



# Ballet Dictionary

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## **A la seconde**

A step done "à la seconde" is in second position or to the side.

## **A terre**

"A terre" means on the ground and describes a step connected to the floor.

## **Adagio**

The word "adagio" comes from the Italian language and is used to describe slow music. In ballet class, it can also be called "adage" as that is the French version of the word.

## **Allegro**

The word "allegro" comes from the Italian language and is used to describe brisk music. It means happy or joyful. In ballet class, dancers usually jump on this type of music. We start with "petit allegro", then "moyen allegro" and we finish with "grand allegro".

## **Allongé**

"Allongé" means elongated or lengthened. In ballet class it is usually used to describe a position that shifts from a rounded shape to a longer one.

## **Arabesque**

"Arabesque" is a type of beautiful and elaborate decoration usually carved in wood. In ballet, it describes a position where a dancer has one straight leg extended behind.

## **Assemblé**

"Assemblé" means assembled and is the name of a jump where the dancer lifts one foot at a time, assembles their legs in the air and lands two feet together.

## **Attitude**

"Attitude" is a position either front, side or back where the dancer is standing on one leg with the other one bent.

## **Balancé**

"Balancé" means rocked and describes a movement that goes down in a coupé, then up on relevé and finishes back down in coupé.

## **Battu**

"Battu" means beaten and usually describes jumps where the legs beat in the air.

## **Brisé**

"Brisé" means shattered and is a jump where the dancer's feet leave the floor one at a time and beats in the air.

## **Cabriole**

"Cabriole" means caper and is a jump where the dancer's feet leave the floor one at a time, assembles in the air and lands on one foot.

## **Chaînés**

"Chaînés" refers to the links of a chain and is a quick turning step that travels on two feet.

## **Changement**

"Changement" means change and is used to describe a jump from one "fifth" to the other.

## **Chassé**

"Chassé" means chased and can be used to describe a jump or a sliding step "à terre" where one foot travels and the other catches up.

## **Cloche**

"Cloche" means bell and describes the leg swinging front and back.

## **Contre temps**

"Contre temps" means against time and is a step allowing the dancer to change directions by squeezing the legs in the air and releasing the foot of the new direction.

## **Corps de ballet**

"Corps de ballet" means body of the ballet and describes all the dancers who aren't soloists or principals. They dance together and create the beautiful formation and patterns of the ballet.

## Coupé

“Coupé” means cut and describes a pointed foot placed either in the front or back of the opposite ankle.

## Croisé

“Croisé” means crossed and describes the facing of a position. It is “croisé” if on the diagonal with the downstage leg in front.

## Derrière

“Derrière” means back and is used to describe movements to the back.

## Détourné

“Détourné” means diverted and is usually three quarters of a turn done on the standing leg while the working leg “fouetté” from the back to the front.

## Devant

“Devant” means front and is used to describe a movement to the front.

## Développé

“Développé” means developed and is a movement where a dancer goes through “passé” to extend the leg either front, side or back.

## Effacé

“Effacé” means erased and describes the facing of a position. It is “effacé” if on the diagonal with the upstage leg in front.

## Écarté

“Écarté” means pulled apart and describes the facing of a position. It is “écarté” if on the diagonal with a leg extended to the side.

## Échappé

“Échappé” means escaped and it is a jump where the feet start either in first, third, fifth or sixth and land either in second or fourth.

## **En arrière**

“En arrière” means backwards and is used to describe a movement traveling back.

## **En avant**

“En avant” means forward and is used to describe a movement traveling front.

## **En l’air**

“En l’air” means in the air and is used to describe a movement off of the floor.

## **En croix**

“En croix” means in a cross and is a pattern where the movement happens front, side back and side.

## **En dedans**

“En dedans” means inwards and is used to describe a movement that goes towards the standing leg(s).

## **En dehors**

“En dehors” means outwards and is used to describe a movement that goes away from the standing leg(s).

## **En tournant**

“En tournant” means turning and describes any movement that turns in this context but that could also be done without a turn. For example, “pirouette” or “chaînés” are never said to be en tournant as they are always turning. On the other hand, “piqué” or “balancé” can be described as “en tournant” as they are not necessarily turning.

## **Entrechat**

“Entrechat” (probably from Italian intrecciare: “to weave,” or “to braid”) is a vertical jump where the legs beat in the air.

## **Épaulement**

“Épaulement” means shouldering and describes the use of the upper body.

## **Failli**

“Failli” means almost or nearly and describes the ending of any position that could have landed in “fifth” but instead brushes through “first” to finish in “fourth”.

## **Fifth position**

“Fifth position” has one foot in front of the other with the toes pointing outward and the front heel touching the back toes.

## **First position**

“First position” has both feet side to side with the toes pointing outwards.

## **Fondu**

“Fondu” means melted and describes a movement where the standing leg is in a “plié”.

## **Fouetté**

“Fouetté” means whipped and describes a brisk movement where either the leg or body whips around.

