



RPM Level I: Lesson Plan

Approximate Age: 7–8+

Class Length: 60 minutes

Frequency: 2x per week recommended (RPM recommends 2 years at this level)

Primary Focus: Foundational alignment, first technical vocabulary, safe movement habits, body awareness

Suggested music: A clear waltz (3/4) or 4/4 accompaniment for barre work. Allow enough space between combinations for transitions; transitions are teaching moments too. If working with recorded music, any classical ballet class accompaniment with clean phrasing at moderate tempos works well at this level.

The RPM Lens for Level I

At Level I, you're building the container everything else lives in. Before a dancer can extend beautifully or turn powerfully, they need to understand *how their body actually moves*. That understanding starts here.

Posture and **Placement** lay the structural foundation, not just for ballet, but for every physical demand dance will make on the body for years to come. **Circular Patterns** teach the body that movement flows continuously; it doesn't arrive and stop at each position. **Contribution of Joints** plants the seed of safe landing mechanics before bad habits have a chance to take root.

Don't rush the barre. A student who understands *why* their body works this way will progress faster, correct more reliably, and stay healthier than one who is simply mimicking shapes.

POSTURE

PLACEMENT

RELEASE

CIRCULAR PATTERNS

TWO-WAY ENERGY

CONTRIBUTION OF JOINTS

RECOIL & REBOUND

EQUILIBRIUM

Primary Principles at This Level: Posture · Placement · Release · Circular Patterns · Two-Way Energy · Contribution of Joints · Recoil & Rebound · Equilibrium

Class at a Glance

Section	Time	Primary Focus	Exercises
Barre Work	25 min	Alignment, strength, foundational vocabulary	Demi Plié · Tendu Devant & à la Seconde · Battement Soutenu · Dégagé Devant · Demi Rond de Jambe à Terre · Temps Lié à la Seconde · Élevé & Relevé · Retiré Devant & Derrière
Centre Practice	20 min	Balance, weight transfer, spatial awareness	Chassé en Avant & à la Seconde · Pas de Bourrée Dessous · Waltz Triplets · Paddle Turns · Balancé
Allegro	10 min	Safe landings, coordination, rhythm	Sautés · Échappé Sauté · Changements · Spring Points · Pas de Chat Preparation
Révérence	5 min	Grace, etiquette, community	Simple Curtsy

Section I

Barre Work: 25 Minutes

Goal: Build proper posture, alignment, and foundational strength while establishing placement and turnout from the hip.

POSTURE

PLACEMENT

RELEASE

TWO-WAY ENERGY

CIRCULAR PATTERNS

CONTRIBUTION OF JOINTS

EQUILIBRIUM

RPM Principles: Posture · Placement · Release · Two-Way Energy · Circular Patterns · Contribution of Joints · Equilibrium

Demi Plié

Setup

Positions: 1st, 2nd, 3rd

Counts: 4 down, 4 up (slow), or 2/2 (moderate)

Reps: 2–3 per position

RPM in Action

"Up to go down to go up." Before the descent, the body lifts slightly. That lift creates energy that powers the recovery. This is **Release** (Principle 4): the upward breath that initiates movement.

"Ankle, knee, hip: all three joints work together." No single joint takes all the weight. Each one contributes its share. **Contribution of Joints** (Principle 9).

What to Watch For

- Knees must track directly over the 2nd toe, not rolling inward
- Heels stay grounded in 1st and 2nd position throughout
- Pelvis stays neutral, neither tucked under nor tipping forward
- No gripping in the shoulders or tension in the neck
- The movement is continuous; the plié does not pause at the bottom

Common Corrections

- Knees rolling in → *"Press your knees toward your pinky toes, feel the floor push back."*
- Shoulders lifting → *"String from your sternum to the ceiling, the shoulders are passengers."*
- Shallow plié → *"Let gravity help you, you're not fighting the floor, you're passing through it."*

Tendu Devant and à la Seconde

Setup

Positions: From 1st or 3rd

Counts: 2 out, 2 close (or 1/1 when ready)

Reps: 4–8 each direction

RPM in Action

"Press down into the floor as you reach through space, energy goes both directions at once." The standing leg presses down while the working foot reaches away.

Two-Way Energy (Principle 6): opposing forces create length and stability simultaneously.

