's internal structure is visible.

Be certain the dancer understands how she has been fitted. Ask her to remove and re-insert any cushions and heel grippers that she will need.

Explain ribbon and elastic placement and sewing methods. If the dancer is young, be sure her parent or teacher understands all of the above as well. It is also a good idea to have the dancer show her shoes to her teacher for approval before sewing the ribbons and elastic to the shoes.

DRAWSTRING

It is essential to use the drawstring correctly to eliminate gaping or bagginess. When pulling the drawstring, be certain that both ends are completely free, that there are absolutely no knots at all. Then, standing flat, pull slowly and carefully **PARALLEL** to the floor; do not pull upward toward the knee. Always pull both ends of the drawstring evenly, so that you don't lose one end inside the binding. The drawstring should feel snug, not tight, to avoid irritating the Achilles tendon. Tie securely.

Rather than opening at the throat, the drawstring opens at the side for maximum comfort. It is designed to open on the inside of each shoe, and to tuck in on the inner side of the foot, but the shoes may certainly be worn with the drawstring opening on the outer side of the foot if desired.

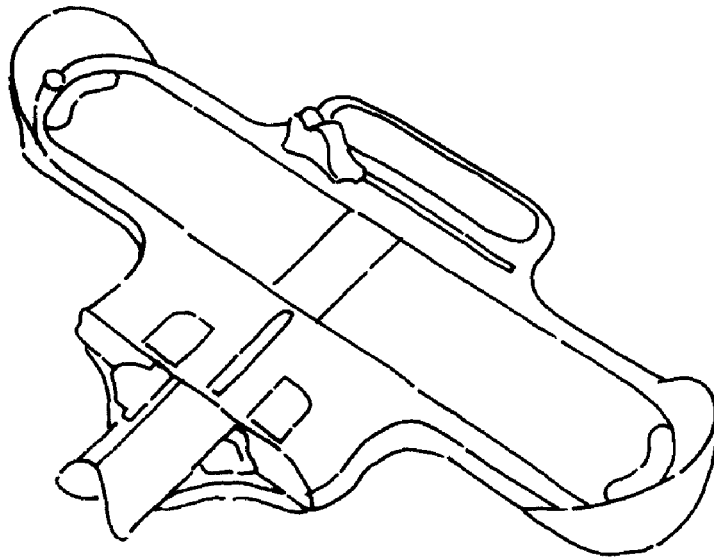
THE BRANNOCK DEVICE

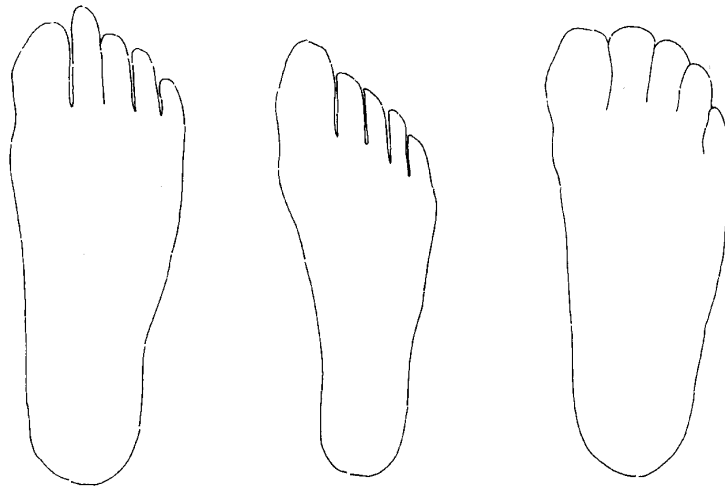
This device was designed to measure feet for street shoes, including women's dress shoes. It is an excellent device for fitting pointe shoes as well. Along with width and overall length, it measures arch length. A demi-pointe in ballet slippers is similar to the position of the foot in a high-heeled dress shoe.

The numbers on the Brannock device are the most precise measurements available. What most people wear in street shoes is not a good representation of pointe shoe size. For example, most dancers with wide feet will choose longer street shoes in order to get the extra width they need for comfort. Many women choose a longer size when buying tapered pumps than they would when buying rounded flats.

Have the dancer stand with one foot on the device with the heel all the way against the back. Make sure that her feet are parallel. The first measurement should be done with all the weight completely on the foot being measured. Find the appropriate width and also the corresponding arch length. The next important measurement should be done with weight completely off the foot being measured. **BE CAREFUL TO NOTE THE CHANGE IN WIDTH!** This is how you measure metatarsal compression (explained in Problem Feet). Measure both right and left feet; often there is a significant difference.

Please note that this application of the Brannock Device is different from its use fitting street shoes. To obtain a Brannock Device call the Brannock Device Company in Syracuse, NY, (315) 475-9862.