## **Fourth position**

“Fourth position” has one foot in front of the other approximately the length of the dancer’s foot apart with the toes pointing outwards.

## **Frappé**

“Frappé” means to hit or to strike and is a movement where a dancer starts with a flexed foot on the ankle, then brushes the floor with the ball of the foot to finish completely pointed either front side or back.

## **Glissade**

“Glissade” means slide and it is a gliding jump traveling either front, side or back.

## **Grand battement**

“Grand battement” means large swing and is a movement where the dancer extends a high straight leg either front, side or back by brushing the floor.

## Grand jeté

“Grand jeté” means large throw and it is a big jump where a dancer extends two straight legs; one in the front and one in the back.

## Jeté

“Jeté” means thrown and is either a movement where the foot brushes the floor until the legs create a 45° angle or it is a jump using the brush just described.

## Manège

“Manège” means merry-go-round or carousel and in ballet it describes a pathway. A dancer makes a “manège” when dancing in a big circle around the stage.

## Ouvert

“Ouvert” means open and describes a movement that finishes on one leg.

## Pas de basque

“Pas de basque” means step of the Basque (region of France and Spain) and is a traveling step that can be jumped. It is composed of “fondu”, “rond de jambe”, “glissade” and “chassé”.

## Pas de bourrée

“Pas de bourrée” means step of the bourrée (old traditional French dance) and can be executed with many different variations. It is often done with the feet starting in “sous-sus”, opening in a small “first” and finishing in “fifth”.

## Pas de chat

“Pas de chat” means step of the cat and is a light jump sideways with the legs bending and landing one at a time.

## Pas de chat à l'italienne

“Pas de chat à l'italienne” means step of the cat Italian style and is a big jump traveling sideways with the first leg executing a “développé” to the side and the second one bending in the air. The feet can land one at a time or together according to the requirements of the choreography.

## **Pas de cheval**

“Pas de cheval” means step of the horse and is a small circular movement starting in “fifth”, going through “coupé” and extending to a “tendu”.

## **Pas de deux**

“Pas de deux” means step of two and is a duet in ballet.

## **Passé**

“Passé” means passed and is a position where the foot is pointed on the knee of the opposite leg.

## **Penché**

“Penché” means tilted and is an “arabesque” with the back leg lifted as high as possible which pushes the torso forwards. The dancer still has to keep the shoulders as lifted as possible as the upper body should not be collapsing towards the ground.

## **Piqué**

“Piqué” means stung or pricked and is a small movement where the dancer goes through “jeté”, brings the tip of the big toe down on the ground and promptly lifts the foot again. It can also describe going onto “relevé” by putting the weight immediately on the toes without passing by the whole flat foot on the floor.

## **Piqué en tournant**

“Piqué en tournant” means stung in turning and is a turn happening in “passé” while going immediately on the toes without passing by the whole flat foot on the floor.

## **Pirouette**

“Pirouette” means spin and is a turn happening on one leg with the head spotting.

## **Plié**

“Plié” means to bend and describes a movement where the knees bend.

## **Port de bras**

“Port de bras” means carriage of the arms and describes the use of the arms in ballet.



## **Précipité**

“Précipité” means precipitated and is a quick little jump where one foot at a time brushes the floor to land in “failli”.

## **Relevé**

“Relevé” means raised and describes one or two feet starting flat on the floor and finishing on the ball of the feet with the heels lifted as high as possible.

## **Renversé**

“Renversé” means spilled and is a movement going through “attitude derrière” where the body tilts sideways from the top of the head.

## **Répertoire**

“Repertoire” means repertory and refers to all the well known ballets and their choreographies.

## **Rond de jambe**

“Rond de jambe” means circle of the leg and describes a movement where the foot circles either “en dehors” or “en dedans”.

## **Sauté**

“Sauté” means jumped and is a little jump usually from first or second.

## **Second position**

“Second position” has the feet side to side with approximately the length of the dancer’s foot between them.

## **Sissonne**

“Sissonne” is the name of the person who codified this jump. It starts with two feet leaving the floor at the same time but landing one at a time or landing on one foot only.

## **Soubresaut**

“Soubresaut” means jolt and describes a jump from “fifth” to “fifth” without a “changement”.

## **Soutenu**

“Soutenu” means sustained and is a turn in “sous-sus”, pivoting on the ball of the toes. The leg that starts in the front will finish in the back.

## **Temps levé**

“Temps levé” means lifted time and is a jump starting on one foot and landing on the same foot.

## **Temps lié**

“Temps lié” means link of time and is a step that moves in space by transferring the weight. That step is composed of “tendu” either front, side or back, “plié” either in “second” or “fourth”, and finishes with a “tendu” on the other leg.

## **Tendu**

“Tendu” means stretched and describes a straight leg with a pointed foot on the floor.

## **Third position**

“Third position” has the front heel placed in the middle of the back foot with the toes pointing outwards.

## **Variation**

“Variation” means variation and is a solo in ballet.