

All Minds Dance Hub  
Inclusive Teaching Resource

# Ballet Class Adaptations

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*Supporting structure, precision, and artistry  
through accessible pathways*



## What this supports

These adaptations support dancers who may:

- struggle with working memory or sequencing
- need more processing time or preparation
- find stillness or rapid corrections dysregulating
- experience sensory overload from mirrors, language, or pace

The goal is **not to simplify ballet**, but to teach it in ways that reduce unnecessary load so technique can emerge clearly.

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## Key Challenges in Ballet Classes

Ballet places high demands on:

- memory and sequencing
- posture and body awareness
- terminology and language processing
- sensory regulation during stillness
- managing multiple corrections at once

When too many demands are layered together, dancers may appear tense, distracted, or disengaged when they are in reality, overloaded.

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## Practical Adaptations for Ballet Classes

### 1. Create a Clear Entry into Each Exercise

#### Why it helps

Preparation time supports alignment, coordination, and nervous system regulation.

#### What to try

- Pause briefly before each exercise
  - Clearly show the starting position
  - Use a longer introduction (8 counts rather than 4)
  - Allow dancers to quietly mark the first movement
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## **2. Chunk Barre Sequences**

### **Why it helps**

Breaking exercises into sections reduces working memory load.

### **What to try**

- Teach the exercise in short sections
  - Repeat each section before adding the next
  - Use the same cues each time
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## **3. Reduce Language Load**

### **Why it helps**

Terminology can overwhelm dancers with language processing differences.

### **What to try**

- Pair terminology with demonstration
  - Use functional cues alongside names
  - Repeat the same language consistently week to week
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## **4. Allow Micro-Movement During Stillness**

### **Why it helps**

Small movements help some dancers stay regulated and organised.

### **What to try**

- Allow subtle weight shifts or breath adjustments
  - Focus corrections on alignment, not immobility
  - Avoid calling out harmless micro-movement
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## **5. Break Up Long Barre Sections**

### **Why it helps**

Extended static work increases physical and cognitive fatigue.

### What to try

- Pair barre exercises with simple centre practice
  - Change places at the barre every few exercises
  - Add small travelling steps where appropriate
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## Centre Practice Adaptations

### 6. Support Balance Without Removing the Challenge

#### Why it helps

Balance relies on sensory integration, which may be less reliable for some dancers.

#### What to try

- Offer optional fingertip support initially
  - Prepare in parallel before turnout
  - Use a calm, fixed visual focus
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### 7. Build Turns Progressively

#### Why it helps

Turns combine balance, coordination, timing, and sensory input.

#### What to try

- Practise preparations separately
  - Use slower tempos when learning
  - Focus on initiation and alignment before speed
  - Reduce visual clutter to support spotting
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## Allegro & Travelling Work

### 8. Clarify Pathways

#### Why it helps

Clear spatial planning reduces hesitation and anxiety.

### What to try

- Mark starting points clearly
  - Walk pathways before dancing
  - Keep patterns consistent before adding variation
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## 9. Reduce Performance Pressure

### Why it helps

Visibility can heighten anxiety and affect coordination.

### What to try

- Work in pairs or small groups
  - Allow a “watch first” option
  - Remove unnecessary urgency
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## Strengths Ballet Can Unlock

With the right teaching pathways, ballet can develop:

- strong body awareness
- pattern recognition
- musical phrasing
- attention to detail
- disciplined focus without fear
- expressive clarity

Many neurodivergent dancers thrive within ballet’s structure when it is predictable, supportive, and clearly communicated.

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### Key Takeaway for Teachers

**Ballet does not need to be softened to be inclusive.**

When teachers adjust *how* ballet is taught, dancers gain access to its full technical and artistic depth, without compromising standards, integrity, or artistry.