

# Dance Shoes

Like any line of work that requires professional equipment, dancers need quality shoes. There are many brands, many styles, and many price points for dance shoes. While budget is a driving factor for every dancer, it's important to keep in mind that in dance shoes, you get what you pay for. If that \$10 shoe seems too good to be true, IT PROBABLY IS.

## Ballet Shoes

Ballet shoes are typically the least expensive shoe you'll need. We recommend sticking with a brand name shoe to help ensure quality, but in a pinch just about any ballet shoe will serve its purpose. Ballet shoes come in leather or canvas. Leather shoes are typically more expensive, harder to break in, and often, less comfortable than a canvas shoe. The material from which a ballet shoe is made is really a personal choice. We would recommend buying a cheaper ballet shoe and putting your budget into your character or tap shoes. Trusted brands of ballet shoes include Capezio, Bloch, and Sansha. Ballet shoes run between \$7 and \$30 per pair. There is no need to spend more than about \$15-\$20 on a pair of canvas ballet shoes. We also recommend a split sole shoe (which means there is a gap in the sole that spans the arch of the foot giving you maximum flexibility in the foot).

[Capezio](#)

[Bloch](#)

[Sansha](#)

## Jazz Shoes

There are many styles of jazz shoes from slip-ons to lace-up, to boots. Split sole jazz shoes are very popular and like the ballet shoe, give you the maximum flexibility in the foot. Some jazz shoes have rubber soles, some have suede soles. The materials from which the soles are made are a personal preference. Ultimately dancers want to have shoes appropriate for any dance floor on which they perform, audition, or take class. Some surfaces are sticky or offer a lot of friction in which case a dancer may want a suede sole on their shoe to reduce the friction. Some dance floors are very slick. In this case, a dancer may want a rubber sole on their shoe to provide additional traction. Having the right shoe for the right floor provides the right amount of traction which is important to help prevent injuries. Jazz sneakers are a popular shoe and come in a variety of styles and brands. The harder rubber split sole makes them a versatile shoe on many flooring surfaces including wood, Marely, and Masonite. Because of the construction of jazz sneakers, however, we do not permit students to wear them in class as they tend to promote bad habits such as sickling the feet. Jazz sneakers are better suited for dancers who have developed strong technique. Again, brands such as Capezio, Bloch and Sansha are reliable. Jazz shoes tend to be more expensive. Typically, they are made of soft leather but there are some companies that make canvas jazz shoes. You can expect to spend between \$15 and \$50 on a pair of jazz shoes.

[Capezio](#)

[Bloch](#)

[Sansha](#)

## Character Shoes

Jazz and ballet shoes are relatively inexpensive because they are cheaply made with fewer materials. In essence, these shoes are little more than coverings for your foot to prevent blistering or skinning your feet. Character shoes, however, are more like a street shoe that add support and substance that jazz and ballet shoes do not. When it comes to character shoes, you should consider investing in a good pair of shoes. You want a nice leather shoe built to last. A quality shoe will have a sole that is stitched to the upper of the shoe. Cheaper shoes are often made of plastic or vinyl and glued together making for weak seams and shoes that will fall apart easily. Character shoes are considerably more expensive than jazz or ballet shoes. For a decent pair of character shoes, you can expect to pay between \$80 - \$300. Character shoes will be a workhorse in your dance wardrobe. While spending money on a quality shoe costs more, in the long run it will likely be cheaper because well-made shoes are built to last.

## Color

While ultimately a dancer wants to have shoes in multiple colors, the most versatile shoe for women and those who identify as women would be a skin tone shoe. The reason is it blends in with the rest of your leg making the leg look longer. Some shoe brands have finally started to carry shoes in a variety of skin tones which offer greater options for dancers of color.

For men and those who identify as men, however, black is the most versatile color. Men rarely, if ever, wear character shoes without trousers or jeans. The classic black dress shoe goes a long way for men when it comes to character shoes pairing with costumes. Of course, there are always exceptions and like women, men will ultimately want to have a variety of colors (typically black, skin tone, and occasionally white).

