

## BODY ALIGNMENT

**Alignment** is the organization of body parts in relationship to each other. Figure 5.1 shows correct vertical alignment. In jazz dance, as well as other dance genres, proper alignment creates prolonged health and greater efficiency. The alignment of your ankles, knees, hips, and spine greatly affects the movement of your body. If the muscles supporting the ankles, knees, hips, and spine are weak or unbalanced, your posture will be poor, which will lead to uncoordinated movement and possibly injury.

### Ankles

Your ankles are complex joints that can move in multiple directions (see figure 5.2). This range of movement gives your ankles the ability to function in helpful ways but also makes them susceptible to alignment issues such as pronation and supination. **Pronation** occurs when the ankles roll in toward the centerline of the body. This leads to an imbalance in which the inside of the ankle is weak and often too flexible while the outside is tight. Often known in dance class as rolling in, ankle pronation causes stress on the knees and often leads to ankle sprains on the inside of the ankle. **Supination** occurs when the ankles roll out from the centerline of the body. This leads to an imbalance in which the outside of the ankle is too flexible and the inside is tight. In dance class, this leads to what is often called sickling of the foot in the air and can lead to sprains on the outside of the foot when the dancer lands improperly. Proper ankle alignment keeps the foot healthy and relieves stress on the knees.



**Figure 5.1** Correct vertical alignment.



**Figure 5.2** Ankles correctly aligned (a), pronated (b), and supinated (c).