

Unit 43: Developing Classical Ballet Technique

Unit code: R/502/4905

QCF Level 3: BTEC National

Credit value: 10

Guided learning hours: 60

● Aim and purpose

This unit introduces the essentials of ballet technique. Learners will develop strength, suppleness, fitness and coordination, experiment with movement combinations and learn sequences of choreography.

● Unit introduction

Ballet is at the heart of many of the dance styles performed today. It can be classical or modern and is performed in a variety of contexts, such as whole classical ballets, as the basis of techniques used in musical theatre and as the foundation of jazz and some street dance styles. There are opportunities to work as ballet performers in variety shows, circus and in film and video. Ballet can be seen in dance performance, for instance in pop promotional videos, often heavily disguised beneath more modern-looking techniques.

Classical ballet technique can be the starting point for dance training for anyone wanting to pursue a career in the performing arts. Dancers may also wish to pursue further training in specialist ballet schools where their technique will need to be polished and developed to a very high level of expertise.

This unit introduces the essentials of ballet technique, developing strength and suppleness and exploring how dancers move. Working in class will improve fitness levels and coordination so that learners can experiment with movement combinations and learn sequences of choreography.

There are many steps and positions that go to make up what we know as classical ballet and learners will master some of these, as they learn how a class is put together, what the basic principles are and how the body is aligned and moves in the space. The basic positions of the feet, turn-out and use of the arms are seen in so many ways in dance today; this unit will develop all of these, along with how they are used in interpreting music and ideas in ballet choreography.

● Learning outcomes

On completion of this unit a learner should:

- 1 Be able to use classical ballet technique in practical work
- 2 Know the main elements of classical ballet terminology
- 3 Be able to create combinations of movement using classical ballet technique
- 4 Be able to perform combinations and sequences using classical ballet techniques.

Unit content

1 Be able to use classical ballet technique in practical work

Application: suitable practice clothing; ballet shoes; hair tied back where appropriate; self-discipline; following instruction during class; self-evaluation; able to accept correction

Anatomical principles: centring; use of the spine; turn-out; body alignment; classical bodyline; use of the head and eyes for spotting while turning; basic feet and arm positions; pointe; demi-pointe

Components of the ballet class: barre; adage; petit-allegro; grand-allegro

2 Know the main elements of classical ballet terminology

Barre: plié (demi and grand); battement (tendu, glissé and fondu); rond de jambe (à terre and en l'air); développé; grand battement

Adage: pirouette (en dehors and en dedans); arabesque and attitude (effacé, croisé, écarté); bourrées; pas de bourré piqué

Petit allegro: échappé; pas de chat; balloté; sauté; assemblé; chassé

Grand allegro: petit and grand jeté; glissade; sissonne; waltz turns

3 Be able to create combinations of movement using classical ballet technique

Technical accuracy: importance of the clarity of the line of the body; the control of energy; balance; breathing; timing; dynamic variation; accurate recreation of combinations

Expression: focus; projection; emphasis on movements using music or rhythm; interpretation; musicality

4 Be able to perform combinations and sequences using classical ballet techniques

Combinations: accurately perform taught sequences using known steps and techniques

Communication: with the audience, between performers; proxemics and how dancers relate to each other on stage in performance; expression through movement and emotion; movement quality

Assessment and grading criteria

In order to pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria for a pass grade describe the level of achievement required to pass this unit.

Assessment and grading criteria		
To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:	To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:	To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:
P1 demonstrate an awareness of classical ballet technique in practical work [SM]	M1 demonstrate a sound awareness of classical ballet technique and use it appropriately in practical sessions	D1 demonstrate a thorough awareness of classical ballet technique using good turnout, classical body line and correct alignment in practical sessions
P2 use classical ballet terminology in practical sessions [RL]	M2 use the relevant classical ballet terminology in practical sessions	D2 use relevant terminology accurately at all times
P3 select and use classical ballet technique to create and refine movement combinations with structure and progression [CT, SM]	M3 apply classical ballet technique to create and refine dynamic movement combinations, showing sensitivity, structure and progression	D3 apply classical ballet technique to create and refine structured, innovative and individual combinations of movement through progression, unity and sensitivity
P4 perform combinations with control, expression and emotion, with an awareness of the audience and other performers. [TW, EP]	M4 perform combinations accurately with body control and expression, relating clearly and appropriately to other performers and the audience.	D4 perform combinations with precision, clarity of line and expression, encompassing the work of other dancers and relating to the audience.

PLTS: This summary references where applicable, in the square brackets, the elements of the personal, learning and thinking skills applicable in the pass criteria. It identifies opportunities for learners to demonstrate effective application of the referenced elements of the skills.

