

Buying Hardshoes 101

So, your dancer has started learning hardshoe in class and has started asking after when they will be getting their first pair of hard shoes or “Heavy” shoes.

Once a dancer starts learning their hardshoe technique in class, the sooner they get into the hard shoes, the better. The shoes are strange for beginners to get used to and are a lot more difficult to balance in than softshoes. Dancers need to have strong legs and ankles and good softshoe technique before beginning hardshoe. That’s why we wait so long to start teaching hardshoe in the first place.

So, although its good to get your dancer their hard shoes as soon as possible, we understand that they can be expensive. So, if your dancer is about to go into their yearly growth spurt or is currently in one, we recommend waiting so that their new shoes last as long as possible.

If your dancer is very young, only dancing once a week and will not be competing for the next year, you can purchase inexpensive tap shoes at Zellers, Pay Less or Walmart depending on the time of year.

If your dancer is about to start competing or is currently competing, I would recommended getting hardshoes as soon as possible after their latest growth spurt.

Where to buy:

New hardshoes can be purchased at any feis or at:

“Steele Celtic Dancewear” <http://www.irishdanceshoes.com/>
576 Coach Grove Rd SW Calgary, AB (403) 686-3514

You can also check out our MJP used shoe exchange by e-mailing MJPIDA at: mjpida@hotmail.com

Hard shoe sizing tips:

- If you know your Irish or UK size, this is generally the closest match as most irish dance shoes are manufactured in Ireland.
- Many shoe boxes in regular shoe retail stores print both the American and UK size right on the box. So, go into a store, try on shoes until you find the correct size, then look on the box for the corresponding UK size.
- All leather shoes stretch. Hard Shoes may stretch up to 1/2 size with a lot of use, and Soft shoes may stretch even a bit more. Therefore, at the time of purchase, the fit should be as snug as tolerable. That being said, if you are trying to decide between two sizes, you probably want to err on the side of the smaller shoe.
- The exception to the last rule is for younger dancers who are growing very fast. You'll want to leave some room for growth, which can usually be accomplished by going with a size that is a bit roomier to begin with. But don't go too big. It can lead to looking sloppy and bad habits. Us dancing teachers and adjudicators like a nice tight, neat look. So we recommend that you never buy a shoe more than 1/2 size larger than ideal.