

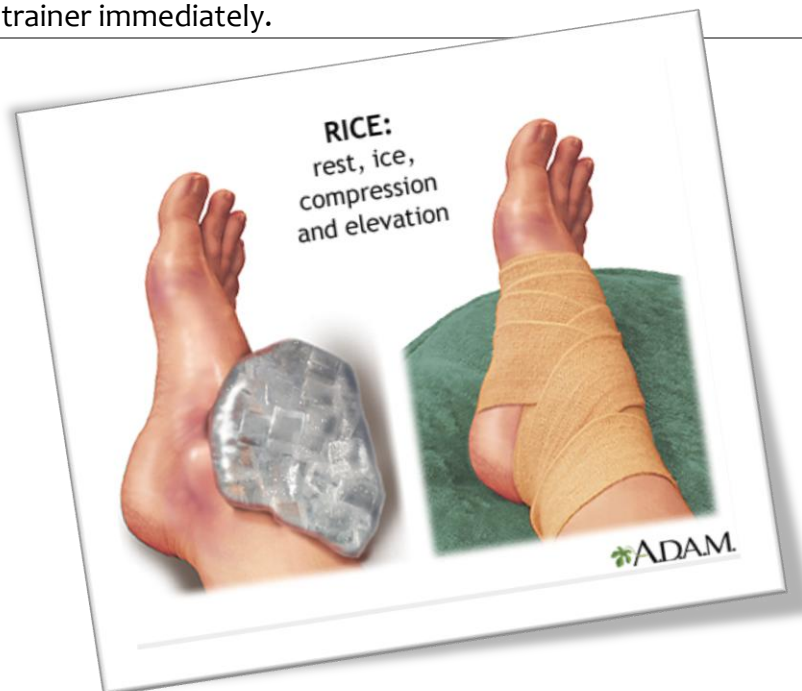
# Common Dance Injuries and R.I.C.E.

**Muscle soreness**—Exercise body (muscle) as soon as possible; take a hot bath or shower to prepare sore muscles for movement.

**Cramp**—Gently stretch or massage the cramped area. Stomach cramps may result from eating heavily or consuming too much water before exercising.

**Strain:** overstretching of a muscle, sometimes involving a minor tear of the muscle fibers or adjacent tissue—Treat with RICE

**Sprain:** sudden or violent twisting or wrenching of a joint, causing the stretching or tearing of ligaments and often the rupture of blood vessels with hemorrhage into the surrounding tissues: Treat with RICE. Early movement of joint is also important, but no weight can be put on the sprain—See a doctor or professional athletic trainer immediately.



**R**est: Allow the injured area to rest and stop all activity as soon as you experience pain.

**I**ce: Apply immediately for 8-10 minutes at a time, allowing injured area to regain normal body temperature between icings.

**C**ompression: Wrap the injured body part with an elastic or ace bandage. Wrap should be tight, but not cut off circulation.

**E**levation: Raise injured body part.

**Reduces swelling for quicker healing.**

# Elements of Technique

## S.A.F.E.



**S.A.F.E.** is an acronym for strength, alignment, flexibility, and endurance. These are all elements that are innate in the study of dance.

### **STRENGTH**

The amount of control and explosive power a muscle group has determines the amount of strength. The length of time one can hold a particular position depends on the amount of strength, as does the height one can jump. Many aspects contribute to the element of strength, including diet and continuous exercise.

### **ALIGNMENT**

Alignment is the correct placement of joints in relation to each other for efficient muscular function. Lax or hyperextended joints (sometimes called double jointed) can cause a break in the natural alignment of the skeletal structure. Since dance is a visual art form, alignment plays a large part in the general aesthetics. The lines of a dancer's body create the visual images the audience is to experience, therefore the proper placement of joints and general skeletal structure is emphasized.

Alignment is also essential to injury prevention. It is important for the dance student to learn basic anatomical structure and motion in order to prevent injury.

### **FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility determines how far a muscle can be stretched or extended before pain occurs. The pain one feels is the muscle's way of communicating its limits. Performing continuous stretching exercises increases the muscle's limits of flexibility.

### **ENDURANCE**

Endurance has to do with the amount of oxygen required for continuous physical activity. Often in a dance class there is a lot of stop and go because of the necessary explanation of each activity. Therefore it is necessary to regularly participate in a class that is somewhat strenuous and ongoing, in an effort to challenge your physical endurance.

# Basic Dance Principles

## Shifting the Weight

When the body shifts support from both feet to one foot, or from one foot to the other, a shift of weight must also occur. If balance is to be maintained, the shift of weight must occur without a change of the pelvis, which should remain horizontal throughout the movement. Engaging the abdominal muscles will keep the pelvis in its correct position and the weight lifted out of the legs, thus enabling a smooth shift of weight.



## Pointing the Foot

Whenever the foot is released from the floor, it is either in a pointed or flexed position—never dangling. When pointing your foot:

- Think of a straight line from the top of the knee, to the ankle, to the big toe.
- Keep the toes long and extended. Don't let the toes curl under, or flex upward. Maintain the line.
- Create the greatest arch of the foot by using the instep and muscles of the longitudinal arch.
- **Sickling** your foot is allowing the toe to point inward. Don't sickle—maintain the straight line.
- Practice pointing and flexing while keeping the knees, ankles and toes in line.

## Jumps

The ability to jump high and land softly and smoothly demands the application of important ballet principles. These principles are important not only to help to achieve a beautiful and exciting jump, but are also necessary to prevent injury to knees, ankles, and feet.

- Begin all jumps from demi plié
- Press off the floor by fully extending (pointing) the feet to attain height.
- The dancer must land from the jump first on the tips of the toes, then balls of the feet, and rolling through to the heels.
- End with a return to the demi plié position.



## Turns

The secret to alleviating the dizziness and acquiring the ability to do multiple turns is spotting—head is last to leave the focus of a point and first to return to that point. The focal point should be at or above the eye level and head should remain level (parallel to the ground).