"Where is your weight centered? Standing leg is active, not passive."

Placement (Principle 2): weight distributes over the standing leg, hip stays level, spine doesn't shift.

What to Watch For

- Foot articulates fully: heel lifts → ball rolls → toes point last
- Turnout is maintained from the hip, not forced from the ankle or knee
- Standing hip stays level, no hiking on the working side
- Foot returns *through* a soft plié to the closed position, not directly
- Working knee stays straight as the foot reaches away

Common Corrections

- Foot sickles outward → *"Reach your big toe away, not your pinky toe."*
- Hip hiking → *"Keep both hip bones pointing forward, the working one isn't allowed to rise."*
- Turnout rolling from the ankle → *"The rotation lives in your hip joint. Let it open from there."*

Battement Soutenu

Setup

Positions: From 3rd or 5th

Counts: 2 count open, 2 count close

Purpose: Prepares rotation; preparation for pas de bourrée dessous

RPM in Action

"No beginning, no end. Let the energy flow through the close." The closing is not an ending. It's a transition into whatever comes next. **Circular Patterns** (Principle 5): movement transforms rather than stops.

What to Watch For

- Working foot passes through cou de pied on the close, not a wide sweep
- Both legs remain turned out throughout
- Arms participate intentionally; they don't just hold position
- The close has quality, it isn't dropped at the end

Dégagé Devant

Setup

Positions: From 1st or 3rd

Counts: 1 brush out, 1 close (or 2/2 for beginners)

Reps: 4–8

RPM in Action

"The preparation gathers energy, the brush releases it." **Working Body / Posing Body** (Principle 7): the working body is the close, gathering energy. The posing body is the extended position, released. The close also prepares the next brush: it's not a rest, it's a reset.

What to Watch For

- Foot brushes fully off the floor, fully extended at approximately 25–45°
- Turnout maintained in both legs throughout
- Working hip stays down, no tilting to create height
- The brush has energy, foot isn't just lifted, it's sent

Common Corrections

- Lazy brush → *"Wipe the floor clean, your foot is the squeegee."*
- Hip tilting → *"Your two hip bones are headlights. Keep them pointing straight ahead."*

Demi Rond de Jambe à Terre

Setup

Direction: En dehors and en dedans

Counts: 4 counts per half-circle

Reps: 4 each direction

RPM in Action

"Draw a continuous half-circle, the leg is always in motion, never pausing." **Circular Patterns** (Principle 5): the movement traces a pathway; there is no stopping point.

"Feel the hip joint open and close as you travel." The rotation comes from the hip socket, not the knee. **Placement** (Principle 2).

What to Watch For

- Movement initiates from the hip; the knee and ankle follow. They don't lead.
- Toes maintain contact with the floor throughout
- Standing leg remains stable; the torso doesn't sway or rotate with the working leg
- The circle is genuinely round, not squared off at devant or derrière

Common Corrections

- Hip rotating with the leg → *"Your torso is a statue. Only the leg is moving."*
- Knee leading → *"The hip goes first, the knee is just along for the ride."*

Temps Lié à la Seconde

Setup

Counts: 4–8 counts depending on tempo

Purpose: Introduces weight transfer and first traveling pattern

RPM in Action

"Pass through plié, don't land in it." **Recoil & Rebound** (Principle 8): the plié is a passage, not a destination. Weight transfers through movement, not in a pause.

"Where is your weight centered before the step? Find it first, then move." **Placement** (Principle 2): each new position has a specific weight distribution. Know where you're going before you arrive.

What to Watch For

- Both feet stay in contact with the floor through the full weight transfer
- No popping up between weight shifts; the transition is smooth
- Arms and head move with intention, coordinating with the legs
- Each new position is fully inhabited before moving to the next

Élevé and Relevé

Setup

Positions: 1st, 2nd (and 3rd when ready)

Counts: 4 up, 4 down (or 2/2)

Reps: 4–8

RPM in Action

"Find your balance point, weight over the balls of your feet, not sinking into the toes."

Equilibrium (Principle 11): the center of gravity must stay over the base of support.

"String from your sternum to the ceiling, you're being lifted from the center, not pulled up by the shoulders."

Posture (Principle 1): the spine lengthens through a central pull, not a muscular clench.