Key	IE – independent enquirers CT – creative thinkers	RL – reflective learners TW – team workers	SM – self-managers EP – effective participators
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Essential guidance for tutors

Delivery

Most of the learning for this unit will take place in the studio. Ballet classes have a clear and ordered structure, and learners must have the chance to find out through experience how classes work. Class should enable learners to appreciate the need for a thorough warm-up, explore the nature of the class repertoire of exercises and understand how these build up strength, stamina and suppleness. Ballet class develops all the skills a dancer needs to create and dance choreographed ballets.

Every dancer needs to arrive at regular class properly dressed and prepared for the strenuous exercise that the class affords. Tutors need to insist on learners wearing suitable exercise clothes that allow for the line of the body to be clear, and a pair of appropriate ballet shoes. Most ballet is performed in shoes, so bare feet are not appropriate. Hair properly tied back and no watches or jewellery is the norm in a ballet class. The studio should be a warm, clean space, preferably with mirrors to help learners self-evaluate and correct work, and preferably with a sprung floor to make jumping safe. Music can be used to help the timing of exercises, but it is not essential; this can be live or recorded. The presence of a live accompanist adds a creative dimension to work, allowing tutors to set rhythm and pace at will, but this is by no means essential.

The structure of the class should be appreciated as learners pursue this basic grounding for all the dancing that will follow. The slow build-up from barre, through adage to petit and grand allegro builds skills and coordination as well as appreciation for the shape and line of ballet movement. All classes should follow this format so that when they tackle more creative dancing, learners are already warmed up both physically and mentally. It is very important that learners get into good habits here as coming into a lesson where centre choreography is the main task without warming up at the barre and in the centre can be dangerous. Muscles need to become warm and flexible; injuries will then be rare.

The technical vocabulary of ballet can be taught through repetition at the barre and in the centre. The French words used to describe movement, directions and speed are essential learning for all dancers, even those not pursuing ballet in their further dance training. Tutors should use the correct French terms at all times in class, so this becomes a natural mode of communication. Self-criticism is a way of life for dancers and all learners will need to carry out their own evaluations; dancers have to accept this and use it as a way of progressing. Discussions between tutor and learners should focus on learners skills and potential for development.

Whilst the tutor may choreograph simple dance combinations, learners should be encouraged to develop their own ideas, although the choreographic process is not taught here in this unit. Sections of choreography from ballet works are good challenges for learners to master. These can be found in notated dance scores, where the tutor is familiar with dance notation, films of ballets and from observation of live performances. The chance to see live dance on stage will be invaluable to young dancers and should be encouraged by tutors. There are websites run by many universities that offer examples of ballet steps and movements performed by professional dancers, so that learners can see the range of movement and extension required in the professional field. The technical mastery of ballet steps and movements, clarity of the bodyline, emotional expression and awareness of the need to create a performance for an audience are the key features of this unit.

Each learner may need to keep a performer's log, which can take the form of a written diary or logbook, or may be captured as a video diary or audio recording. The log should provide clear supporting evidence for the development of choreographic ideas and notes on terminology and technique.

Outline learning plan

The outline learning plan has been included in this unit as guidance and can be used in conjunction with the programme of suggested assignments.

The outline learning plan demonstrates one way in planning the delivery and assessment of this unit.

Topic and suggested assignments/activities and/assessment
Introduction to class: personal physical and mental preparation, suitable clothing, hair tied back, shoes, self-evaluation.
Components of the ballet class: barre; adage; petit-allegro; grand-allegro.
Assignment 1: The Ballet Class – P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2 Introduction to combinations of steps, motifs, technique development, language, principal elements of classical ballet, learning the language and vocabulary, exploring combinations of classical movement.
Assignment 2: The Audition Piece – P1, M2, D2, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4 Learn and perform combinations based on classical repertoire, using DVD or live performance as starting points; evaluations. The demonstration of ballet technique should take place in at least two workshops and/or performances, each lasting between two and three minutes. Explore a contrasting piece from the repertoire, using DVD or live performance. Explore the use of space, proxemics; delivering successful work for an audience.
Assignment 3: The Ballet Showcase – P1, M2, D2, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4 Develop two dances for a ballet showcase, using more than one ballet style, refining a role, more language and vocabulary. Class assessments, feedback. Performances, assessments, evaluations.

Assessment

Assessment will take place both in the workshop and in performances. Workshops will be ideal to see how technique is developing, but regular class will also show how learners are building understanding of both terminology and technique.

Class work will produce evidence for learning outcomes 1 and 2. How well learners respond to direction in class and to simple enchainements or combinations, taught then performed without rehearsal, will give a vocational flavour to the unit. Workshops may be set up to explore specific features, such as jumps or turns, travelling combinations or partner work. These will allow for the assessment of the criteria 1, 2 and 4, particularly where the group is encouraged to watch and comment on each other's work, using the correct terminology and vocabulary. It will be important to ensure that work explores different styles of ballet, from classical to modern.

