

Sewing Ribbons and Elastic on Pointe Shoes

Please remember that dancers should only purchase and wear pointe shoes if their teachers have approved first. Also, keep in mind that dancers may have received instructions from their teachers that explain how to attach ribbons and elastics, if these are their first pair of shoes. The instructions below may vary from studio preferences, so it is a good idea to always follow the procedure that the ballet teacher recommends.

Step 1: Mark the Shoes

Put your pointe shoes down so that the toe faces away, and the heel faces toward you. Fold down the material that would go around your heel, pushing it forward, so that the outer seam or piping lays flat across the insole of the shoe. With a pen or marker, place a line on both sides of the inside lining, where the heel is folded down. This is where you will line up the ribbons to sew them into the shoes, so do this with both shoes.

Step 2: Attach the Ribbons

Before sewing the ribbons in the shoes, you may need to cut the length of ribbon you were provided. You should have four pieces of ribbon in equal lengths. To prevent fraying at the ends of the ribbons, some dancers may burn the edges or sew a line along the tips of the ribbons.

To attach the ribbons, place the front edge of one ribbon along the line that you marked inside the shoe in Step 1. Angle the ribbon so that the end points toward the heel of the shoe, with the length of the ribbon extending away from your body. Angling the ribbon will help you to wrap it around your ankle when putting on the shoes. Keeping half an inch of ribbon inside the shoe, sew around the edges of the ribbon to attach it to the inside lining of the shoe. It is also a good idea to sew across the top of the ribbon, just below the outer piping of the shoe, to secure it. Repeat with the other three lengths of ribbon.

Step 3: Attach the Elastics

There are two ways that you can use elastic on pointe shoes, if you choose to do so. The first is an ankle strap that you would slip your foot through before sliding it into the shoe. This can help to keep the feet from sliding out of the shoes if you have higher arches, and can generally keep the feet more secure.

You can also use the elastic in a small loop at the back of the shoe, to thread the ribbon through it and keep the shoe from sliding off the heel. An inch length of elastic should be enough for this. Either elastic technique, or both, can be used, depending on the dancer's feel in the shoes. Both techniques will require the ends of a loop of elastic to be sewn into the heel of the shoe, on either side of the back seam in the inner lining.

If your shoes do not have a canvas inner lining, and you need to shoe through to the outside of the shoes, be sure to use a clear thread or one that matches the color of the shoes. Proper attachment of ribbons and elastic can enhance a dancer's experience with pointe shoes, and provide added security when training and performing.