STUDIO SAFETY

The dance studio must be a safe place for students to move and learn. Some general rules govern how studio space is used to ensure the safety of everyone who dances in the space.

Equipment and Storage

Many dance studios have equipment for use in classes, such as portable or stationary ballet barres, bands for resistance work, weights, fitness or yoga mats, props, and sound systems. This equipment should never be used without supervision or proper instruction.

No food or drink should ever be carried into the studio. Accidental spills or pieces of food could ruin the floor, unnecessarily dirty the studio, and make dancing unsafe. Some studios and teachers allow water bottles in class. Your teacher will let you know whether you can bring water bottles into the studio. Chewing gum is never allowed in a dance studio. Aside from being a choking hazard, gum that falls on the floor becomes a safety issue for others who dance in the space.

Personal belongings such as backpacks, dance bags, phones, and street clothes should be stored securely. Some schools may have a locker room that can be used for storage, but some may not. If no storage area is available, the teacher will designate a place within the studio where you can keep your personal items. All items must be stored in that area; personal items must not be left somewhere in the studio where they can become a hazard for dancers who might trip over them or slip on them. In addition, you must turn off your cell phone so that it does not create a disturbance during class.

PERSONAL SAFETY

Although the rules for the dance studio help ensure that you remain safe in class, you need to think about a few other things. You need to be sure that you dance in your own personal space and do not endanger others. You also need to establish an open line of communication with your teacher about your personal health.

Personal Space

Understanding the concept of **personal space** is important for the safety of both you and your fellow dancers. You should be sure that you have enough space around you to accommodate leg, arm, and body extensions without encroaching on the personal space of another dancer. You need to be aware of where you are in space at all times, whether you are standing in the center, traveling across the floor, or performing a dance.

Personal Health Information

Personal health information is just that—personal information. If you have had an injury or surgery or have a chronic health condition that might affect your physical performance or the health of your peers, you are not obligated to tell everyone, but

Dancers spread out across the studio, establishing personal space.

you should tell your instructor. To protect privacy, instructors usually encourage students to see them after the first class. Your instructor should be aware of any chronic condition or disease such as asthma, diabetes, or epilepsy so that he or she is prepared for a possible emergency and can help you dance safely. An instructor who is not aware of your specific health conditions will be unable to accommodate your needs.

BASIC ANATOMY

The body is made up of various systems that work together to make movement possible. The skeletal system provides the framework for the muscles, and the muscular system is composed of several types of fibers that work together to make movement happen.

Skeletal System

Bones are the foundation of the body (see figure 3.1). When they are aligned correctly, muscles, tendons, and ligaments can do their jobs effectively and efficiently. Bones and joints are designed to provide support and offer shock absorption when dancers run, jump, or leap. But bones can provide this support only if they are in the correct positions. Proper alignment helps prevent injuries and reduces the physical stress that dance places on the body.

When the body is perfectly aligned, muscles are able to move the bones properly, and joints are able to move in the manner they are designed to move. The skeleton should be aligned over the feet, the knees should be directly above the ankles, and the hips should be directly over the knees. The ribcage should be in line with the pelvis and remain neutral, not splayed open or collapsed inward. The pelvis should also be held in a neutral position. If the pelvis is tucked under or swayed back, the natural curves of the spine will be altered. The spinal curves are designed to absorb shock and bend accordingly. The shoulders, neck, and head should be relaxed and sit on top of everything else.