For learning outcome 3, learners will need to have chances to develop and interpret combinations and enchainements; these might be based on existing repertoire, on ideas from the tutor or themselves.

Opportunities to perform their work to others might mean to members of their group or an invited audience. Learners could also develop simple ideas for enchainements or movement combinations as preparation for centre work, or could plan sections of class, such as adage, and record their ideas in a performer's log. This would provide evidence for all learning outcomes and provide opportunities to prepare for future auditions for dance schools and companies.

All assessments must be supported by tutor observation statements. It is suggested that the demonstration of ballet technique takes place in at least two workshops and/performances each lasting two to three minutes.

The unit does not demand written work in assessment but tutors may wish learners to produce notes for evaluation of their own and others' dancing. This will allow learners to access higher grades for understanding and use of terminology and technique, and to demonstrate independence in their learning, something that will prove invaluable in the vocational world.

For P1, learners must be able to copy and accurately demonstrate the classical ballet style in regular class; for P2 they will need to show accurate use and understanding of ballet terminology and vocabulary. Both these pass criteria demand understanding and application of the various stylistic demands of ballet, such as the correct positioning of the head and spine, turn-out, the basic feet and arm positions. Learners will also need to turn with accuracy by using spotting technique, use demi-pointe, travelling steps and basic jumps. The structure of the traditional classical ballet class will become familiar through constant repetition, along with the French vocabulary that is the essential tool used for communicating in ballet.

For P3, learners must be able to interpret the ideas, terms and names of steps given to them by their tutor. This is an essential skill for any dancer. The performance of these steps and enchainements will provide evidence for P4; these performances must include chances to dance with and alongside other dancers, as well as in solos.

For M1, learners will use their ballet technique accurately in class, copying and demonstrating work they are taught. For M2, they will also employ ballet terminology appropriately; this could be demonstrated where learners are tasked with teaching others some new steps and combinations set to their own music choices. For M3, learners will create and reproduce ballet steps and enchainements, refining their work progressively as they familiarise themselves with the movements. They will begin to explore the emotionality of the style, expressing this with sensitivity.

For M4, movement combinations will be performed accurately, with expression and control; this might mean through working around and with other performers on stage or in class. Learners will need to have chances to work in different groupings, including partner work. The audience required for any performance could be the rest of the group or invited.

For D1, dancers will have developed a thorough technique, including turn-out and the classical body line so essential to professional ballet dancers. All steps and movements will be demonstrated accurately and with sensitivity. For D2, steps and movements will be clearly and quickly absorbed through understanding of the French terms and vocabulary. For D3, learners must use their technique to create and refine combinations to fit their own individual strengths, whilst retaining the inherent structure and demands of the work.

Dancers must know how to bring a sense of individuality to their work, when required, as well as to dance harmoniously with others. Ballet dancers who make it to the top of their profession are the ones who are unafraid to take risks, to try the extra rotation in a pirouette, extend the leg higher in a *développé* without losing the line.

For D4, dancers will reproduce work in performance with precision; their classical line will be clear and expressive. There will also be clear understanding of the needs of other dancers in performance as well as those of the audience. The performance of ballet dance is a cooperative process and learners who achieve D4 will exhibit this.

Programme of suggested assignments

The table below shows a programme of suggested assignments that cover the pass, merit and distinction criteria in the assessment and grading grid. This is for guidance and it is recommended that centres either write their own assignments or adapt any Edexcel assignments to meet local needs and resources.

Criteria covered	Assignment title	Scenario	Assessment method
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2	The Ballet Class	Working as a freelance professional ballet dancer, take regular class to fully prepare yourself for an audition for a classical ballet company.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tutor observations • learner observations • learner log • digital recordings of classwork.
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	The Audition Piece	The audition brief: the performed ballet combination You are auditioning for a professional ballet company; you will be required to perform a short solo dance based on a piece of taught repertoire, in front of the audition panel, to an accompaniment of your choice.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tutor observations of preparation work • learner observations • audition performance, recorded.
P1, M1, D1, P2, M2, D2, P3, M3, D3, P4, M4, D4	The Ballet Showcase	Brief: you are a member of a small touring ballet company; prepare a showcase to show the range of your group's talents. This will be performed at a local community arts centre, celebrating the arts in your town.	Portfolio of evidence consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tutor observations • choreographic ideas in learner log • digital recordings of combination developments • rehearsals • recorded performances.