Greek or Morton's

Egyptian

Giselle or Peasant

3 FOOT TYPES

Greek or Morton's: this foot type has a long second toe. The rest of the toes are shorter. The width tends to be narrow to medium. (Gaynor Minden boxes #2 & #3)

Egyptian: this foot type has a long first toe. The rest of the toes taper. The width tends to be narrow to medium. (Gaynor Minden boxes #2 & #3)

Giselle or Peasant: this foot type has at least three toes the same length (sometimes more). The toes tend to be short and the width medium to wide. (Gaynor Minden boxes #3 & #4)

THE COMPRESSIBLE FOOT

Many dancers have fine-boned, delicate feet to go with their thin, fine-boned bodies. These feet are usually highly compressible in the metatarsal area. If you gently squeeze the sides of the foot at the metatarsal the bones will move easily. There is not a great deal of flesh between them. Often this foot is a Greek or Egyptian foot.

Standing flat, this foot may create a relatively wide footprint, because the bones spread out to the sides. But en pointe, the foot compresses and the bones squeeze into one another. Thus the shoe that is sufficiently wide standing flat is too wide en pointe and the dancer slides easily into the box, causing pressure on the already prominent big toe or long second toe. Dropping into the box too much also causes the shoe to be too long and baggy en pointe, even though it may be just barely long enough standing flat. See Problem Solving for advice on fixing this situation.

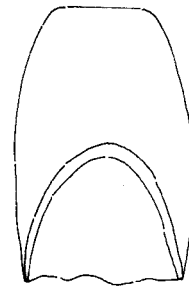
WIDTHS & BOXES

Width versus box number

In most lengths, Gaynor Minden offers 3 widths, and 3 box styles, giving the fitter and dancer a lot of choices in fitting this critical part of the foot. The width, which refers to the girth measurement taken around the metatarsal, is available in narrow, medium, and wide. The box number refers to the size and shape of the box.

Fitting the #2 box

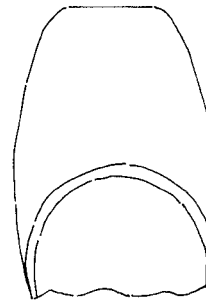
The #2 box is small, narrow, and tapered.



#2 box

Fitting the #3 box

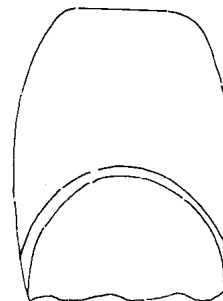
The #3 box is medium sized and somewhat tapered. Well suited for most foot types, this is our most popular box.



#3 box

Fitting the #4 box

The #4 box is very square and is most appropriate for wide feet.



#4 box

When the box is fitted properly, the foot will fit snugly against the top of the shoe. If you can fit a finger in the throat of the shoe it is too wide or the box is too big.

**THERE ARE ALWAYS EXCEPTIONS TO EVERY RULE
IN THE FITTING OF THE BOXES!**

SHANKS

In general, the lighter and more flexible the shank, the easier it is to roll through demi-pointe and to “go over”. Flexible shanks permit a dancer to achieve a higher demi-pointe before attaining full pointe, and they readily conform to the foot. They are beneficial for dancers whose ankles are lacking flexibility and thus need help “going over”. Professionals often prefer softer shanks because they can better control their shoes.

Firmer shanks are often necessary to prevent a dancer from “going over” too far; this can overstretch the ankle and hinder correct placement. Stiff shanks are required by dancers with highly arched feet and by those who are tall and big-boned. Stiffer shanks offer more resistance in rolling through demi-pointe; there is sometimes a springy quality to their action which some dancers enjoy because they feel it helps propel them up onto full pointe. Students often prefer the stiffer shank for this reason.

NOTE: Ballet teachers hold different theories regarding the appropriate shank stiffness for beginners. When fitting in our New York showroom we follow teachers’ wishes; however, whatever properly supports the dancer’s arch is ultimately the best shank for her.

Gaynor Minden shanks are made from a thermoplastic elastomeric material – not fibreglass, not cardboard, not leather. With few exceptions, traditional pointe shoes have shanks made from a paper product such as cardboard or fibreboard – hence their lack of durability. Dancers have employed crude methods to prolong the life of the shank, such as coating it with floor wax or shellac. They have tried to make the shanks conform to their arches by removing a portion from the back. Provided that the dancer is fit in the appropriate Gaynor Minden shank for her skill level and body type, the shanks in Gaynor Mindens need not be altered. Just sew and go!

All Gaynor Minden shanks are equally durable. The shoes will become slightly more flexible in demi-pointe after a couple of classes, because the satin fabric stretches, but the shanks do not lose strength or supportiveness.

THEY NEVER BREAK OR WEAKEN.

