



# PROP IT UP

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[www.abcfordance.com](http://www.abcfordance.com)

[info@abcfordance.com](mailto:info@abcfordance.com)

201-874-5380

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## Special Thanks

Models – Tori Apollo, Madison Bigelow and Kings Park Dance Center Dancers

Studios – Cresskill Performing Arts – Cresskill, NJ

Kings Park Dance Center – Kings Park, NY



### **Paperclips**

Paperclips provide quick tactile feedback for both positioning and tension. Using paperclips which are about 2 inches in length seems to be the most effective for the exercises provided here. When using the prop for arm positioning, either coated or metal clips were equally effective.



### **Arm position in turns**

This exercise has been quite helpful in chaîné turns, piqué turns and pirouettes, but only if the arms are being held in 1<sup>st</sup> position for the duration of the exercise. Due to the relatively small size of the paperclip, this prop provides a target which is too small to be effectively found during arm movement by many students.

Holding the arms in 1<sup>st</sup> position, the paperclip is grasped lightly between the thumb and third finger of each hand. Keeping the clip parallel to the body requires the student to maintain the proper alignment of the upper and lower arm with the wrist and the hand. The relatively small size of the prop helps students to minimize unconscious movement of the arms while increasing the connection and stability of the arms to the torso and the torso placement to the pelvis. Students are pleasantly surprised to find that this cleans up the line of travel and often also improves their ability to spot more accurately.



### **Arm and head positioning**

The students sit on the edge of the chair and dance just the arm and head parts of the choreography. This can also be done sitting on the floor, but the chair has the advantages of: creating a tension free sitting position with proper posture and providing negative space for allowing the arms to lengthen straight down by the students' sides without hitting the floor.

One of the advantages of this exercise is that the students are able to concentrate on their arm and head lines without having to worry about the rest of their body. Students often find that they need to increase the amount of effort and energy needed to create the proper arm and head positions. This knowledge can then be brought into the students' execution of the full choreography.

Another advantage of this exercise is that the students need to be able to remember just the arm and head movements of the choreography as opposed to the full body movement. This requires them to pay closer attention to detail in this area.

This exercise is best suited to cleaning up choreography that is already known and not as a means of learning the choreography initially.



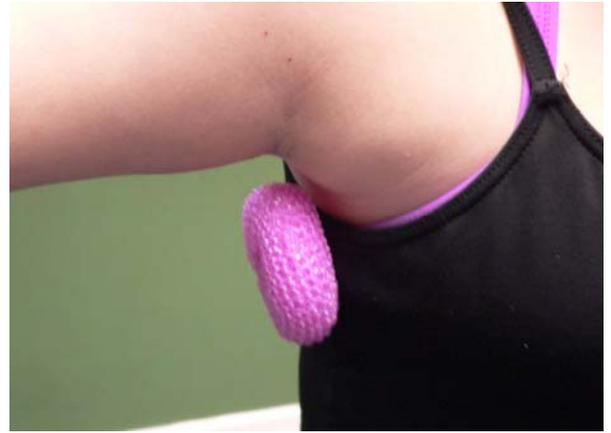
### Pot Scrubber Pad

Plastic pot scrubber pads are a quick way for students to understand the idea of armpit space. It is very important that you do not use metal scrubbers or scrubbers which already have soap in/on them as both of these types can be quite irritating to the skin and possibly cause allergic reactions.



### Arm air space

This exercise will only work if the students are wearing a camisole or tank top or leotard. The pot scrubber pad is safety pinned to the top of the shirt or leotard armpit opening. The pad will provide an unpleasant sensation when the upper arm is resting on it. The students will then need to find the muscular connections needed to maintain the rotation of upper arms off of the pot scrubber pads.



This exercise is good after students have a basic idea of where the arm placement should be and they have the strength and endurance to maintain the correct position.

This prop works well as a reminder and is effective when the students need a reminder to think about the whole body's presentation and not just one area.

It is very important that students realize that this prop is not a punishment. Because it can be uncomfortable, they may construe it as a punishment. Please remember to explain that this prop is to heighten their awareness of what it takes to create and maintain the proper arm lines throughout the designated time.



### Pencil

A regular wood pencil works better than a mechanical pencil or a pen for these exercises. If you don't have a pencil, a stick type pen would be the next best option. Keeping the pencil unsharpened for the arm exercise can increase the safety of the prop if you are incorporating the pencil exercise with movement.

### Ballet hand positions

Place the pencil under the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> fingers and allow the fingers to soften into a rounded line to compliment the hand. This exercise can be used on its own or incorporated into barre work so the students have a focus point at the end of their hands. This will help the students to maintain energy and consciousness of position throughout the full length of the arm, hand and wrist.

This exercise is effective in small durations from an early stage of ballet training. It is important to have the students feel the line of the hands with and without the pencil. Students can misconstrue the exercise and splay the fingers wide as they hold the pencil. This needs to be corrected when seen.