Links to National Occupational Standards, other BTEC units, other BTEC qualifications and other relevant units and qualifications

This unit forms part of the BTEC Performing and Production Arts sector suite. This unit has particular links with the following unit titles in the BTEC Performing and Production Arts suite:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Exploring Dance Skills	Performing Dance	Rehearsing for Performers
	The Development of Dance	Performing to an Audience
		Dance Performance
		Choreographing Dance
		Applying Classical Ballet Technique
		Movement in Performance

Essential resources

A suitable clean, heated studio space, with ballet barres and preferably fitted with wall mirrors, sprung floor, sound system and space for changing will be necessary. Access to DVD/video recording/playback facilities for recording learners work and watching dancers at work is essential.

Employer engagement and vocational contexts

Centres may wish to develop links with local providers of higher education and training so that learners may have access to outside expertise. Many dance training providers run community classes that learners can access, such as the University of Surrey community dance programme. Such providers are often hubs for visiting dance companies that learners can then see in performance.

National dance competitions provide opportunities for learners to showcase their talents in a broader setting than that offered within their own centre.

Indicative reading for learners

Textbooks

Blakey P – *The Muscle Book* (Bibliotek Books, 1992) ISBN 9781873017005

Craine D and Mackrell J – *The Oxford Dictionary of Dance* (Oxford University Press, 2000)
ISBN 9780198607656

Crist L – *Ballet Barre and Center Combinations: Volume 1: Word Descriptions* (Princeton Book Company, 2001)
ISBN 9780871272201

Franklin E – *Dynamic Alignment Through Imagery* (Human Kinetics, 1996) ISBN 9780873224758

Glasstone R – *Classical Ballet Terms, an Illustrated Dictionary* (Dance Books, 2001) ISBN 9781852730802

Grieg V – *Inside Ballet Technique: Separating Anatomical Fact from Fiction in the Ballet Class* (Princeton Book Company, 1994) ISBN 9780871271914

Grosser J – *ABC of Ballet* (Dover Publications, 2003) ISBN 9780486408712

Howse J – *Dance Technique and Injury Prevention* (A&C Black, 1992) ISBN 9780713651904

Jacob E – *Dancing: A Guide for the Dancer You Can Be* (Addison-Wesley, 1981) ISBN 9780201049565

Koutedakis Y and Sharp C – *The Fit and Healthy Dancer* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1999) ISBN 9780471975281

Mara T – *The Language of Ballet* (Princeton, 1975) ISBN 9780871271440

Mara T – *Third Steps in Ballet: Basic Allegro Steps* (Princeton Book Company, 1994) ISBN 9780916622558

Moss D S and Allison K L – *The Joffrey Ballet School's Ballet-Fit* (Dance Books, 1998) ISBN 9780312194703

Ryman R – *Dictionary of Classical Ballet Terminology, 3rd Edition* (Royal Academy of Dance, 2007)
ISBN 9781904386872

The Royal Academy of Dancing – *The Foundations of Classical Ballet Technique* (Royal Academy of Dance, 1997) ISBN 9780952484820

Journal

Dance Now

Websites

www.dancebooks.co.uk

NResource for Dance books and materials

www.surrey.ac.uk

NRCD – National Resource Centre for Dance

Delivery of personal, learning and thinking skills

The table below identifies the opportunities for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) that have been included within the pass assessment criteria of this unit.

Skill	When learners are ...
Creative thinkers	identifying, selecting and using classical ballet techniques to create and refine movement combinations with structure and progression
Reflective learners	appropriately employing correct ballet terminology in practical sessions
Team workers	creating and performing classical ballet dances with others
Self-managers	using appropriate classical ballet technique to meet the demands of class
Effective participants	performing ballet dance combinations with others.

Although PLTS are identified within this unit as an inherent part of the assessment criteria, there are further opportunities to develop a range of PLTS through various approaches to teaching and learning.

Skill	When learners are ...
Creative thinkers	interpreting directed choreography in class applying classical ballet techniques in development of classical ballet dance maximising personal strengths and talents in the interpretation of classical ballet choreography
Reflective learners	setting goals for own work based on objective criticism and evaluation appreciating the need for on-going objective criticism interpreting classical ballet terminology in class using appropriate classical ballet terminology in class
Team workers	developing dance for performance being aware of the need for cooperation with other dancers and the production team taking account of audience needs in developing and delivering classical ballet dance in performance
Self-managers	ensuring correct self-preparation for class, rehearsal and performance seeking out personal challenges in the interpretation of classical ballet choreography dealing with the pressure of the physical and emotional demands of classical ballet responding positively to objective criticism and setting personal goals
Effective participants	taking part in rehearsals and performances of classical ballet.

● Functional Skills – Level 2

Skill	When learners are ...
English	
Speaking and listening – make a range of contributions to discussions and make effective presentations in a wide range of contexts	taking part in ongoing objective criticism and analyses of own and others' work
Writing – write documents, including extended writing pieces, communicating information, ideas and opinions, effectively and persuasively	writing and maintaining a dancer's log self-evaluating progress and planning for improvement.