
THE BALLET BLOG
COACHING CALL #82
SEATED RISES

THE ORIGINAL EXERCISE

The Seated Rises exercise has been included in several previous programs, each with a different focus:

- The Perfect Pointe Book - Alignment of the ankle & pointe range
- Advanced Foot Control - Tibialis Posterior Activation
- My Beginner Pointe - Articulation of the ankle, mid foot & forefoot
- Level 1 - Each of the above applications are mentioned

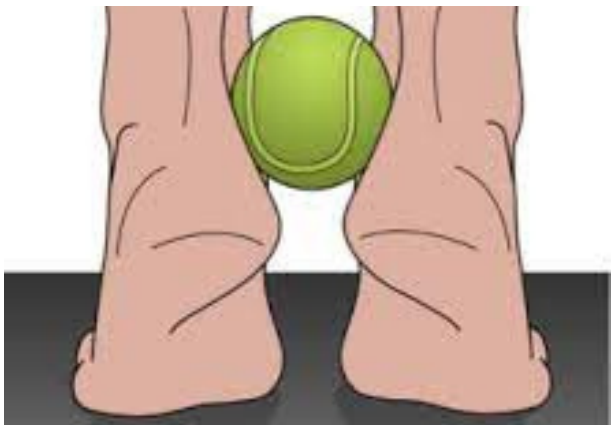
We will revises each of these uses, but also look at several other ways that this simple exercise can be used to help your dancers.

FOR THE MINIS

Why it is needed: Many young dancers struggle with ankle alignment on rise, but often this is because not enough focus is put on it early in their training. Starting a simple Seated Rises exercise with students as young as 6 or 7, depending on attention span, can be a great way to increase their focus on alignment and identify any potential issues to clean technique.

Use electrical or strapping tape:
A strip of tape down the front of the ballet stockings is an easy to remove visual reminder of alignment. Young students will struggle to discern a sickled foot from a well placed one, however they can often easily tell a curved line from a straight one!

Tennis Ball between the ankles:
If you have young students who constantly sickle the ankle on rise, try placing a ball between the two feet for double leg seated rises. If they sickle, the ball will fall out! Aim to get as many well placed rises as they can before the ball falls to avoid students purposeful dropping it! Play with the placement of the ball; sometimes its best between the malleolus, sometimes between the heels, and sometimes further up the shin works well

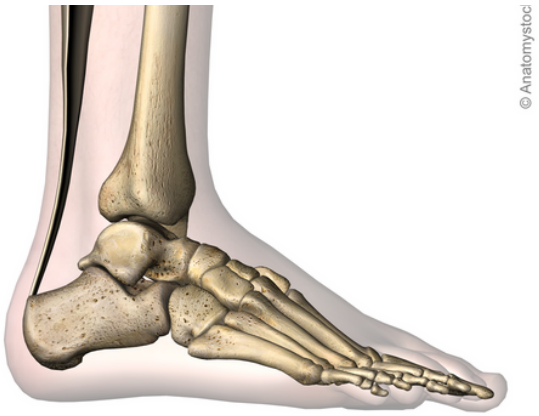


Notes: Do not worry too much about the back and hip placement in the little ones, as they will often need to lean forward to look at their own toes. Do however keep an eye out for any student who's toes retract and claw when rising on to demi pointe.

ISSUES WITH ALIGNMENT

Why it is needed: The Seated Rises Exercise is a great way to establish whether a dancers issues with alignment on rise are due to a physical restriction in the foot or ankle, or a patterning and strength issue. While often issues that appear in class will be resolved when practicing seated rises, occasionally a bony restriction will be identified.

Cuboid Restriction:
A Cuboid restriction often results in the dancer having a pronounced sickle in the mid to end part of their range. They may be unable to correct the alignment, and if you manually try to adjust their foot, it will feel stiff and immobile.



Subtalar Restriction:
If a dancer has a subtalar restriction, often the heel bone will suddenly and excessively supinate at the end of range. It is very important to correct this before the student progresses onto pointe as this can cause major twisting of the shank

Cross-Test and Treat:
If you suspect either of these issues, cross-test with a James Bond Mobiliser or 3D Calf Stretch watching the foot movement carefully. A cuboid restriction will block the mid foot, while a Subtalar restriction will block the rear foot and will usually restrict pronation.

PRE-POINTE STUDENTS

Why it is needed: Many dancers progress onto pointe without enough specific work on the articulation of the ankle and forefoot. If this is developed before starting in the shoes, it will really help them develop effective patterning in the shoe, which is essential for preventing injury long term.

Tibialis Posterior Activation:
An important element to focus on with pre-pointe students is the ability to point the ankle fully before articulating the toes, and to reverse the process on the lowering. Make sure that the student is able to relax the Gastrocnemius on the high demi-pointe to ensure good activation of Tibialis Posterior.

Articulation of the Toes:
Start working on the progression from high rise to full pointe in bare feet. This will allow a close observation of the articulation of the forefoot to work on correcting any clawing. Make sure that the dancer can keep the front of the ankle lengthened as the toes are released to lower back to the demi-pointe.

Notes: With pre-pointe students it is good idea to get them assessing and analysing their peers feet, and filming their feet if they have access to a smart phone or iPad. This seems to get them far more engaged in the process and far more aware of the specifics that need to be worked on. They are often far more critical of their fried than they are on themselves!