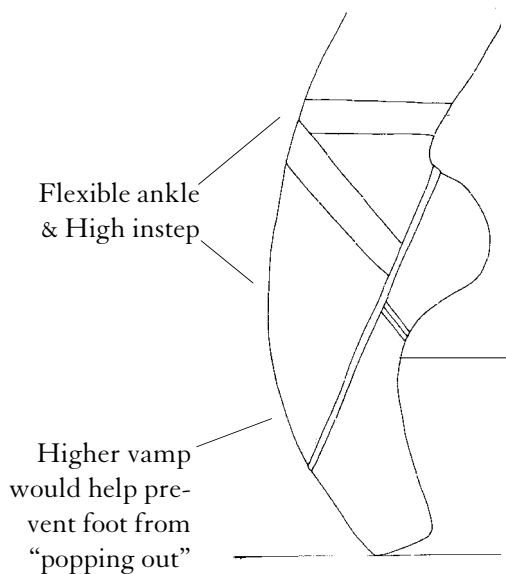
PIANISSIMO (Our most flexible shank) is so light and pliable that we recommend it only for very strong, or very light weight professional dancers who want the softest possible shoe.

FEATHER FLEX (Extremely flexible stock shank) is very pliable. It is preferred by dancers who want minimal resistance from their shoes, and can sacrifice some support in order to obtain such flexibility.

SUPPLE (Very Flexible Shank) Our all-around flexible, supple shank. This provides good support for strong dancers and lightweight dancers, and allows them to roll through demi-pointe easily. If the dancer is petite, a Supple usually gives ample support. If the dancer likes the demi-pointe in a Freed or a soft Chacotte, and if she likes half-shanks or cardboard-type shanks that break low, then she will probably prefer Supple. Also, if the dancer does not have a great deal of flexibility in her ankle, a Supple can help her “go over” more. However, fitters should be cautious about letting inexperienced dancers overstretch their ankles in shanks that are too soft. Some students deliberately choose shoes that are too soft in order to make their feet appear more arched. This should be discouraged.

EXTRA FLEX (Extra Flexible) Our medium/firm shank. This provides ample support for most dancers, and a slight springiness that helps the dancer rise up to pointe. If the dancer likes the shank in a firm Bloch, Repetto, Capezio or Grishko, then she will probably enjoy Extra flex. This is our most popular shank, but fitters must caution dancers that Gaynor Minden shanks will never soften or weaken. Therefore the dancer must be satisfied with the ease of rolling through demi-pointe when the shoe is new.

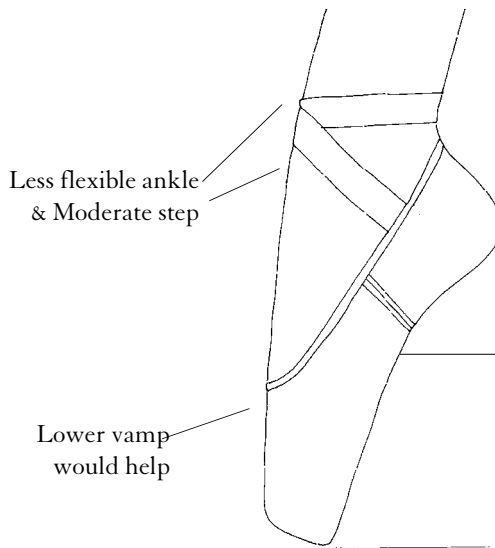
HARD SHANK (Our hardest shank) is best for taller, larger dancers with big arches who easily break other shanks. The Hard shank with a Deep vamp will provide the most support for this type of dancer, and it should prevent her from going over too far. However, there is more resistance to rolling through demi-pointe. Smaller, lighter dancers should not require this shank. Only about 5% of dancers need this shank because it is so stiff.



Too much bend here due to:

1. Shank too soft OR
2. Firm shank with molded arch too low (close to toe) OR
3. Firm shank with molded arch too great

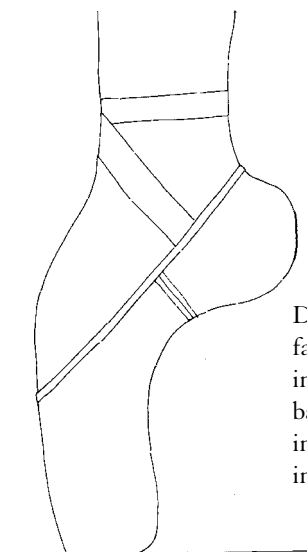
**Going Over Too Far
or
"Knuckling"**



Not enough bend in shank due to :

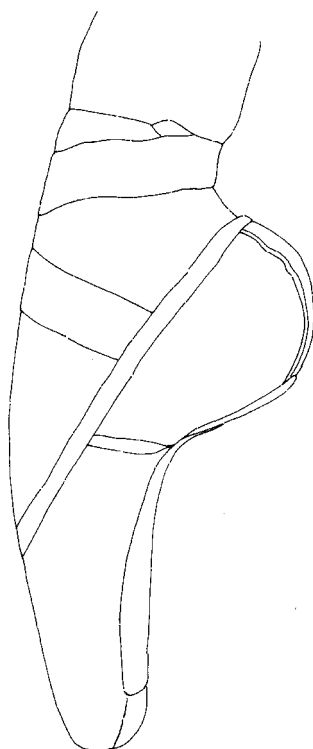
1. Shank too stiff OR
2. Molded arch too high (close to heel) OR
3. Not enough molded arch

**Pulled Back
or
Can't Get Over Enough**



Dancer saves herself from falling forward by clenching foot to hold herself back. Also called "hitching back," it is caused by inadequate support.