What to Watch For

- No sickling at the top of relevé, ankle stacked over the toes
- Hips stay level, no tilting to compensate for weakness on one side
- Descent is controlled, not a collapse
- Heels lower fully on the way down

Common Corrections

- Gripping the barre → *"Press the barre away slightly. Let your balance hold you, not the wood."*
- Sinking into toes → *"Stack: ankle over the ball of the foot, hip over ankle, shoulder over hip."*

Retiré Devant and Derrière

Setup

Purpose: First single-leg balance; prepares pas de chat

Counts: Hold for 4–8 counts

RPM in Action

"String from your sternum to the ceiling, your spine is the axis." Posture (Principle 1): a lifted, centered spine is the only way to sustain a single-leg balance.

"Alert but not tense, engaged without gripping." Neutral (Principle 3): the body is poised, not clenched. Tension is the enemy of balance.

What to Watch For

- Foot wraps at the ankle of the supporting leg, not pulled to the side
- Working hip stays level, doesn't open out or pull back
- Standing leg is fully straight in relevé retiré
- Head and gaze are still, not wobbling to compensate

Common Corrections

- Hip opening on retiré derrière → *"The knee goes back, the hip stays forward."*
- Wobbling → *"Soften the grip. When you squeeze, you shake."*

Sample Barre Combination: Level I

01

Demi Pliés

4 demi pliés in 1st (2 counts each)

02

Tendus Devant

4 tendus devant (2 counts each)

03

Tendus à la Seconde

4 tendus à la seconde (2 counts each)

04

Temps Lié

2 temps lié à la seconde (4 counts each)

05

Dégagés Devant

4 dégagés devant (1 count each)

06

Relevé & Close

Relevé balance (4 counts) → lower and close → repeat on other side

📌 *Music tip: A clear waltz or 4/4 rhythm lets phrases breathe. Don't rush between combinations, transitions are teaching moments too.*

Section II

Centre Practice: 20 Minutes

Goal: Develop balance, weight transference, and body awareness in space. The barre is gone. Everything the student learned must now live inside their own body.

EQUILIBRIUM

WORKING/POSING BODY

CIRCULAR PATTERNS

ARM/LEG COORDINATION

NEUTRAL

ROTATION AROUND AXIS

RPM Principles: Equilibrium · Working/Posing Body · Circular Patterns · Arm/Leg Coordination · Neutral · Rotation Around Axis

Chassé en Avant and à la Seconde

Setup

Counts: 2 counts per chassé

RPM in Action

"Upper and lower body in conversation: where are your arms as your legs travel?"

Arm/Leg Coordination

(Principle 13): arms and legs are partners, not separate systems.

"Alert but not tense, ready to move in any direction." **Neutral** (Principle 3): between steps, the body is poised and available, not resting.

What to Watch For

- Landing foot meets the floor with a soft, bent knee; no straight-legged landing
- Arms and legs move simultaneously, not arms chasing legs
- Torso stays lifted, no forward lean when traveling
- Second chassé springs off the floor with genuine energy

Pas de Bourrée Dessous

Setup

Preparation: From battement soutenu

Counts: 3 quick counts

RPM in Action

"Alert but not tense, you're between steps, ready to go." **Neutral** (Principle 3): three distinct, deliberate weight shifts. Each one is a new decision.

What to Watch For

- Three clearly distinct weight shifts, not a blurred shuffle
- Turnout maintained on all three steps
- Arms held steadily, no flapping or swinging for balance
- Final position lands with weight placed and ready for what follows

Common Corrections

- Steps blurring → count them out loud: "side, behind, side"
- Falling off balance → *"Tiny steps. The smaller the step, the better the balance."*

Waltz Triplets

Setup

Rhythm: Down-up-up ("1-and-2")

Direction: En avant, en arrière, à la seconde

RPM in Action

"Up to go down to go up, feel the accent on the first step."

Release (Principle 4): count 1 is the plié that generates energy for the two relevés that follow.

"No beginning, no end. Let the waltz breathe." **Circular**

Patterns (Principle 5): each phrase flows into the next rather than stopping and restarting.

