

Shoe Guide

Purchasing your ballroom shoes will be a big decision since you will be dancing in them for at least a year and they cost upwards of \$130 a pair. Thus you should make sure you buy the shoe that fits you best, and here's how to find your perfect shoe.

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The Difference between Ballroom Shoes and Regular Shoes

The biggest difference lies in the soles. Ballroom shoes have a thin layer of suede sole, this allows the shoes to glide well on the floor while also retain a certain level of grip. Ballroom shoes are also very flexible, enabling the dancers to articulate their feet and show off their techniques. Men's shoes are often made of leather while women's shoes are made of leather and satin.

When to Buy Your First Ballroom Shoes

Shoes are not required to compete at the newcomer levels; however, we recommend that you get them ASAP. Preferably 4 weeks into dancing. You need a certain amount of time to break into your new dance shoes. One week before the competition will not be sufficient. The shoes will allow you to become a better dancer. Whether it is because you can rise further onto your toes in a Standard shoe or stand more forward on the balls of your feet in a Latin shoe, a dancer in flexible dance shoes will usually be slightly better than an equal dancer in limiting street or dress shoes.

The Different Types of Ballroom Shoes

Women Latin Shoes

These shoes are open toe, generally look like sandals; heels are long and thin, ranging from 2 in to 3.5 in. Beginners are recommended to choose 2.5 inch heels.



Women Standard Shoes

These shoes are closed toe, closely resemble pumps; heels are shorter and slightly wider. This should usually be your second pair of shoes, unless you decide to only dance Standard.



Men Latin Shoes

Men's Latin shoes have a higher heel, usually 2 in to 2.5 in. But unlike women's Latin shoes, the heel area is much bigger. This should usually be your second pair of shoes, unless you decide to only dance Latin.



Men Standard Shoes

Men's Standard shoes have a much lower heel, often 1/2 in. and the heel base is wider than that of men's Latin shoes. They resemble regular dress shoes.



Practice Sneakers

Dance sneakers are usually split sole canvas sneakers specially designed for dance forms ranging from jazz to hip hop funk. Other features include a breathable arch and tongue, as well as a spin spot for increased control and balance. Dance sneakers can be used for practices but CANNOT be used on the competition floor.



How to Find the Right Shoes

Ballroom shoes are a large investment, thus they must fit your feet well. Just half a size bigger or smaller can make a huge difference in your dancing. So please do not purchase a pair of shoes one size smaller just because it is on sale. Ballroom shoes should fit tighter than your everyday shoes; you don't want ANY extra room in them. Thus we recommend that when you purchase your shoes, buy a pair that fits snugly on your feet, even maybe a little tight. Because after many hours of dancing, they will loosen up and thus fit your feet comfortably. However, do not get shoes that are too tight, because they will injure your feet.

Also take note that ballroom shoes are all designed in British sizes, thus they're often 1-2 sizes smaller than your US shoe sizes. Walking around in the shoes on carpet to make sure they fit you well, because once they are used on the wooden floor, they cannot be returned.

Also, utilize sales associates to their fullest, because they know best.

Recommendations for Newcomers

We strongly recommend newcomers to purchase one pair of shoes for now, since they are such a large investment; and after you are more experienced you can buy both types of shoes.

Women - For newcomers, your first pair of shoes should be Latin shoes, since both Latin and Standard styles dances can be danced in Latin shoes. We strongly recommend that you get a pair of flesh tone Latin shoes, since they elongate your legs and blend your feet into the floor. Please refrain from buying black shoes since they attract attention to your "not-so-pretty" footwork. Also refrain from buying shiny/sparkly silver or gold shoes for the same reason.

Men - For newcomers, your first pair of shoes should be Standard shoes, because it is far easier to dance Latin and Standard in Standard shoes due to the lower heel and wider base. Most of men's shoes are black, so go with a black pair. If you are buying Standard shoes to dance both styles, we recommend that you buy regular leather shoes since patent (shiny) leather shoes do not hold well in Latin dances. Also refrain from buying two-tone shoes, they look great in swing, but nothing else.

We also recommend that you buy a shoe brush with your shoes. They are useful to brush off and dirt of debris your shoes may pick up during practice/competition. They clean the suede sole and give a better grip to the shoes.

Where to Buy: Recommended Merchants

Our recommended merchant is **Worldtone Dance Shoes**. Worldtone has a great selection of styles and sizes, and the staffs are very warm and helpful. Students receive a 10% discount at the store. We also recommend **Capezio Dance Shoes**. Capezio has a much smaller selection of ballroom dance shoes in their stores, but nonetheless a place to look at. For practice sneakers, you can find them at Worldtone, but they only have a small selection of dance sneakers. We recommend **Sansha New York**.

Shoes can also be purchased from online vendors and manufacturers directly, however, we do not recommend this for newcomers because it is best that you try on your shoes and find the best fit. Shoes usually cost \$90 - \$160, but sometimes you can find sale shoes for \$40 to \$60, those cases are rare however.

Worldtone Dance Shoes
230 7th Ave
2nd Floor
New York, NY 10011
Tel: 1-866-WTD-SHOES
Website: www.worldtonedance.com

Capezio Dance Shoes
1776 Broadway
2nd Floor
New York, NY 10019
Tel: 212-586-5140
Website: www.apeziodance.com

Sansha New York
888, 8th Avenue
Corner 53rd Street
New York, NY 10019
Tel. orders: 212-246-6212
Fax orders: 212-246-2138
e-mail: sanshanyc@sansha.com

Shoes Maintenance

Cardinal rule: Never wear your dance shoes outside, because the concrete or asphalt tops will quickly wear the suede bottom away. Also, brush your soles often with shoe brushes to maintain a clean sole.

Heel Covers (for Ladies)

Heel protectors perform three important tasks: they protect the floor, grant you more traction, and most importantly, they protect your heels. Most ladies' dance shoes come with "slim" heels that are between two and three inches in height. This means that the base of the heel is fairly small. In ballroom dancing there are often instances where you will be putting all your weight in your heels. If you do a few quick calculations you will find that you could be exerting pressures of a few hundred pounds per square inch on the ends of your heel. If your heels are not properly protected this will cause problems.

The tips of the high-heeled dance shoes are generally made of hard plastic. Most dance floors are made of wood. The two do

not mix well. The plastic will scratch and damage the wood floors. You may not care personally, but the people who own the floor and let you dance there will.

The most compelling reason for using heel covers is to protect your dance shoes. Most dance shoes cost about \$100 or more. The little heel tip on the heel is the first thing that will wear out, and replacing it will cost about \$5 or more, and may require ordering the replacements, another source of frustration. These heel tips wear away quickly when they aren't protected; just one dance can wear them down to the nail that is keeping them attached to the shoe. The heel protectors are much cheaper and more convenient than constantly replacing the plastic heel tips.