

NATIONAL  
*Dance*  
WEEK

**Fifth - Eighth Grade Ballet Projects**

**Objectives**

- ❖ To introduce the Ballet style of dance.
- ❖ To use Ballet as a form of exercise which includes flexibility, strengthening, balance and coordination.
- ❖ To allow students to experience the joy of dance.
- ❖ To encourage students who have an interest in dance to continue to pursue opportunities which will enhance their personal development and appreciation of the art form.
- ❖ To have fun and explore creativity through movement
- ❖ To look at the Ballet as a method of storytelling.

**Dance Activity** (approx activity length 45 minutes)

### **Equipment**

Something to play music on (stereo, mp3 player and speakers, etc)

Classical or ballet music appropriate for each exercise. Suggestions are provided below for appropriate music which can be downloaded from online sources.

### **Movement Exercise General Information**

The class is designed to be conducted without barres, mirrors or special flooring.

If possible, a thin flexible soled shoes or socks would be the easiest footwear to work in.

Students will need a fair amount of room to move in safely. A gym or all purpose room would be ideal for this class.

The goal of the class is for students to be introduced to the movements, not that they perfect the movements in a single class.

There are several major styles of ballet. The terminology provided in these notes is based on the Vaganova style. Alternate terminology is included when appropriate.

**Exercise Order, Music Suggestions and Goals**

1. Feet Positions and Stretch
  - a. Music
    - i. 64 counts in length
    - ii. Slow tempo
    - iii.  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{4}{4}$  meter
    - iv. [Listen to a sample piece of music that works for this exercise from Amazon](#)
  - b. Goals
    - i. Spinal articulation
    - ii. Abdominal strength
    - iii. Balance
    - iv. Lengthening of hamstrings
2. Plie'
  - a. Music
    - i. 64 counts in length
    - ii. Slow tempo
    - iii.  $\frac{3}{4}$  or  $\frac{4}{4}$  meter
    - iv. [Listen to a sample piece of music that works for this exercise from Amazon](#)
  - b. Goals
    - i. Strengthening of the muscles of the thigh
    - ii. Lengthening of the muscles of the lower leg
    - iii. Articulation of the ankle, knee and hip joints
    - iv. Core strength and control
3. Tendu 1
  - a. Music
    - i. 64 counts in length
    - ii. Moderate tempo
    - iii.  $\frac{2}{4}$  or  $\frac{4}{4}$  meter
    - iv. [Listen to a sample piece of music that works for this exercise from Amazon](#)
  - b. Goals
    - i. Balance
    - ii. Articulation of the feet
    - iii. Strengthening of the feet
    - iv. Strengthening and stability of the supporting leg
    - v. Strengthening and mobility of the gesture leg
    - vi. Core strength and control
4. Tendu Jete' 1
  - a. Music
    - i. 64 counts in length
    - ii. Moderate to quick tempo
    - iii.  $\frac{2}{4}$  or  $\frac{4}{4}$  meter
    - iv. [Listen to a sample piece of music that works for this exercise from Amazon](#)
  - b. Goals
    - i. Balance
    - ii. Articulation of the feet

**Exercise Order, Music Suggestions and Goals**

- iii. Strengthening of the feet
  - iv. Strengthening and stability of the supporting leg
  - v. Strengthening and mobility of the gesture leg
  - vi. Core strength and control
5. Ronds de Jambe 1
- a. Music
    - i. 128 counts in length
    - ii. Moderate tempo
    - iii. 4/4 meter
    - iv. [Listen to a sample piece of music that works for this exercise from Amazon](#)
  - b. Goals
    - i. Rotation of the leg in the hip socket
    - ii. Balance
    - iii. Articulation of the feet
    - iv. Strengthening and stability of the supporting leg
    - v. Strengthening and mobility of the gesture leg
6. Sur le cou de pied 1
- a. Music
    - i. 128 counts in length
    - ii. Moderate to quick tempo
    - iii. 2/4 or 4/4 meter
    - iv. [Listen to a sample piece of music that works for this exercise from Amazon](#)
  - b. Goals
    - i. Articulation of the feet
    - ii. Balance
    - iii. Stability and strengthening of the supporting leg
    - iv. Coordination and fine motor control of the gesture foot
7. Port des bras 1
- a. Music
    - i. 64 counts in length
    - ii. Slow to moderate tempo
    - iii. 4/4 or  $\frac{3}{4}$  meter
    - iv. [Listen to a sample piece of music that works for this exercise from Amazon](#)
  - b. Goals
    - i. Arm and head articulation
    - ii. Abdominal control
    - iii. Expression

Comprehensive directions for each exercise are provided on the following pages.

