

## Assessing Range

The first stage of the program is assessing your current range to see how much you have to work with. Spending time working on these specific areas of mobility will help allow your leg to be placed with ease in your extensions. This program is great if you've already got the flexibility to mount your leg easily to the front but you're struggling to hold your leg devant. If you don't have much mobility, it's very important to work on that first, as if you're fighting against resistance it's going to create a lot more tension around your hips.

You will need a partner to help with these tests so that you can focus on relaxing as much as possible. If you are working with your arms to try to test your own leg, you may get an inaccurate reading.

Make sure to note your findings from each test in the chart on each page. Noting down the quality of the restriction is important as this give you a lot of information about how to improve your range.



## Turnout Devant

The first thing we want to do is have a look at your turnout range devant and your flexibility to the front. Interestingly, many dancers have far more range than they are aware of in this position. The more you can rotate the leg in this position the easier it is to rotate the quads to the side, allowing the deeper hip flexors and inner thighs to support the weight of the leg when working devant.

1. Start lying on your back on a yoga mat. Try to relax completely as your partner lifts your leg to flex both the hip and the knee to 90 degrees.



2. Ensure that the thigh bone is vertical, and the hips are square. Place your fingertips on your hip bones to monitor your own pelvic position.

3. The assessor gently rotates the lower leg, keeping the upper leg vertical, until either of you start to feel a little bit of resistance, but before the pelvis starts to move. Make sure that there is no strain in the knee.



4. Note where in your body you feel pulling or what stops your hip from rotating further, and ask the assessor to estimate your range. If the starting position is 0 degrees, and having the shin bone parallel to your waist is 90 degrees, ask the assessor to estimate your range.

5. Aim for above 45 degrees in this position on both sides before moving forward with the higher levels of the program. Some dancers will easily have this range, others may have to spend a few weeks working on their range before this is possible.

6. Repeat the assessment on the other side. As long as there is a nice muscular stretch and you have decent range, then you should be able to continue with the program. If you are markedly restricted, or there is pain or blocking in the front of the hip, then this should be worked on before starting the strengthening exercises in the program.

Test	Left	Right
Turnout Devant		

Becoming aware of the location and quality of the restriction will give you lots of information about how best to improve your range. Use the chart below to establish a strategy for improving range, and consult the appendix at the back of the book for more details on specific releases if needed.

Location and Quality of Restriction	Likely Structure	Suggested Release Techniques
A pulling of stretch on the outer hip	Muscular or fascial tension around Piriformis or Gluteus Medius	Tennis ball releases for Gluteus Medius and Piriformis Cupping for outer hip, Lateral Line Mobiliser Pigeon Pose.
Pinching or sharp pain in the front of the hip	Thickening in the capsule or Iliopsoas Tendon. Possible Labral Tear. Do not push into this as it will aggravate it.	Consult Health Professional for accurate diagnosis. Focus on postural control - not sitting into hips. Iliacus suck exercises to recentre hip. Gentle Hip Flexor mobilisers - avoid direct stretches at the site of pain.
Pulling into the hamstring or inner thigh	Fascial tension or over use of the hamstrings for turnout.	Hamstring Mobilisers Cupping for hamstrings Sub-Occipital Release
No feeling of restriction, it just stops	Bony block or very tight posterior capsule.	Tennis ball releases for Obturator Internus and Piriformis Internal rotation stretch

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## Hamstrings in all Positions

Next you need to assess your hamstrings. Everyone is a little different, and we can also be quite different day to day, so even if you normally have fantastic range please go through this test carefully to see what subtleties you can feel. It is also important to make sure that you assess the hamstrings in both parallel and in turnout, as a lot of dancers are markedly restricted when they rotate the leg fully due to a fascial wind up down the back of the leg.

1. Start by lying on your back on a mat, with your pelvis square and spine in neutral

2. Lift your leg up into parallel, making sure your hips are nice and square. If you are quite mobile you can do this yourself, however if you struggle to get the leg past 90 degrees, it will be easier to get someone else to test your leg for you.



3. Try to keep your back in neutral, rather than flattening it to the floor, and make sure the opposite foot and leg are relaxed on the floor.

4. Note the position in range where the restriction starts to come on, and also the placement and quality of the restriction. Is it a sudden grab in the middle of your hamstrings? Or possibly a long line of pull behind the knee? Some dancers may feel a deep pulling right up by their sitting bone.



5. Next, turn the leg out and place it where you'd like your Développé Devant to be. Some people have a lot of range in parallel yet when they turn it out they feel much more restricted. You want to make sure that you have good range in turnout to be able to nicely place your leg in your adage.

6. Relax the leg back down and repeat on the other side. Note your results in the box below, and then check for the possible solutions to any restriction in the table on the following page.