Claw Foot



PERFECT!

WHAT TO DO:

If she goes over too far; if she feels she is sinking or is otherwise inadequately supported, then try:

1. a deeper vamp
2. a deeper vamp and a shank heat-formed to be straighter
3. a deeper vamp and a stiffer shank
4. a deeper vamp, stiffer shank and a different box
5. all of the above, plus vamp elastic

If she feels pulled back, if she cannot get over enough, or if the shank fails to conform to the foot, then try:

1. a lower vamp
 2. a softer shank
-

VAMP

There are two vamps: Regular and Deep. The Deep vamp is about 1/4 inch longer at the throat than the Regular vamp so that the shoe covers more of the foot. It is especially helpful for dancers with pronounced arches and/or long toes. The vamp should always cover the toes, metatarsals and bunion joints. On most dancers it covers the front third of the foot. A vamp that covers half the foot is almost certainly too long.

The shape of the Gaynor Minden throat is oval, or egg-shaped, in between the sharp Russian-V and the open-throat styles. It flatters most feet and provides excellent support. However, variations are possible by special order and special arrangement with the New York office. Longer and shorter vamps are also available by special order.

Dancers who go over too far despite deep vamps and straight, stiff shanks should try vamp elastic (see Pads & Cushions).

Regular vamp - in GM sizes up to 7, most dancers will work better in the Regular vamp. If the dancer prefers it, the Deep vamp is also available in those sizes. If the dancer has an extreme amount of ankle articulation, sometimes the Regular vamp is too short.

Deep vamp - in GM sizes 7.5 and higher, most dancers will work better in the Deep vamp. If the dancer has a "Giselle foot" (see Foot Types) or has trouble "getting over," then sometimes the Deep vamp is too long.

LOW HEEL – in GM sizes up to 7, the low heel will be similar to the cut of a Freed. In GM sizes 7.5 and higher, the low heel is extremely shallow. Low heels require a special order and are non-cancellable. Low heels are 1/4” lower than our Regular heels.

REGULAR HEEL – in some of the smaller sizes it may be too high and in some of the longer sizes it could be too low, especially if the dancer has a very pronounced, rounded heel.

HIGH HEEL – this heel in GM sizes 7.5 and longer is similar to the cut of a Grishko. In the smaller sizes it often creates extra material on the back of the foot. Generally the regular or low heel is a better choice in sizes shorter than 7.5. High Heels are 3/8” higher than our Regular Heels.

SLEEKFIT HEEL - is for the dancer with a very narrow heel. Available in most sizes.

A change in heel height affects the amount of material along the sides of the shoe as well as at the back.

DIRECTIONS FOR SEWING RIBBONS ON POINTE SHOES

We suggest using a strong needle and waxed dental floss instead of thread.

Be sure to stitch ribbons and elastics around *all four sides*, not just along the top edge.

Position ribbons and elastics all the way down in the shoe so that their bottom edges almost touch the sockliner.

Sew below the binding so as not to interfere with the drawstring.

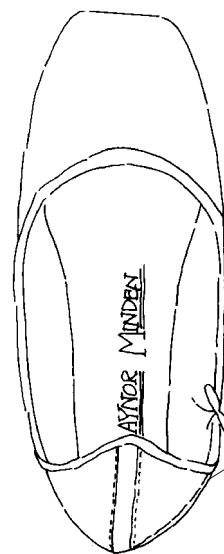
We do not recommend: tying ribbons through a loop sewn to the heel, placing elastics where they could irritate the Achilles tendon, or slitting the satin to thread ribbon through the sides of the shoes. When the fit is good these measures are rarely necessary.

EXAMPLE #1

1. Cut 4 pieces of ribbon, approximately 22" each. If you are using Gaynor Minden's pre-cut ribbon, that is 1/4 of a packet.

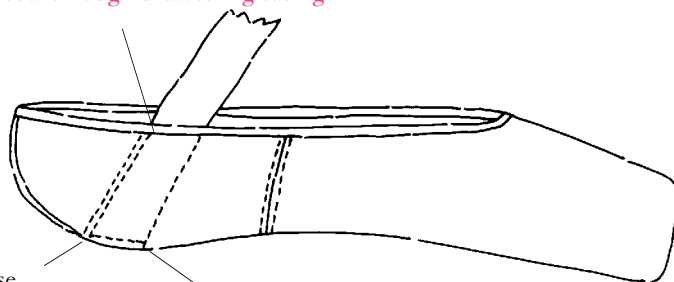
2. Find the proper place to attach ribbons by folding down the back of the shoe so that it touches the sockliner. Use a pencil to draw lines at the creases.

3. Place the back edge of the ribbon against the pencil line. The end of the ribbon should be *all the way down* by the sockliner. Angle the ribbon so that it is on the diagonal.



Mark crease at fold. Back edge of ribbon lies along crease.