General body alignment notes and necessary definitions of body positions and terms are included before the break down of exercises.

### Body Alignment

1. Unless otherwise specified the starting body alignment is standing with the spine as neutral as possible. A neutral spine generally has 3 curves in it. There is a slight curve in the neck (where the apex of the curve goes to the front of the body). The thoracic area has a slight curve in the opposite direction (where the apex of the curve goes to the back of the body). The lumbar area has a slight curve in the same direction of the neck (apex forward). The amount of curve in these three areas will vary from body to body.
2. The pelvis should be held as neutral as possible. In a neutral alignment the crest of the hip bones (ASIS) are approximately in line with the PSIS (roughly where the dimples are on the back).

If the ASIS are lower than the PSIS, the pelvis is anteriorly (forward) tilted. A person with this body type needs to think about lengthening the tailbone to the floor to encourage their pelvis back to a more neutral alignment.

If the ASIS are higher in the front than the PSIS in the back, the pelvis is posteriorly (backward) tilted. A person with this body type needs to think about releasing the tailbone down to the floor as it is tucked under them and coming forward.

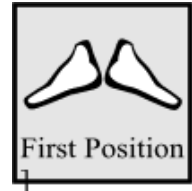
3. In standing posture, the body is stretched up with the feeling of lift coming from the knees, up the leg, through the spine and head. From the knees down, there should be a feeling of grounding or weight into the floor. The abdominal muscles should be supporting the center of the body. All of the toes and the heels should be in contact with the floor as should the lateral aspect of the feet. The weight should be evenly divided across the metatarsal, not favoring the inside or outside edges. The weight should be centered both front to back and side to side. There should be energy up and out the crown of the head and down through the feet.
4. When bending the knees (using plie') it is important that the knees track over the middle three toes of the foot or feet. The weight placement should remain as consistent with number 3 above as possible.
5. It is important to remember that just as some body types have coming to parallel. If this is the case for a student they should strive to work in the most neutral position they can attain.

**Positions**

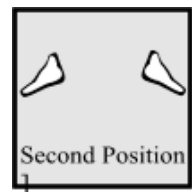
***Parallel First*** The feet are together (with up to 1 inch distance between them), toes facing straight forward and heels straight back.

***Parallel Second*** The heels are placed under the hip sockets, toes facing straight forward and heels straight back.

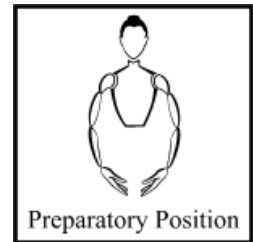
***First*** The legs are rotated out from the hip so that the toes are facing away from each other and the heels remain together. There can be a slight space between the two heels to allow for individual leg structures.



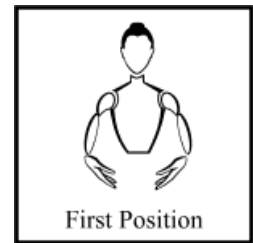
***Second*** A step to the side from first position opens the legs into 2nd. The heels are under the hip sockets and the rotation of the legs away from each other is maintained.



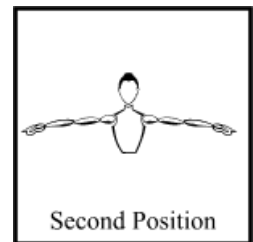
***Preparatory*** Arms are held with palms facing each other, centered in front of thighs, elbows lifted slightly to allow for space between arms and torso. The arms maintain a rounded line. This position is also known as Bras bas, Low Fifth, and Fifth position en bas.



***First Position*** The arms are brought up in front of the body, in line with the bottom of the sternum, while maintaining the rounded line described above. The thumbs are folded behind the index fingers without touching. The elbows remain higher than the wrists, so there is a downward slope from the shoulder, through the elbow to the wrist. This position is also referred to as Middle Fifth in some styles of ballet.

