

Ballet Warm-ups for Non-Dancers

Exercise becomes enjoyable when you take hints from dancer warm-ups. Consider these six ideas to create a relaxing, yet beneficial workout.

1. Ballet warm-ups provide exercise without strains or the need for heavy equipment.

Dancers use their bodies as their tools. Their exercises warm muscle groups slowly when they stand at the barre (French spelling for the bar attached to the wall that you hold for balance while exercising).

Some resources at the end of the article suggest you add two or three-pound weights for a more robust workout. When you do their modifications, these added weights are possible since many move the exercises from standing at a barre to lying on your side on the floor. The bottom line is you don't need heavy equipment or to leave home to create a thorough workout.

2. Ballet warm-ups require only a small area with room for a chair and space to stretch your leg forward, to the side and to the back.

When you step up to your straight-backed chair or your ballet barre, you join the world of ballet dancers across hundreds of years who perform those same warm ups every day they dance.

Dancers wear body-fitting clothes to make it easier to see the changes needed to perfect their movements. If you use the opportunity to exercise in front of a mirror, you will see your body positions and will be able to correct small errors.

3. Barre exercises offer increased flexibility, fluidity and improved posture.

Dancers stand at the barre with their heels together and their toes opened out as far as possible without allowing their knees to bend. They tuck under their backsides and pull their bodies tall and taut. Ballet arm movements trail as though your arms are moving through water.

Exercises begin by flexing the knees and following the prescribed arms for the basic foot positions: first, second, fourth and fifth. Dancers take turns using the left hand and the right hand on the barre so the side stretches loosen muscles on both sides of the body equally.

Be patient with your leg turnout and the position of your arms. After you repeat these exercises a few times you will notice increased flexibility and fluidity. With your body pulled tall and taut, your posture will also improve.

4. Barre exercises increase your appreciation of what dancers work on every day to prepare for dancing.

The ritual of barre exercises appears simple, but each requires specific arm and leg placement. Once you begin a regular routine of ballet barre warm-ups, you'll appreciate how those slow, quiet movements provide a thorough workout.

5. The music used with barre warm-ups expose you the world of classical ballet music.

It's relaxing to move to instrumental classical music in 3/4 or 4/4 time. The tempo of your selections will vary according to your movements. Slow orchestral pieces accompany pliés

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Tendril Press

ISBN 978-0-9858933-2-3

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and the early warm-up at the barre. More quick-paced music accompanies combinations of steps at the barre and standing unsupported away from the barre.

Experiment with the resources suggested at the end of the article. You'll sweat but you also enjoy the relaxation provided by world-famous classical music. It's a win-win.

6. Looking for authentic ballet warm-ups? Take a ballet class.

Enjoy learning authentic warm-ups, the mental stimulation required to execute dance combinations and the fortitude to show-what-you-know in front of a bunch of like-minded adults. It's a great way to exercise and come to appreciate a dancer's daily regimen.

Resources:

Ballet-inspired exercises:

Shape magazine articles on home ballet & ballet-based total body workouts

Prevention magazine.com/fitness (dancer's body)

You Tube: Look up ballet exercises, ballet-barre workouts

www.Danceclass.com shares exercises and ballet positions

Ballet music for exercising:

www.balletclassmusicforfree.com

<http://ballet.dancemelody.com>

Amazon: ballet class music (numerous titles to consider)

About the author

Paddy Eger is the author of recently-released *84 Ribbons*, a novel that follows the turbulent first year of a young professional ballet dancer. The first book and future books in the trilogy is available through your favorite local bookseller, online and from the author at paddyeger.com.

Character Count: 3873

Word count: 625

Line count: 55

Paragraphs: 28

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