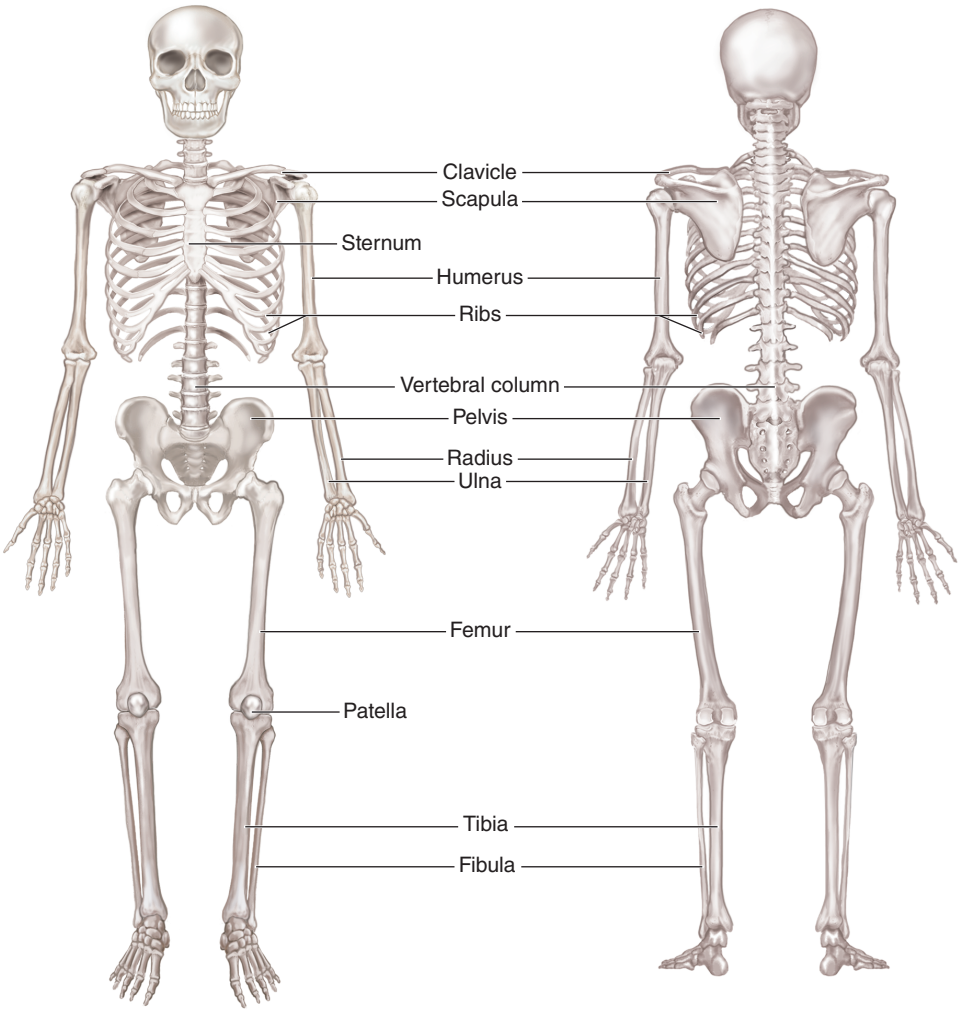


Figure 3.1 Skeletal system.

The focus in dance should always be on lengthening the body, not holding the body in certain positions. If the body is aligned correctly (see figure 3.2), movement will be easier and take less effort, and physical stress will be reduced.

When you are dancing, no matter what position your dancing takes you into, you need to be aware of how your bones are positioned so that you can dance safely and efficiently. For example, good spinal alignment when you are dancing means that your shoulders will be lined up over your hips, usually with the ribs gently hanging in between. Similarly, for leg alignment, your knees will be lined up with the center of your feet as you jump and travel through space.

Alignment is important not only for your bones but also for your muscles. When your skeleton is well aligned, your muscles can work at peak efficiency for the longest duration and with the least risk of injury. The body is a closed system. If you have misaligned the bones in one part of the body, then another part of the body

must compensate for that misalignment, leading to an unnecessary expenditure of muscle energy that will tire you quickly. Worse yet, misalignment can be a recipe for injury. Proper alignment is a principle of all forms and styles of dance.

Figure 3.2 Proper alignment.

