

Title:

Correct activation and use of the gluteal muscles in a dancer.

Word Count:

848

Summary:

It is often asked in regards to ballet training how hard the bottom muscles should be working.

Keywords:

Gluteal muscles, hip extensors, flexibility, Dance, Ballet, Lisa Howell, glutes, turnout, arabesque

Article Body:

Your 'Gluteal Muscles' are actually extremely important when you are dancing, and the correct activation is key. The first thing you have to understand is the difference between your turnout muscles and your gluteal muscles. Your Gluteal muscles on the other hand, work to extend the hip (in other words, take the leg back). If you often feel tight in your low back, and struggle to keep your knee straight in an arabesque, try this simple test to see how well the gluteals are working.

- Lie on your tummy with your legs out straight, in parallel.
- Turn your head to one side and place your fingertips into the middle of each of your buttocks.
- Keeping it straight at the knee, lift one leg just off the floor.
- Notice whether anything happens under your fingertips, and even better, note where in your back it feels like the muscle is working.
- Some people will find it hard to bring the muscle on at all; others will find that it comes on easily.
- For some people, it will come on beautifully, automatically!
- To take the maximum load off your hamstrings, the gluteals should start the movement, not the hamstrings.
- Test the difference side to side, and test your friends. If you are testing other people, be careful.
- Remember, it is okay for the hamstrings to work a little, we just want the bottom to be the primary mover.

Once you are sure that the bottom is working, you must know when to use it. I hate hearing girls say they can't do an arabesque because their bottom isn't working. Another tip is to see if your bottom muscles come on when you are walking. Especially up stairs. The one major time when the gluteal muscles should not be doing too much is when you are just standing.

- Stand in parallel, with your finger tips on your bottom.
 - Rock your weight back onto your heels and turn the legs out, focusing on starting the movement with your bottom.
 - Place your toes back down on the floor (you will be in a small first position) and focus on the bottom muscles.
- Using the gluteals and turnout muscles in this way is the secret to improving the mobility of the hips.

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