Don't sew through drawstring casing



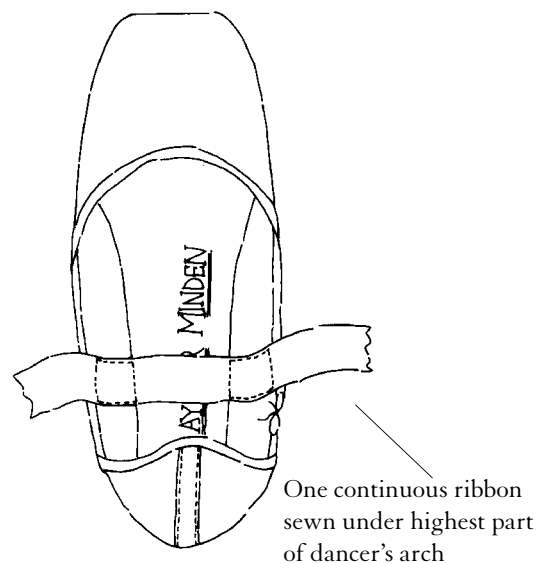
Mark at crease inside shoe

Sew ribbon all the way down, next to sole. Note angle.

EXAMPLE #2

This arrangement can help the dancer with a highly arched foot and a very flexible ankle feel more support and stability.

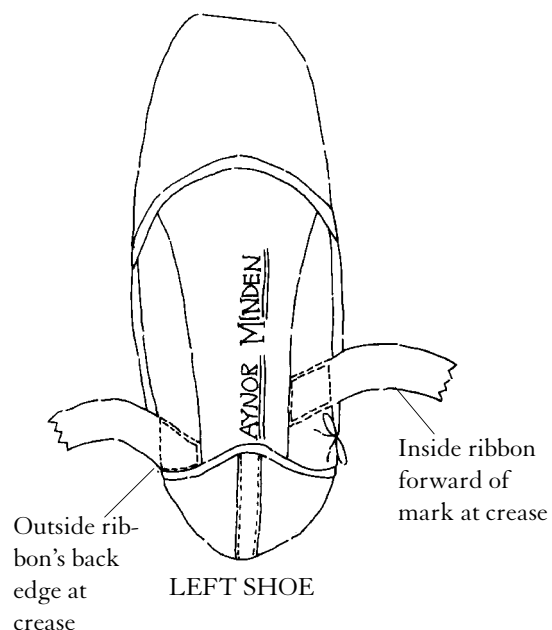
1. Cut ribbon into two equal lengths, one per shoe, approximately 45" each.
2. Find the proper place for ribbon attachment by placing the ribbon underneath the dancer's arch while she stands flat in the shoe. Holding one end of the ribbon in each hand, pull it taut. Slide the ribbon forward and back to locate the highest point of her arch. Use a pencil to mark the inside of the shoe at the spot that corresponds to that highest point.
3. Position the middle of the ribbon on the middle of the sockliner at the place indicated by the pencil mark. Stitch the ribbon on both sides of the shoe, keeping tension on the portion that will run underneath the foot. When pulled, the ribbons will be perpendicular to the sockliner and outer sole, rather than on the diagonal.

**EXAMPLE #3**

This arrangement can provide extra support and stability to dancers who pronate.

1. Cut ribbon into 4 pieces approximately 22" each. If you are using Gaynor Minden's pre-cut ribbon, that is 1/4 of a packet.
2. Find the proper place to attach ribbons by folding down the back of the shoe so that it touches the sockliner. Use a pencil to draw lines at the creases.
3. Position the outside ribbon just as in Example #1. Position the inside ribbon so that its back edge is 1/2" forward of the pencil line.

Both ribbons should be on the diagonal.



ELASTIC

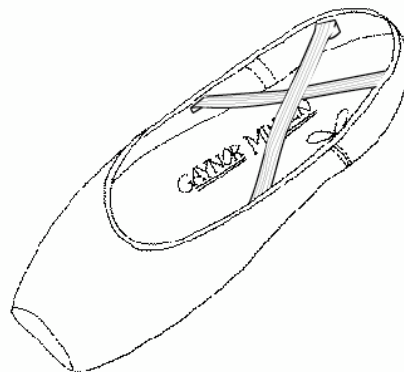
EXAMPLE #1

1. Cut 2 pieces of elastic, about 7.5" each. If you are using Gaynor Minden's pre-cut elastic, that is half of a packet. Dancers may need more or less, according to foot width or individual needs. NOTE: The elastic should be tight enough to securely hold the back of the shoe, but not so tight that it constricts circulation. A good gauge for tightness is to put the shoe on your foot, stand flat so that your ankle is perpendicular (flexed), hold the elastic on one side of your heel at the edge of the shoe and pull the other end across to check tautness. Cut the elastic accordingly.
2. The proper attachment for elastics may vary according to foot width, but generally speaking you can attach each end of elastic about 1/2" away from the back heel seam. If you sew the ends too close to the heel seam you risk irritating the Achilles tendon.
3. Sew each elastic end below the drawstring casing, stitching back and forth at least two times OR stitching in a small square for extra security.