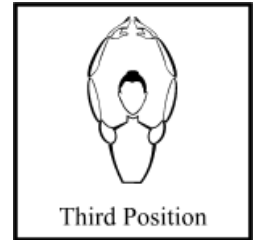


***Second Position*** The arms are opened out from the first position so that they are almost to the side of the body. The elbows remain slightly in front of the body, which helps prevent the back from arching. The hands remain facing each other and the downward slope described above is maintained.



**Positions continued*****Third Position***

The arms from first position are brought up slightly in front of the crown of the head. Raising the eyes should allow you to see the edge of the hands. The shoulders are pressed down allowing for a long neckline and the hands are slightly rotated so that the palms are not facing front. The elbows are opened to the side without being behind or even directly over the head. This position is also commonly known as 5th or 5th en haute.



All the other arm positions will be made by combining two of the positions described above. The bold names of the arm positions above are from the Vaganova Style of ballet. Each of the major styles of ballet has a different numbering system for the arm positions and the most common versions are listed above.

**Movement Terminology*****Battement Tendu***

The working foot slides along the floor until it is fully extended to a point with just the toes touching the floor. The process is then reversed to close. This will commonly be referred to as tendu. The term is derived from the word *etendre* meaning to stretch. The pictures of the body positions in the previous section all have the gesture leg executing a tendu when the foot is in contact with the ground.

***Battement Tendu Jete'***

The working leg slides along the floor, passing through the tendu as described above, until the foot leaves the floor to approximately ankle height, with the foot fully pointed. The process is then reversed to close. This will commonly be referred to as *tendu jete'* or *degage'*.

***Eleve'***

Beginning with the feet in any position, press into the metatarsal of the feet until the heels rise off the floor. Lower with straight legs to the starting position. *Eleve'* means to elevate.

**Movement Terminology continued*****Passe'***

The toe of the working leg is touching the knee of the supporting leg, either in front, to the side or behind the kneecap. The working leg is turned out so that the knee is making a triangle. When the foot passes through this position on it's way somewhere else it is a passe'. If the foot is drawn to this position and held, as in a pose, it is a retire'.

***Plie'***

The knees are bend over the toes and then are straightened to return to the starting position. A demi plie' allows the knees to bend as far as possible keeping the alignment over the toes and maintaining heel contact on the floor. Grande plie' are a more advanced form which will not be used except in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> positions. To execute a grand plie' you demi plie' and then continue to bend the knees to full flexion. In first position the heels will release from the floor and in 2<sup>nd</sup> position they will not. At no time during a grand plie' will your pubic bone be below your knees. The term is from the word plier, meaning to bend. The picture is of a grand plié in second position.

***Port des Bras***

Literally meaning carriage of the arms there are several different ports des bras that will be described in the lesson plans.

***Ronds de Jambe***

The working leg executes a tendu devant, opens to the side, continues to rotate to the back and closes to first position. This pattern is en dehors, reversing the pattern is en dedans. A demi ronds de jambe would close after each change of positions, i.e.: tendu devant, opens to second position and then closes to first; tendu a la seconde, rotates to back and closes to first. Ronds de jambe may be done par terre and en l'air. The term Ronds de jambe means around the leg.

***Sur Le Cou De Pied***

The working foot is wrapped around the ankle of the supporting leg. The heel is in front and the toes are behind for sur le cou de pied devant, for the derierre position, the heel is behind the ankle and the toes are extended back from there. The literal translation is wrapped around the neck of the leg.





### Feet Positions and Stretch

Starting position – feet parallel first position, hands by the sides of the body

Counts	Movement
1,2,3,4	Roll down through spine in parallel first position.
1,2,3,4	Roll up.
1,2,3,4	Turn legs and feet out to first position.
1,2,3,4	Roll down through spine maintaining leg position.
1,2,3,4	Roll up.
1,2,3,4	Rotate legs to parallel first position.
1,2,3,4	Step open to parallel second position.
1,2,3,4	Roll down through spine maintaining leg position.
1,2,3,4	Roll up.
1,2,3,4	Rotate legs to turned out second position.
1,2,3,4	Roll down through spine maintaining leg position.
1,2,3,4	Roll up.
1,2,3,4	Rotate legs to parallel second position.
1,2,3,4	Rotate legs to turned out first position.
1,2,3,4	Rotate legs to parallel first position.
1,2	Eleve'
3,4	Lower