What to Watch For

- Count 1 is genuinely a plié, not a stomp or flat-footed step
- Counts 2 and 3 are genuine relevés, not just weight shifts at the same height
- The phrase has a swinging, rocking quality, not a march
- Arms participate in the rocking quality of the movement

Common Corrections

- Flat waltz → *"Imagine waves, you go down into the wave, then up over it."*
- No relevé on 2 and 3 → *"Two-three means UP-UP, both steps go to the tips of your toes."*

Paddle Turns

Setup

Direction: Clockwise and counterclockwise

Purpose: Introduction to spotting and rotation control

RPM in Action

"Energy spirals upward around your axis, you're not spinning, you're ascending." **Rotation Around a Central Axis**
(Principle 12): the spine is the axis, and it stays vertical as the body rotates.

"Fix your eyes before your body turns, the head follows last."
Spotting: visual focus creates the reference point that stabilizes rotation.

What to Watch For

- Core engaged throughout, no sinking or swaying in the waist
- Supporting foot is fully active, not passive
- Each quarter-turn is complete before the next paddle begins
- Head leads the spot, eyes find the target first, then the body turns through

Common Corrections

- Dizziness → *"Eyes first. Always eyes first. Pick one spot on the wall and find it every turn."*
- Wobbling → *"Taller. Every turn, a little taller."*

Balancé

Setup

Direction: Side to side, en avant, en arrière

Purpose: Introduces rhythm, épaulement, and musical weight shifts

RPM in Action

"No beginning, no end, rock through the step, don't land on it." **Circular Patterns** (Principle 5): the balancé flows continuously. Side-behind-side is one unbroken action.

"Upper and lower body in conversation: the head and shoulder lead the direction."

Arm/Leg Coordination

(Principle 13): épaulement is not an add-on. The shoulder and head tell the story; the legs follow.

What to Watch For

- Three distinct weight shifts: side → cross-behind → same side
- Genuine small relevé on the second step
- Opposite shoulder comes forward (épaulement)
- The phrase has a lilt: musical, not mechanical

Common Corrections

- No épaulement → *"Let your shoulder lead, like you're leaning into a gentle curve."*
- Mechanical balancé → *"Sing it: ba-lan-cé. Let the word move you."*

Sample Centre Combination: Level I

01

Chassé Right & Left

Chassé à la seconde right
→ chassé à la seconde
left

02

Pas de Bourrée & Balancé

Pas de bourrée dessous
→ balancé right →
balancé left

03

Paddle Turns Right

4 paddle turns right (spot
the front wall)

04

Reverse

Chassé left → chassé right → pas de
bourrée → balancé x2

05

Paddle Turns Left

4 paddle turns left

Section III

Allegro: 10 Minutes

Goal: Introduce small jumps with safe landings, rhythm, and coordination. Establish that the floor is a tool, not something to fight.

RECOIL & REBOUND


CONTRIBUTION OF JOINTS

DOUBLE LIFT

WORKING/POSING BODY

TIMING

RPM Principles: Recoil & Rebound · Contribution of Joints · Double Lift · Working/Posing Body · Timing

 **Teacher Note:** At Level I, allegro is about landing safely and finding the rhythm, not height. Correct landing mechanics matter more than elevation. Build the habit now.

Sautés: 1st and 2nd Position

Setup

Counts: 8–16 consecutive, or phrases of 4

RPM in Action

"The floor is a springboard, pass through the plié, don't hold it."

Recoil & Rebound (Principle 8): the plié is not a landing position. It's a passing-through. The moment it is held, the rebound dies.

"Ankle, knee, hip: all three joints absorb the landing."

Contribution of Joints (Principle 9): no joint takes all the impact. This is injury prevention at the root. Teach it before height, before turnout, before anything else.

What to Watch For

- Feet fully point in the air, no winged or flexed feet at the apex
- Both feet leave and land simultaneously in 1st and 2nd
- Landing plié is deeper than takeoff plié, absorbing the fall
- Heels reach the floor on landing (especially in 2nd)
- Jump is light and bouncy, not heavy and effortful

Common Corrections

- Heavy landings → *"You're not landing, you're already preparing for the next one. Keep going."*
- Not pointing in the air → *"The floor just released your feet. Show it you appreciated it."*
- Shallow landing plié → *"Cushion it, like you're catching something fragile."*

Échappé Sauté

Setup

Movement: 1st → jump → 2nd → jump → 1st

Counts: 2 counts (or 1 count each for more advanced)

RPM in Action

"Gather and release, the plié is your power source."