For non-binary dancers, please forgive the world as it adapts to new norms. As much as we endeavor to rise to greater levels of acceptance, understanding, and inclusion, the dance world still offers mostly a binary choice in character shoes. Until such time as the dancewear industry catches up, we would recommend purchasing the shoes in which you are the most comfortable working. The recommendations on color would apply as above, but the style should be driven by your personal comfort level.

Below are some websites and recommendations for shoes known to be of good quality. Keep in mind that many of these styles of shoes may be purchased online from several sources (Amazon, 6pm, Zappos, or from the manufacturer websites), so shop around for the best price! Buying the least expensive shoe is not typically recommended in characters or taps. As was mentioned above, in dance shoes, you get what you pay for.

Tap shoes for female identifying dancers (heel height should be 2")

- [Capezio](#): Manhattan Xtreme
- [La Duca](#): Roxie
- [Miller and Ben](#): La Coquette, T-Step (The Covid-19 pandemic created a supply issue that required M&B to suspend the production of the La Coquette style. Please check directly with M&B for availability).

Character shoes for female identifying dancers (heel height should be a minimum of 2.5")

- [Capezio](#): Manhattan, Charlotte, Chorus (Closed Toe T-Strap), Heel Flex
- [Bloch](#): Broadway Hi, Splitflex, Chord T-Strap 3", Cabaret
- [Sansha](#): Poznan
- [Miller and Ben](#): La Coquette (order without taps)
- [La Duca](#):
  - The Roxie and Angelique styles have hard soles and are suitable for all dancers comfortable in heels.

- The Alexis, Elizabeth, Teresa, Leanne, and Rachelle styles are soft sole shoes designed for advanced dancers with very strong feet and ankles. These shoes lend very little arch support and are not safe for dancers who are new to dancing in heels.

#### Tap shoes for male identifying dancers

- [Capezio](#): Classic Tap (K543), Premier (CGO9), K360 (typically come without taps) Roxy Tap (unisex shoe)
- [Sansha](#): T-Buda, T-Bojango (these are men's oxfords in women's sizes. They would be appropriate for men with smaller feet size 7-12ish.
- [La Duca](#): Edward
- [Miller and Ben](#) - Jazz Tap Master, Triple Threat
- [Bloch](#) - Tap Flex, Jason Samuel Smith

#### Character shoes for male identifying dancers

- [Capezio](#): Overture, K360
- [Sansha](#): Mariano
- [La Duca](#): Edward (hard or soft sole). Luigi (soft sole)
- [Miller and Ben](#): Jazz Tap Master (order without taps)

#### Notes

- For larger shoe sizes
  - Those who wear shoes larger than a US men's 13, may need to special order ballet shoes from Capezio BEFORE arriving on campus. Allow up to 6 weeks for delivery.
  - Those who wear shoes larger than US women's 10 may need to special order or do an extensive search for shoes.
- Miller and Ben Shoes all come without taps. Miller and Ben will install taps for an additional fee (recommended) but all styles can be purchased without taps to be worn as character shoes. The styles recommended above are those that we think offer the most versatility.
- Shoe sizes vary quite a bit from manufacturer to manufacturer. Before purchasing shoes be sure to inquire about sizing. Your street shoe size will not always be the right fit in a dance shoe.
- Quality character/tap shoes are expensive. While you do not need to spend \$200-\$300, you do get what you pay for. Cheaper shoes are more difficult to dance in, are more likely to break down or fall apart, and are not as good for your feet.
- LaDuca soft-sole shoes are built for comfort and flexibility and have a relatively short life span. They are probably the most popular shoe among professional female identifying dancers, but a dancer can expect about 2-3 years of wear when taken care of very well. Hard soled shoes will last significantly longer, but you will have to sacrifice flexibility. Consider these things when budgeting for shoes.
- Fit is essential. Dance shoes should fit like a glove without pinching or putting pressure on your toes. Shoes with excess room in them are more likely to cause injury than those that fit well. This is especially true with women's heels.