#### Notes and Corrections:

1. Not everyone is able to achieve a parallel position. Allow students to slightly turnout their feet if it helps with proper body alignment and balance.
2. When rolling down, the head initiates the movement and the vertebra roll down one by one. The rounding movement is flexing the spine.
3. When rolling up, the tailbone initiates the movement by pointing to the floor. Each vertebra stacks on top of the one below it until the head is returned to the neck.
4. Make sure the knees are not locked. They should be straight, but not hyper-extended.
5. The abdominal muscles need to be engaged before any movement occurs and remain engaged throughout the exercise.
6. Incorporating breathing into the exercise can assist the range of movement. The breathing would be to exhale as you roll down and inhale as you roll up.

**Plie' 1**

Starting position – feet parallel, hands on hips. As alignment and balance improve move arms to 2<sup>nd</sup> position

Counts	Movement
1,2	Demi plie' parallel 1st
3,4	Stretch
1-4, 1-4	Repeat 2 more times
1,2.3	Head roll to the right.
4	Rotate legs to turned out 1st.
1,2	Demi plie' turned out 1st
3,4	Stretch
1-4, 1-4	Repeat 2 more times
1,2.3	Head roll to the left.
4	Rotate legs to parallel 2nd.
1,2	Demi plie' parallel 2nd
3,4	Stretch
1-4, 1-4	Repeat 2 more times
1,2.3	Head roll to the right.
4	Rotate legs to turned out 2nd.
1,2	Demi plie' turned out 2nd.
3,4	Stretch
1-4, 1-4	Repeat 2 more times
1,2.3	Head roll to the left.
4	Stand up straight, legs in turned out 2nd position.

**Notes and Corrections:**

1. Ideal alignment is for the knees to bend over the middle three toes of the feet.
2. Watch the arches of the feet for rolling in (eversion) or out (inversion).
3. There should be weight over all 10 toes and both heels throughout this exercise.
4. When the knees bend watch for changes in the pelvic placement. If you see students tucking their pelvis under (which will appear to flatten their back) remind them to release their tailbone to the floor. If you see students who appear to release their hips forward to gain movement (often arching their lower back) cue them to lengthen their tailbones to the floor.
5. The feeling of a plie' should be one of resistance. As the knees and ankles flex forward the body should remain tall to avoid the appearance of getting shorter. There is a feeling of pulling up to go down. As the knees straighten there should be a feeling of lengthening through the backs of the legs into the floor.
6. During the head roll do not allow the head to extend too far to the ceiling, creating a shortening of the back of the neck. Think of the nose as a pen drawing a circle on the wall in front of you. The highest part of the circle should barely be over the seam of the wall and ceiling.

**Tendu 1**

Starting position – feet turned out 1st, hands on hips. As alignment and balance improves arms move to 2<sup>nd</sup> position.

Counts	Movement
1	Right foot tendu to ball of foot front.
2	Stretch foot to full tendu.
3	Pull toes into ball of the foot.
4	Close 1st position.
1-4 , 1-4, 1-4	Repeat 3 more times switching weight to the right side on the last closing.
1 -4, 1-4, 1-4, 1-4	Repeat the tendu front with the left foot. Switch weight to the left side on the last closing.
1	Right foot tendu to ball of foot side.
2	Stretch foot to full tendu.
3	Pull toes into ball of the foot.
4	Close 1st position.
1-4 , 1-4, 1-4	Repeat 3 more times switching weight to the right side on the last closing
1-4, 1-4, 1-4, 1-4	Repeat the tendu side with the left foot. Switch weight to the center on the last closing.

**General Notes and Corrections**

1. Tendu to the front is properly aligned when the working toes are in line with the edge of the supporting heel.
2. When executing a tendu there should be no shifting of weight onto the working leg.
3. The working foot should keep contact on the floor for as long as possible before extending to a full point.
4. In tendu front and side the heel should feel as if it is leading the movement out. The toes pull back to bring the foot back in.
5. Both legs remain straight throughout this exercise.
6. Watch for the height of the hips to shift. One hip lower than the other indicates a problem with alignment, weight distribution (generally there is weight on the working leg), and or sitting in the standing hip.
7. When executing a tendu to the side, proper placement is along the diagonal line that the foot is pointing in when in first position. It is very rare for a beginner and intermediate dancer to have a side that is along a 180 degree line.
8. The posture of the body remains pulled up with a neutral pelvis. If you see the pelvis tilting forward or backward remind the students that their tailbone needs to be extending to the floor.
9. The weight shift is subtle, just enough to allow the weight of the body to be on the standing leg as opposed to over the working foot.
10. The action of pointing the foot comes from the ankle, the idea is to have as straight a line as possible along the front of the leg.
11. The toes continue the line of the ankle and foot by stretching, they do not curl under.

