

Activity: The Foot as a Tool

Themes: Dance Knowledge, Health and Wellbeing

Elements of dance: body

Dancers' feet are tools for their livelihood and artistic expression. They therefore have to look after them by keeping them in the best condition possible. This may mean exercises for strength and flexibility and activities that provide relief after a hard day's work.

1. As a class, view *Dance Academy* episode 15, *My Life En Pointe*, where Petra Hoffman arrives at the Academy on exchange from the Berlin Ballet School. Homesick, she adopts a lost dog and attempts to conceal him in the Boarding House. Kat has been ditching class to spend time with her new boyfriend and her punishment is to teach ballet to a class of underprivileged children. Tara ends up kissing Christian behind Ethan's back, leaving her feeling guilty and confused. In the introduction, Petra says: "*You can tell everything about someone by their feet; how they stand in the world; how grounded they are; how they dance.*"
2. As a class, research the anatomy of the foot and ankle. Discuss the range of motion and flexibility that the human foot can perform. Have students sit on the floor and take their shoes off to inspect their feet. Instruct students to explore the full range of motion available to the feet when not weight bearing: flexion, extension, rotation in and out. Spread the toes, wriggle them individually, and curl them under. Try combinations of these actions.
3. Ask the class to collectively list the types of motions and flexes that the students can achieve with their feet. Discuss the difference in the range of 'foot motion' present within the class. Some people will be hyper mobile, others will have tight ligaments and others will have tight muscles in the calf, which could be the result of sports or other physical activity. Work together to analyse the reasons behind the range of movement for a number of individuals.

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4. In pairs, have the students take photographs (or a sketch) of a partner's feet in action, examining the extent of personal range of motion of their feet – with a full pointe; rising as high as possible on the ball of the foot, on flat feet, rolling onto the outsides of the feet so the soles of the feet are facing, rolling onto the insides of the feet so that the soles of the feet are facing out; flexing both feet at once so that the weight of the body is on the heels, performing a long lunge, performing a calf stretch with palms of hands against a solid wall.
5. Ask students to complete **Student Activity Sheet E15.2: Foot Evaluation Sheet**, as a self-evaluation of each position. This includes space for an image, the name of the position/activity and comments for both flexibility and strength.

Download

- Student Activity Sheet E15.2: Foot Evaluation Sheet

Useful resources

- Ausdance Video Segment 8 - Feet & Calf Exercises
- [Ausdance Factsheet 16, Caring for the dancer's body](#)
- [Ausdance Factsheet 14, First aid for dancers](#)
- [Ausdance Factsheet 12, Healthy bones for female dancers](#)
- [Australian Podiatry Association](#) (Vic)
- Green Haas, J, *Dance Anatomy*, Human Kinetics, IL, 2010, Ch 8 pp 145 – 167, ISBN: 13:978-0-7360-8193



NAME:

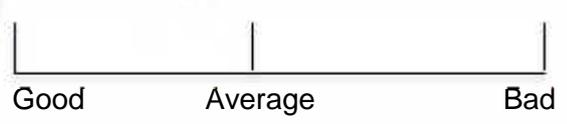
Student Activity Sheet:	E15.2	Episode 15:	My Life En Pointe
Activity:	The Foot as a Tool	Clip:	Dancers' Toes

Foot Evaluation Sheet

For each of the actions listed below, tick along the line to rate how good you think you were at that action, answer the questions and draw your own feet in each position in the space on the right.

Good = It was easy to do. Average = It was a bit difficult. Bad = I couldn't do it.

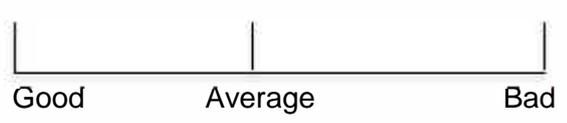
Tippy toes _____ Drawing:



Why did you tick there?

Why were you good/average/bad at this position?

Rolling in _____ Drawing:

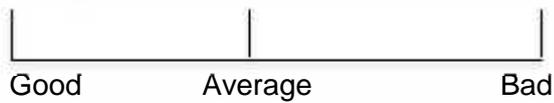


Why did you tick there?

Why were you good/average/bad at this position?

Soles facing/Rolling out

Drawing:

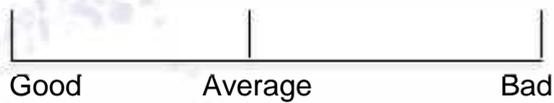


Why did you tick there?

Why were you good/average/bad at this position?

Toes up to knees

Drawing:



Why did you tick there?

Why were you good/average/bad at this position?