NOTE: For a different kind of support, some dancers opt to criss-cross the elastic over the instep. For this, you will need two sets of our pre-cut elastic, each cut in half. Sew one end of elastic about 4" down from the vamp area (near the middle of the shoe or "throat") underneath the drawstring casing and attach the other end to the opposite side of the shoe, about 2" from the back heel seam (see picture). Repeat for the other elastic piece on the opposite side of the shoe. As with the elastic sewn at the heel, be sure not to sew above the drawstring casing.

Gaynor Minden sells a special kind of elastic called "Invisible Elastic." When we first introduced our shoes in Europe we discovered that dancers there take a different approach to pointe shoe elastic - their elastic is practically invisible from a distance. Our "Invisible" Elastic is woven for us in England and is identical to that in use by dancers in the Royal Ballet and other top companies. The open weave design makes the elastic much less visible on stage and provides a beautiful, classic look without interfering with the line of the ankle. Since the "Invisible" Elastic is gentler than our regular Pink Elastic, we offer it in 30" lengths, enough for two pairs or to allow dancers to criss-cross it if desired.

All of these accessories- Ribbon, Pink Elastic, and Invisible Elastic- are also available by the spool. Please feel free to call us for prices and availability.



PADS AND CUSHIONS

When fitting at Gaynor Minden in our New York showroom, we fit without big toe pads, bulky gel pads or lamb's wool. Foam pads can distort the fit by as much as a half a length or an entire width, and they can interfere with the dancer's ability to feel the floor and control the shoe. If the dancer has enough room for big pads then the shoe can not support the sides of the foot.



Cool Blue Crescent

We do, however, use the Micro Pads and Box Liners sold in the Totally Toes Kit. We strongly urge you to do the same. More and more scientific research on dancers shows that repetitive impact can cause stress fractures and tendinitis. Thin and/or immature bodies are especially vulnerable. Micro pads and box liners can also prevent bruised toenails and discouraging pain. They provide a sleek, professional-looking fit while greatly increasing comfort and without taking up too much of room in the shoe.

Totally Toes are less expensive than conventional toe pads, and are made of advanced, impact-absorbing materials, including high-tech Blue Gel and cellular urethane Poron® 4000 which carries the American Podiatric Medical Association Seal of Acceptance. Do not be misled by cheap latex foam cushions; they are not the same.



“Mushroom”

Cushions should stay in place without glue but you may use rubber cement if necessary. Cool Blue Micro Pads have peel-and-stick adhesive.

- **Crescent Cushion** - is for dancers whose second toes are longer. The cushion lies against the big toe and the third toe, creating a space for the long second toe to lie straight, without pressure from the end of the box.
- **“Mushroom” Cushion** - should be used to make the big toe comfortable. Position it so it curves up over the top of the big toenail a little bit; this can help prevent bruising. Try using the “Mushroom” together with the Cool Blue Oval and/or the Box Liner. “Mushroom” is also useful for any small sore spot or blister.
- **Cool Blue Oval** - provides superb protection for the big toe. It may be positioned slightly off-center to wrap around the side of the big toe and cushion the sensitive inside corner.
- **Toe Wrap Micro-Foam Tape** - gives the comfort, protection and support of sports tape but with impact-absorption, no restriction of motion and no sticky residue.



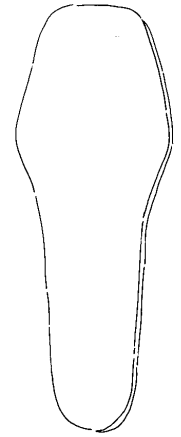
Cool Blue Oval

- **Dynamic Box Liners** (U.S. Pat. #5,740,618) - can make a tremendous difference in the comfort of the shoe. They make the box a little narrower and they grip the foot, thus preventing the dancer from sliding too easily down into the box. They can enhance the appearance of a shoe that is slightly loose around the throat and bunion area, and are especially helpful for dancers with highly compressible feet.



Box Liner

- **Full Sockliners** - are especially useful for fine-boned, narrow feet. The cushion helps the foot lie snugly against the top of the shoe. If you can insert a finger inside the top of the box (and the sizing is otherwise correct), try a sockliner. They also are helpful if the dancer is recovering from a stone bruise or stress fracture to a metatarsal head. Sockliners work well on dancers with narrow heels. They can also be cropped so that only the back portion is used in the heel of the shoe.



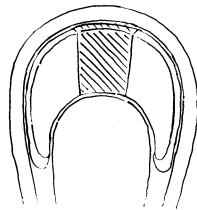
Full Sockliner

- **Heel Grippers** - help to hold the shoe onto the heel. Also, if the dancer complains that there is too much space in the heel (and the length is correct), then heel grippers help take up excess room in the heel. Heel grippers can be cut and shaped in a variety of ways to accommodate the individual dancer.