**Tendu Jete' 1**

Starting position – feet turned out 1st, hands on hips. As alignment and balance improve the arms move to 2<sup>nd</sup> position.

Counts	Movement
1	Right foot tendu front.
2	Extend leg so foot leaves floor.
3	Return to tendu.
4	Close 1st position.
1-4 , 1-4, 1-4	Repeat 3 more times. Switch weight to right side as you close the final tendu jete'.
1 -4, 1-4, 1-4, 1-4	Repeat all with the left foot. Switch weight to the left side as you close the final tendu jete'.
1	Right foot tendu side.
2	Extend leg so foot leaves floor.
3	Return to tendu.
4	Close 1st position.
1-4 , 1-4, 1-4	Repeat 3 more times. Switch weight to the right side as you close the final tendu jete'.
1 -4, 1-4, 1-4, 1-4	Repeat the side tendu jete's with the left foot working. As you close the final one, switch the weight so you are centered on two feet.

**General Notes and Corrections**

1. Apply the notes discussed in tendus.
2. As the foot leaves the floor the toes should remain extended down towards the floor so that the heel is leading the lift.
3. The leg should feel as if it is lengthening away from the body and the foot leaves the floor because it has gone farther than it can keep contact. Try to avoid having the students 'lift' their leg, as that generally implies a different muscular energy.
4. At this level there is no accent to the movement. Each piece of the exercise is given the same amount of time.
5. Use the resistance of the floor to close the feet so that the ankles don't hit each other.

## Ronds de Jambe 1

Starting position – feet turned out 1st, hands on hips.

Counts	Movement
1-2	Right foot tendu front.
3-4	Ronds de Jambe leg to 2nd (en dehors)
1-4	Close 1st position.
1-4, 1-4	Repeat
1-4, 1-4	Repeat
1-2	Right foot tendu front
3-4	Ronds de Jambe leg to 2 <sup>nd</sup> (en dehors)
1-2	Close 1 <sup>st</sup> Position plie'
3-4	Stretch legs, shifting weight to the right leg
8 Measures of 4	Repeat with the left foot working ending with the weight centered between the two feet as they stretch their legs.
1-2	Right foot tendu side.
3-4	Ronds de Jambe leg to back (en dehors)
1-4	Close 1st position.
1-4, 1-4	Repeat
1-4, 1-4	Repeat
1-2	Right foot tendu side
3-4	Ronds de Jambe leg to back
1-2	Close 1 <sup>st</sup> Position plie'
3-4	Stretch legs, shifting weight to the right leg
8 Measures of 4	Repeat with the left foot working ending with the weight centered between the two feet as they stretch their legs.

## General Notes and Corrections

1. Apply the notes from all of the tendu exercises.
2. As the leg opens from front to side, make sure the dancers use their side and not true side.
3. As the leg closes to 1<sup>st</sup> position encourage the use of the inner thighs to pull together.
4. When the leg tendus to side before opening back again remind students that side is along a forward diagonal.
5. Explain to close the foot from the back that toes draw the foot in. The foot should go from a full point, to the ball of the foot, to flat with all 5 toes in contact with the floor.
6. The hips should stay still throughout.
7. Remind students to pull up on the supporting leg to keep the space for the working leg to close without shifting.
8. It is important that the weight center between both feet as the legs close in first position and then shift slightly to the supporting leg just before executing the tendu.

**Sur le cou de pied 1**

Starting position – feet 1st position, hands on hips.

