

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.

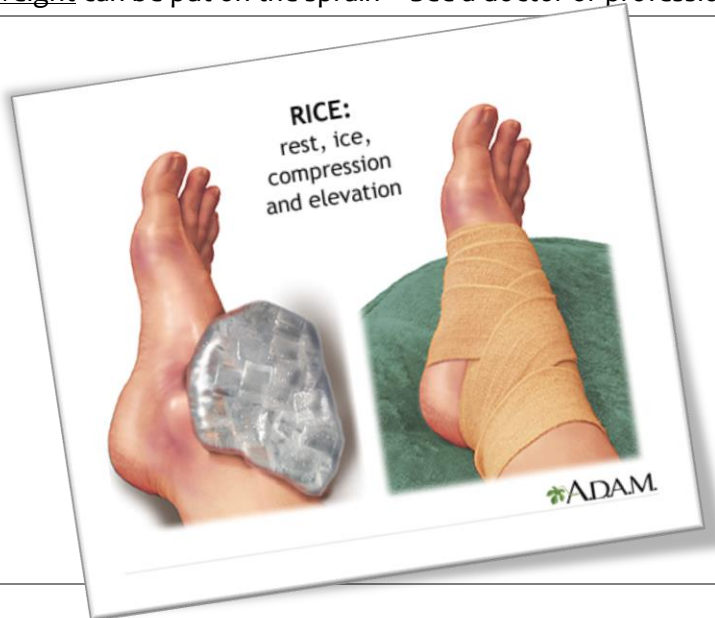
Common Dance Injuries and R.I.C.E.

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.



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

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

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

Elevation: Raise injured body part.

Reduces swelling for quicker healing

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

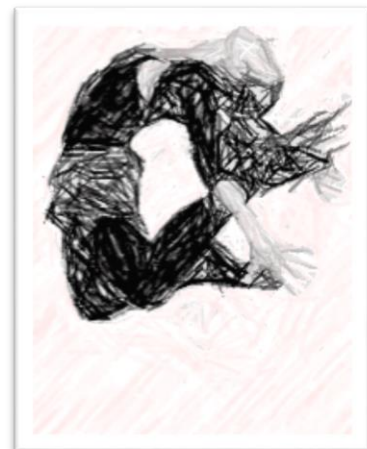
Whenever the foot is released from the floor, it is either in a pointed or flexed position—never dangling. When pointing your foot:

- 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).

Human Anatomy Vocabulary

Format is **Proper Term:** common name or location info

Bones

Spine: the series of vertebrae forming the axis of the skeleton and protecting the spinal cord

Clavicle: collar bone

Scapula: shoulder blade

Humerus: upper arm bone

Radius: the outer and slightly shorter of the two bones of the forearm (thumb side)

Ulna: the inner and longer of the two bones of the human forearm (pinky side)

Sternum: breast bone

Ribs: the bones in the chest that protect the heart and lungs

Pelvis: hip bone

Femur: thighbone

Patella: knee cap

Tibia: 'shin bone' The inner and thicker of the two bones of the leg between the knee and ankle

Fibula: The outer and thinner of the two bones of the leg between the knee and ankle

Tarsals: multiple bones that make up the ankle

Metatarsals: bones between the ankle and the toes

Carpals: multiple bones that make up the wrist

Metacarpals: bones in the palm of the hand

Phalanges: bones of the fingers and toes



Muscles

Trapezius: neck and upper back

Deltoid: shoulder

Triceps: back of upper arm

Biceps: front of upper arm

Pectorals: chest muscles

Latissimus Dorsi: side and lower back

Rectus abdominis: stomach muscles – '6-pack'

Oblique: sides of abdomen

Gluteus Maximus: butt

Quadriceps: front of thigh

Hamstrings: back of thigh

Gastrocnemius: calf