Test	Left	Right
Hamstrings in Parallel		
Hamstrings in Turnout		

Location and Quality of Restriction	Likely Structure	Suggested Release Technique
One point of muscular pulling in the middle of the hamstring	Muscular tension in the hamstrings	Gentle muscular stretch when warm Cupping Technique Trigger point releases in the muscle belly
More spread out tension over a bigger area on the back of the leg	Fascial Tension in the superficial back line	Hamstring mobilisers Cupping techniques Ensure adequate hydration
Strong pull or possible pain at the top of the hamstrings/ sitting bone	Hamstring insertion or Tendinopathy	Eccentric loading of hamstring muscles Avoid stretching Focus on subtle activation of the deep back muscles and pelvic stability
A distinct line of pull down the back of the leg, calf or behind the knee	Neural Tension	Tennis ball releases for performs Deep calf mobilisers Foot massage techniques Tucks and tilts series for back mobility 6D breathing for rib mobility

After reading through the suggestions above and including any other exercises you know from other programs, note down the exercises, mobilisers and stretches that you need to do to improve your mobility in these tests. Also note down any ideas of how you can fit these into your current weekly program.

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## 6D Breathing

Most people don't realise the importance of breathing correctly or they haven't really thought about how much it may be affecting their dancing. When I bring up breathing with a lot of dancers they say, "Oh I know I don't breathe well!" but they haven't actually thought of looking into ways of actually improving it. The first part of the 6D breathing exercise is all about assessing what is actually happening, when you breathe, and on getting all parts of the lungs correctly involved. We then need to learn to use the breath to facilitate a gentle "collecting" of the inner unit as the base for your deep core control. The importance of this in relation to your développé devant comes from the stability component. If the core stabilisers, including the Pelvic Floor, Transversus Abdominis, the Diaphragm and the deep back muscles (Multifidus, Rotatores, Intertransversarii etc) are dynamically working, this allows Psoas Major to be more available to lift the leg en l'air.

### Set Up

Start lying on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Ensure you're in a neutral spine, with the front of the pelvis in a horizontal position (not a flat back) and check to make sure your big back muscles are relaxed by feeling them with your fingertips. Some dancers may need to use a folded up towel to support the low back in this position in the beginning to allow the big back muscles to release. If you have any pain in your back or your hips, try resting your calves on a chair, but use a towel to support the back in neutral.

1. Front and Back - Place one hand over the diaphragm and the other hand around the back of the rib cage. Close your eyes and focus on your natural breathing. See if you can feel how much movement happens at the front of the ribcage compared to the back and determine the percentage in each direction. I.e. 90% front to 10% in the back, or 70% to 30%. A lot of people will feel that it is very imbalanced to the front, and very little coming to the back initially.



If you feel that it is imbalanced, try to correct it using your mind. Keeping your eyes closed, see if you can imagine a little more air coming into the back of the lungs. If this is effective, wonderful! If this is still difficult it may mean that there is more of a mechanical restriction and you need to do some more fascial mobilisers to loosen the tissue to allow a more natural breathing pattern.

2. Side To Side - Place your hands on the sides of your rib cage, up quite high so your hands aren't down near your waist. With normal, natural breathing, compare the movement of the right side of the rib cage to the left in terms of both volume and speed. A lot of people will find that they have a lot more movement on one side compared to the other. This can be due to having a small scoliosis, or may simply be due to sleeping on one side the night before.



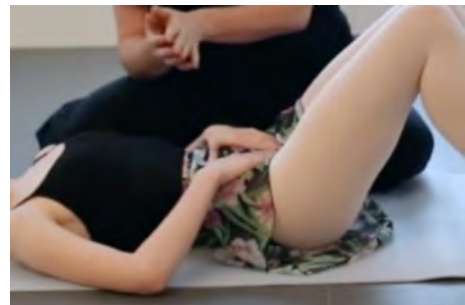
Notice again whether any imbalances can be corrected simply by using your mind, or whether the restriction will need to be worked on when we progress to the mobilising exercises.

3. Up and Down - Place one hand on your neck and the other down on your low belly. Observe your breathing and note how much difference there is at the top compared to the bottom. This is the one test where we don't want to be balanced 50/50. You want to feel the majority of the movement down into your low abdomen. Make sure that your neck muscles and the upper chest stay relaxed. However, make sure that you are not using too much muscle power to push the stomach out and pull it in.



You want to use very little tension and just feel a gentle float and a fall of the abdomen.

4. Collecting the Core - Place your fingertips and thumb tips together to make a little triangle and place them on the low pelvis, below your navel. Combining all of the movements you've done, take a big breath in allowing the ribcage to expand forward and back, side to side, a little bit up but mostly down, expanding the whole abdomen. Exhale with a long "Shhhh" sound. Feel the low abdomen, pelvic floor and deep back gently "collect" as you exhale.



Repeat 3 - 4 times, extending the exhale for as long as possible, but without feeling any bracing in the outer abdomen or back muscles. Repeat this with normal breathing, without the sound, to feel a very gentle collection of your core with each breath. This allows you to train your deepest core muscles subtly and with every day activities.