<b>Counts</b>	<b>Movement</b>
1,2	Right foot presses to ball of foot, the right knee bends to allow the heel to lift.
3,4	Slide heel sideways into ankle of supporting foot. The right knee remains bent.
1,2	Wrap toes around ankle. The right knee remains bent.
3,4	Hold position
1,2	Hold position
3,4	Press ball of foot down onto floor. The right knee remains bent.
1,2	Slide foot back to 1st position. The right knee is now straight
3,4	Hold with weight centered in first position
12 sets of 4	Repeat 3 more times.
16 sets of 4	Use the Left leg to execute the exercise

**General Notes and Corrections**

1. Keep the supporting leg straight and turned out throughout the exercise.
2. Maintain balance on supporting leg.
3. Not every foot has the facility to completely wrap around the ankle, allowances in line need to be made for individual foot structure.
4. Discourage over turnout of the working leg. The turnout will be slightly greater than the supporting side but there should be no pressure into the supporting leg from the working leg to increase the turnout.

**Ports des bras 1A**

Starting position – feet 1st position, arms in preparatory position

<b>Counts</b>	<b>Movement</b>
1,2,3,4	Arms raise to 1st position.
1,2,3,4	Hold position.
1,2,3,4	Return to preparatory position.
1,2,3,4	Hold position.
1,2,3,4	Arms 1st position.
1,2,3,4	Arms open to 2nd position.
1,2,3,4	Hold position.
1,2,3,4	Arms 1st position.
1,2,3,4	Arms preparatory position.
1,2,3,4	Hold position.
1,2,3,4	Arms 1st position.
1,2,3,4	Arms 3rd position.
1,2,3,4	Hold position.
1,2,3,4	Arms 2nd position.
1,2,3,4	Arms preparatory position.
1,2,3,4	Hold position.

**General Notes and Corrections**

1. The movement of the arm happens in the shoulder socket. You don't want the shoulders elevating or coming forward (protracting) with the arms.
2. Follow the hands with the eyes. Each time you perform the exercise, alternate whether the focus is to the right or left side. Keep the focus consistent throughout the whole exercise.
3. The hands should be visible in the peripheral vision throughout the whole exercise.
4. Posture is to be held erect but not stiff throughout the exercise.
5. The arms should feel supported by the back.
6. Have the students lay on their backs with their knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Execute the exercise in this position to let the students feel the work that the arms and back do. Concentrate on keeping the ribcage and back in the same place throughout the exercise.
7. Have the students sit with their legs crossed and their back against a wall or mirror. Execute the exercise in this position. Have the students keep their ribcage and back in the same relationship to the wall throughout.

### Choreography Project

Put on a piece of classical music or instrumental music. Ask the students to create movements based on the exercises completed in class to move across the floor to that music. Encourage the students to expand on the movements, not just duplicate the stationary exercises. Add elements such as turning, jumping, sliding and poses.

If the exercise is done during remaining class time, keep it as a group movement activity. If you are using this activity as a stand alone class, encourage the students to come up with a piece of choreography that they can duplicate. Encourage them to write the movements down so that the students can then either duplicate the dance for others to watch or teach the movements that they created to the other students.



**Research Project** (approximate activity length varies)

Have the students watch a ballet, or portion of a ballet. Either discuss the following areas as a group, or have the students break into smaller groups or pairs and assign one area to each group of students:

- Plot
  - What was the story about?
  - How was it conveyed without spoken word?
  - Can the students think of any ways to convey the message more clearly?
- Costumes
  - Did the costumes help to tell the story?
  - Did the costumes add to the movement or detract from them? Explain.
  - What were some notable differences between different character's costumes? How did these differences help or hurt the ability to understand the story?
- Scenery / Sets
  - Where there scenery or sets up on the stage?
  - If present, did the scenery / sets help with understanding the story? If yes, how? If no, why not?
  - If there was not scenery or sets, what would the students have used if they were in charge?
- Lighting
  - What role did the lighting have in the production?
  - Did the lighting affect the overall mood of the piece?
  - Would the students have used similar lighting or different? Explain.
  - What challenges do the students think there could be in lighting a ballet?
- Music
  - Did the music work with the rest of the production? Explain.
  - Did the music help to tell the story? if so how?
  - Would the students have used similar music to tell this story?
  - Would the students have told the same story if they only heard the music?

Some ballets options to watch:

Swan Lake, Nutcracker, Cinderella, Spartacus, Coppelia, Dracula, Creole Giselle, Fancy Free, Sleeping Beauty and Union Jack.