Heel Grippers

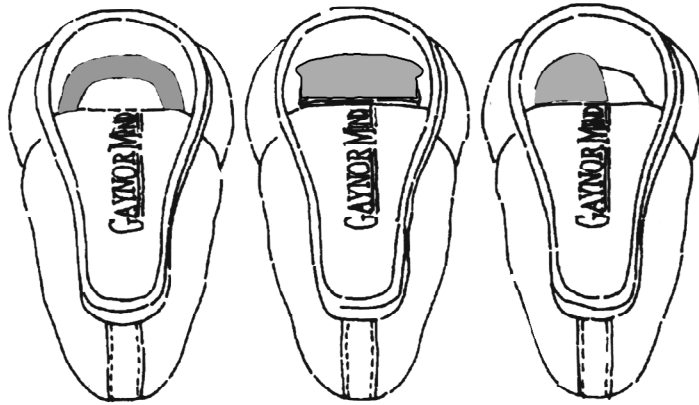


Peel off paper backing



Cut in half. Position at heel about 1/4" from the top and about 1/2" apart, press firmly in place. Or use whole heel gripper.

- **Totally Toes Fitting Kit** - (see Pads and Cushions above).

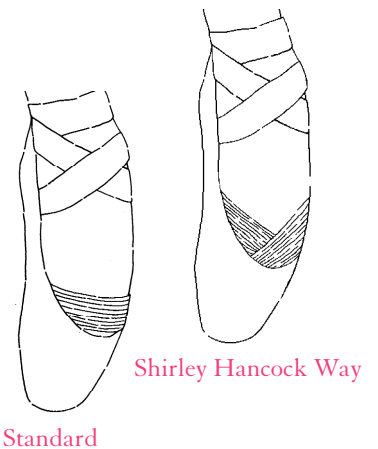


Crescent cushion in position

“Mushroom” or Oval cushion in position

Additional Oval or “Mushroom” cushion in position off-center, under big toe

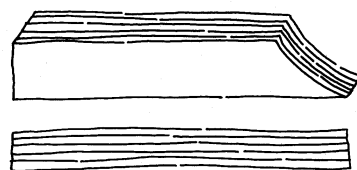
- **Vamp Elastic** - 3” wide, strong elastic, dyed pale peach to match tights and be unnoticeable. Vamp elastic is stitched at the throat of the shoe and is an excellent means of increasing support without incurring the expense or delay of a special order for a deeper vamp. The elastic provides extra support without compromising demi-pointe flexibility. It is especially helpful to dancers with high insteps. Try sewing a single piece straight across the throat the Standard way or, for more support, try The Royal Ballet’s physical therapist Shirley Hancock’s criss cross method.



Standard

Shirley Hancock Way

- **Toe Separators** - Some dancers have a space between the big toe and the second toe which makes them prone to pain and bunion problems. If the second toe is longer, it can develop into a “hammer toe” as well. Toe separators are worn between the big toe and the second toe to alleviate these problems and to help stabilize the metatarsals en pointe. Gaynor Minden offers the only adjustable toe separator.



Toe Separators

PROBLEM SOLVING

- Pain or pressure on the big toe.

This common problem is easily solved. Make sure that the toenails are short enough. Long toenails make pointe work excruciating. Use a Cool Blue Oval from the Totally Toes Fitting Kit. Experiment with placing the Oval slightly off center towards the outside of the big toe. If pain persists, add a “Mushroom” micro-pad. If pain still persists, try the Oval in combination with the Dynamic Box Liner.

- Pain on a long second toe.

See instructions in the Fitting Kit regarding Cool Blue Crescent shaped cushions.

- Gaping or bagginess in the front part of the shoe.

Be certain that the drawstring is pulled snug and tied securely (see Drawstring). You may need to adjust the position and angle of the ribbons and elastics. If gaping persists, insert a Dynamic Box Liner. If gaping still persists, try a sleek fit, a narrower shoe, and/or a different vamp. Bagginess in any part of the shoe can also be corrected by the addition of an extra sockliner.

- Gaping or bagginess in the back part of the shoe.

Be certain that the drawstring is pulled snug and tied securely. Bagginess can be corrected by varying the place where ribbons and elastics are sewn to the shoes. Often wearing the Low heel style eliminates bagginess, but the Low heel sometimes slips off more easily than do the other heel styles. The Sleekfit style is ideal for this situation. Heel grippers will help keep the shoes secured to the heel. We highly recommend using heel grippers for this purpose instead of rosin, which may cause painful blisters and even lead to infection.

- Heel slipping off.

Place a heel gripper in the back of the shoe. If it takes up too much room and causes the shoe to become too short, cut it in half, and place one half on each side of the heel tape inside the shoe so that they will grip on the sides, not the back of the Achilles tendon. Sometimes a shoe that is too short will cause the heel to fall off, so be certain that it is long enough.

- Seams fraying.

The side seams are reinforced with an extra-strong tape inside the shoe, so any fraying will not affect the strength or integrity of the shoe. A frayed side seam can also indicate a too-tight fit. If fraying is a cosmetic problem, you may try clear nail polish or glue such as Duco Cement® to prevent it.

- Tip fraying.