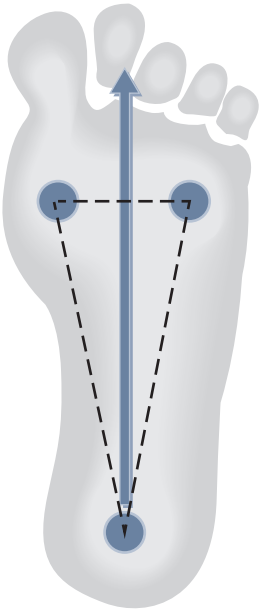
Joints

The place where two bones meet is a joint, and skeletal movement can occur only at joints. The body has five types of joints:

1. Immovable joints—These joints are where two bones meet but no movement occurs. The bones that form these joints offer protection. The bones that make up the skull meet at immovable joints.
2. Ball-and-socket joints—These joints allow movement in all directions. Body parts can flex, or bend; rotate; move toward the body, or adduct; move away from the body, or abduct; and move in a circular motion, or circumduct. This joint is formed where the head of one bone is seated into a hollow spot, or socket, in another bone. The hip joints and shoulder joints are ball-and-socket joints.

TECHNIQUE TIP

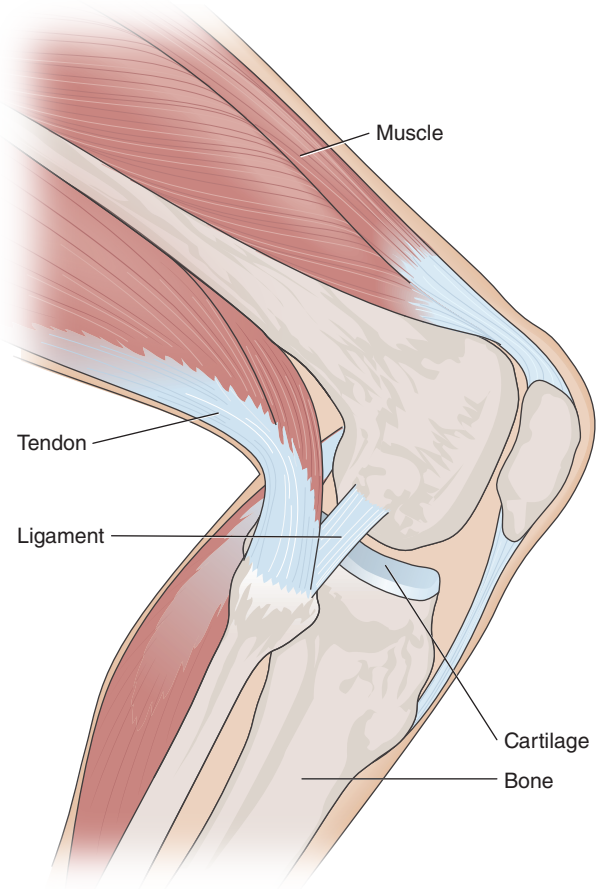
When standing, you should envision a triangle on the bottom of your foot that has one point under the big toe, one point under the smallest toe, and one point under the heel. Body weight should be evenly distributed among those points so that the foot provides a solid foundation. Body weight should not be too far forward or too far backward, and the foot should not be allowed to roll inward or outward. Most students have difficulty learning how to stand correctly. You should work closely with your instructor to remedy any issues you might have in this area to avoid alignment issues and injuries.



3. Hinge joints—These joints allow back and forth movement. Among the many hinge joints in the body are the knees, the elbows, one of the two joints found at the ankle, and the knuckles.
4. Gliding joints—These joints are found in the wrist, the ankle, and the bones of the back, or the vertebrae. They allow sideways movement as one bone slides over the surface of another.
5. Pivot joints—These joints allow twisting up to 180 degrees and are found where the skull and the neck meet and where the pelvis meets the spine.

Muscles, Tendons, and Ligaments

Muscles, tendons, and ligaments are the soft, connective tissues surrounding the skeletal joints that receive information from the brain and react to make movement possible (see figure 3.3).



Knee joint

Figure 3.3 Connective tissues.