INJURY PREVENTION AND BODY AWARENESS FOR THE YOUNG DANCER

A. Correct Standing Posture

Keep Pelvis Level:
- Imagine your hips are headlights, and they must face forward equally.
- Imagine your pelvis as a bucket filled with water. Do not let the water spill forward, backward, or sideways.
- Tighten the stomach muscles, instead of tucking the buttocks under.
- Knees over toes: Keep knees in line with second toe.

3 Points on Feet:
- Keep equal pressure on the floor with base of big toe, little toe, and heel. This makes a tripod to help you balance.
- Avoid ankles rolling in or rolling out.

B. Finding your turnout

- Motion comes from your hip rotator muscles. Locate your hip joint.
- Stand with feet forward/parallel and knees straight, rock back onto your heels, and rotate your hips open by using your hip turnout muscles. This will bring your hips into your natural turnout range of motion.
- Avoid twisting/pushing your feet backwards.
- Your knees should be in line with your toes.

C. Releve

- Start with equal pressure on the tripod points of the foot, then slowly lift heel up into the air between the big toe and little toe.
- Imagine a string lifting you up from the back of your thigh to your heel.
INJURY PREVENTION AND BODY AWARENESS FOR THE YOUNG DANCER (CONT)

D. Plie
- Imagine eyes on ankle bones, inside of knees, and hip bones always pointing forward.
- Keep knees in line with toes
- Rotate at your hips and let your body sink down without gripping your muscles.
- Hips should drop straight down toward the floor, without letting your bottom tuck under or stick out behind you.
- Do not let the arches of your feet “roll in” or collapse.

E. Port de bras
- During port de bras, the arms should move freely without movement of the ribs or back. As you move your arms overhead, keep your stomach tight to stop your rib cage down from rising up.
- 2nd position: elbows in front of side seam of leotard and slightly below shoulder level. Imagine a set of eyes on the palm and in the front of your elbow pointing forward.
- 5th position: hands slightly in front and visible when looking up without tilting head back, rib cage down with shoulders relaxed and away from ears.

F. Jumping
- Use plie for the take-off and landing of jumps. Roll through your feet and allow your heels to contact the ground on your landings.
- Don’t allow your knees to knock together during jumps in parallel. Keep your knees over your toes when landing a jump with your feet turned out to avoid increased stress on your knees.
- Keep your stomach tight and your pelvis level to prevent arching your back as you jump.

G. Guide to Safe and Effective Stretching
- Make sure you take a few minutes to warm up before you start stretching. Stretching cold muscles before you dance may actually cause an injury.
- Don’t stretch to the point of pain. Pain is an indicator that you are stretching too far.
- Don’t allow a partner to stretch you past the point of discomfort. This can lead to muscle strains.
- Hold each stretch for 30 seconds.
- Move further into your stretch as your muscles adapt and start to lengthen. Breathe during your stretches to help the muscles.

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