Some fraying at the tip is inevitable because that part of the shoe gets the most wear. Remember, even though we use reinforced satin on our tips, Gaynor Minden shoes wear out not because the boxes or shanks weaken, but because the satin gets worn away. Do not attempt to darn the tips and NEVER cut the satin off - the shock absorbing layer makes this impossible. Try Tip Tops, Gaynor Minden's tip protection kit that contains pre-cut moleskin covers and Duco-Cement®. Duco-Cement® can even be used alone, just on the tip seams, if the floor is not too abrasive. Another option is to order a suede tip instead of the traditional satin tip. The suede is dyed to match the color of the satin and does last longer than the satin tips. Special order fees apply.

We recommend that dancers not use shoes on which the foam cushioning material under the satin is exposed. Do not dance in shoes in which the hard box material is exposed — it is slippery.

FITTING THE COMPRESSIBLE FOOT

Most of the above fitting difficulties are more likely if the dancer has a compressible foot. Be sure the drawstring is tightly pulled and securely tied. Be sure that the box is as narrow and snug as it can be without compromising demi-pointe or causing the foot to bulge out. Use a boxliner, and often a half or full sockliner, to downsize the shoe. Gaynor Minden cushions are especially effective because they compress to make room for the foot when it spreads out, and then spring back to their regular thickness to take up space and to hold the foot in place when it compresses on full pointe.

Often there is extra room at the heel. In order to have sufficient length to pli  in second position without pain, the shoe will seem too long on full pointe. If the dancer can wear a low heel or a Sleafit this will minimize the problem. Be sure ribbons and elastics are properly sewn. Full sockliners and heel grippers will also help.

PROBLEM FEET

1. Bunions - are hereditary but can be worsened with improper technique and improperly fitted pointe shoes. If the dancer is experiencing no pain, then leave the bunion alone. If the dancer complains of pain, check the following:

Are the shoes too wide? Are the shoes too short? Are the shoes too tapered? Is the dancer wearing a bulky toe pad? Is the dancer pronating? Is she “over-rotating” to force her turn-out? Does she have a space between the big toe and the second toe?

Pain can usually be alleviated by strapping the metatarsal area once with Gaynor Minden’s Toe Wraps. It should be snug and supportive but not tight. Many times the fit of the shoe is causing the problem. A space between her big toe and her second toe can be alleviated with Toe Separators.

2. Dropped arches - The whole arch area spreads out and lies down on the floor, sometimes causing the pointe shoe to appear crooked on the dancer’s foot. Again a few simple straps around the arch area with Toe Wraps can help. Make sure that the taping is snug but not tight. If the dancer pronates and complains about pain on the inside of the knees, she should consult a dance medicine expert.

3. Metatarsal compression - If a dancer’s foot changes in width when she puts weight on it, then most likely she has a “compressible” metatarsal. In other words, when she is standing flat her feet will be a different width than when en pointe. Her bones compress together and slide into the shoe. To prevent the dancer from sliding, use the Totally Toes Fitting Kit and see Problem Solving.

4. Morton’s foot - This is the Greek foot with the second toe longer than the big toe. If the toe begins to hammer (knuckle pops up), it is a good idea to have the dancer consult a podiatrist or physician who specializes in dance medicine. If it is not severe, the Cool Blue Crescent found in the Totally Toes Fitting Kit can take the pressure off the second toe.

5. Hyperflexion - This is when a dancer's arch is so pronounced and flexible that she has trouble standing en pointe. The Deep vamp will help hold back an over-arched foot. Vamp elastic will also help. The Hard shank may be needed for this type of foot. Remember, the dancer should always pull up out of the shoe and strive to correctly align herself.

6. Changeable or Reactive foot - These feet become so swollen during pointe work that they change by as much as a length or a width over the course of a day. In extreme cases two different sizes are needed. Fitting with box liners and sockliners that can be added or removed as needed is also helpful.

7. Feet of Different Lengths - It is best if the dancer buys one pair for each foot. If she will buy only one pair, then fit the longer foot and use cushions to take up space for the shorter one.

Above all else there will be fewer problems when the fit is correct!

#

BOX STYLE
#2 or #3 or #4

#

FLEX CHARACTERISTICS
Hard, Extra flex, Supple, Feather flex,
or Pianissimo

#

VAMP
1 (Reg.)
2 (Deep)
3 (Sleek)

#

HEEL
0 (Low)
by Special Order
1. (Reg.)
2. (High)
3. (Sleek)

Hard	#-5##-##
Extra flex	#-1##-##
Supple	#-2##-##
Feather	#-4##-##
Pianissimo	#-7##-##

FOR EXAMPLE:

3-121-21	<i>is</i>	<i>Box #3 – Extra flex Shank – Deep Vamp – Regular Heel</i>
2-221-12	<i>is</i>	<i>Box #2 – Supple Shank – Regular Vamp – High Heel</i>
4-121-33	<i>is</i>	<i>Box #4 – Extra flex Shank – Sleek Vamp – Sleek Heel</i>