BEGINNER POINTE STUDENTS

Why it is needed: When students first progress into their pointe shoes it is extremely important to establish good patterning through each phase of the rise before commencing any class work.

Articulation of the toes:
Ensure that the shoe has been pre-weakened at the heel break and the demi-pointe area to allow fluid articulation of the mid and forefoot. Peel through the shoe, making sure to fully extend the ankle before working through to full pointe. Make sure the student is aware of doming the pads of the toes against the inner sole of the shoe.

In Turnout:
Repeat the exercise in turnout, by sitting with the legs over the corners of a chair. This helps students establish correct alignment in a more functional placement. Allow them to use a mirror for placement initially, but progress towards being able to do the exercise using internal proprioception alone.

Notes: Once the Seated Rises have been perfected, progress to working on the same articulation in standing, maintaining awareness of the standing leg as well as the working leg.

BACK CONTROL

Why it is needed: Another really good application of the Seated Rises exercise is to build endurance in the deepest spinal stabilisers. When younger dancers are working on their Seated Rises they will often flex the spine to look at the feet. After building more awareness of foot control and position, focus on maintaining spinal stability as well.

Postural Control in Sitting:
First establish the ability to sit up from just above the sacrum, so that neutral spinal posture can be maintained, without excessive gripping in the global lumbar extensors. This will take time to master for many dancers. Using the K-tape offload technique may help initially. Encourage dancers to be able to sit unsupported for 30 seconds.

Add in the Seated Rise:
Adding the Seated Rise movement challenges the deep stabilisers even more, as many dancer will tuck the tail bone as the hip is flexed. This exercise may be done on a high stool initially, but ideally build to being able to have the knee rise higher than the hip. As long as spinal stability can be maintained, try with alternating feet. If a dancer is able to do this with minimal trunk movement this indicates superior spinal stability.

Unstable Surface:
This exercise may also be done sitting on a stability ball to increase the challenge. The global stabilisers will need to work more on an unstable base, but the spine should still be able to be kept in neutral.

HIP CONTROL

Why it is needed: A huge issue for young dancers is to master the art of rotating the leg effectively when working en l'air. Starting to work on the placement of the thigh in sitting as an extension of the Seated Rises exercise can really help with this. Effectively rolling the femur in the socket can lead to much less Tension in the quadriceps and superficial hip flexors during adage.

Femoral Rotation:

Start by sitting on the chair in second, as for the Seated Roses in turnout. Maintain a lift from the top of the Sacrum while rolling the femur in the socket. Use the support of the chair to allow softening in the front of the hip as the leg rotates, until able to feel a deep connection from the front of the hip to the front of the spine.

Add in a leg lift:

Start in the original spinal position, with both feet in a high rise, thighs loosely turned out. Maintain the lift at the top of the sacrum, then work to develop a connection between rotating the thigh bone, a deep hip suck, to allow a float into hip flexion. The front of the hip will be active, but should not feel grippy.

This can be worked on both with the leg devant and a la seconde.

REHAB FOR JUMPS

Why it is needed: The Seated Rises exercise can be implemented when a dancer has been restricted from jumping for a period of time, or if the lack of patterning in taking off or landing a jump was a contributing factor to an injury.

Establish a good pattern:
First establish the ability peel through the foot to replicate the action of a jump, with the toes long in the air. Try to have the toes pointing to the floor rather than the shin moving away from the body. When "landing" the jump, the foot will not hit high on the demi pointe. Focus on the ball of the foot contacting the floor with theankle slightly flexed.

Increase Speed:
Gradually increase the speed of repetition, so that the foot is landing and taking off in quick succession. Make sure to only go as fast as the dancer can control the toes on a lengthened position. Often they will hit a critical point where the toes default to a clawed position or the foot will start to lack shock absorption on the landing.

Notes: You can try doing one leg repeatedly, or alternate legs for more challenge to the spinal stability component. This is a great exercise to include to build endurance in the later stages of rehab. Have the dancer repeat the exercise over and over to the music that their petit allegro enchainment is performed to in order to replicate the true endurance needed. The feet will often cramp the first few times this is done, but this can be easily resolved with a little gentle massage.

SEATED RISES ASSESSMENT

Name:

Date:

Hours Per Week:

Styles:

DEMI POINTE - BARE FEET - LEFT

- [ ] Foot placement on flat
- [ ] Alignment during rise
- [ ] Toes long and relaxed
- [ ] Pointe Range on Rise
- [ ] Calf relaxed on full rise
- [ ] Heel placement on rise
- [ ] Toe articulation to full pointe
- [ ] Repeated fast seated jumps
- [ ] Pelvic placement
- [ ] Alignment in turnout
- [ ] Resistance on lowering

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FULL POINTE IN SHOES - LEFT

- [ ] Foot placement on flat
- [ ] Alignment during rise
- [ ] Differentiate ankle and demi pointe
- [ ] Placement on full rise
- [ ] Toe articulation to full pointe
- [ ] Smooth transition (no snapping)
- [ ] Shank placement on rise
- [ ] Fit of the box
- [ ] Discernable demi-pointe on lowering
- [ ] Pelvic placement
- [ ] Alignment in turnout

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SEATED RISES *Review*

Name:

Date:

QUESTION #1: What component of the Seated Rises was the most challenging?

QUESTION #2: What other exercises could be used to work on this element?

QUESTION #3: What impact will this issue have on their class work?