Working/Posing Body (Principle 7) + **Recoil** (Principle 8): the closing plié gathers; the jump releases. One continuous action.

"Lift once, then lift again at the peak, find the float." **Double Lift** (Principle 10): first lift off the floor, second lift at the apex. That second lift is the secret to ballon.

What to Watch For

- The jump opens AND closes in the air, not on the ground
- 2nd position is genuinely wide and turned out, not narrow
- Landing in both positions returns through a controlled plié
- The phrase has a rhythmic bounce, not a labored push

Changements: 3rd Position

Setup

Counts: 1 count each, or 2 for beginners

Reps: 4-8

RPM in Action

"Pass through, don't hold, the feet change in the air, not on the floor."

Recoil & Rebound (Principle 8): momentum carries the change. A held plié kills the rebound.

What to Watch For

- Feet clearly change positions before landing
- Legs stay crossed in the air, no wide opening to 2nd
- Arms remain quiet and supportive
- Each changement springs directly from the landing plié

Spring Points

Setup

Purpose: Alternating foot rhythm; ankle articulation

Counts: 1 count per foot

RPM in Action

"Quick off the floor, rebound before you think about it." **Recoil** (Principle 8): the spring is reflexive. The brain should be ahead of the feet.

What to Watch For

- Feet alternate clearly, not both together
- Working foot fully points while standing foot springs
- Rhythm stays even, both sides equal
- Upper body stays quiet

Pas de Chat Preparation

Setup

Execution: Retiré devant → spring → retiré on opposite leg → close

Purpose: Two-foot ground separation; foundation for true pas de chat in Level II

RPM in Action

"The preparation gathers energy, the jump releases it." **Working/Posing Body** (Principle 7): the gathering in retiré IS the power source for the spring.

What to Watch For

- Both feet leave the floor, even if only slightly
- Each retiré is genuine, not just a bent knee
- Landing is controlled: one foot at a time, through plié
- Even with minimal height, the action must be correct

Sample Allegro Combination: Level I

01

Sautés

4 sautés in 1st

02

Échappé Sauté

Échappé sauté (1st →
2nd → 1st)

03

Changements

2 changements

04

Spring Points

4 spring points (alternating)

05

Repeat & Finish

Repeat from top → finish: pas de chat
preparation x2

Section IV

Révérence: 5 Minutes

Goal: Close the class with etiquette, grace, and reflection.

POSTURE

CIRCULAR PATTERNS


LEVELS

RPM Principles: Posture · Circular Patterns · Levels

The révérence is not just a bow, it is a final expression of everything practiced in class. A curtsy executed with a rounded arm, a genuine breath, and a focused gaze is worth as much technically as any tendu. Treat it with the same attention.

Suggested Structure

- Simple curtsy with arms in low second, head inclined
- Acknowledgment of the pianist (if present) and the teacher
- A moment of stillness at the end, no rushing out

 **Teacher Note:** Use the révérence to build community. Ask students to acknowledge each other. This ritual is the beginning of what it means to be a dancer in a studio.

RPM Principles Integration: Level I Summary

Principle	Where It Appears in Level I
Posture (1)	All barre work, retiré, révérence
Placement (2)	Tendu, temps lié, chassé, all centre
Body Usage. Neutral (3)	Between exercises, chassé, pas de bourrée
Body Usage. Release (3)	Demi plié, waltz triplets (count 1)
Body Usage. Circular Patterns (3)	Rond de jambe, battement soutenu, balancé, waltz triplets
Two-Way Energy (4)	Tendu (standing vs. working leg), relevé
Working/Posing Body (5)	Dégagé, échappé sauté, pas de chat prep
Recoil & Rebound (6)	All allegro, temps lié
Contribution of Joints (7)	All pliés, all allegro landings
Double Lift (8)	Échappé sauté
Equilibrium (9)	Relevé, retiré, paddle turns
Rotation Around Axis (10)	Paddle turns
Arm/Leg Coordination (11)	Chassé, balancé, all combinations
Sound & Movement (12)	Waltz triplets, allegro rhythm, révérence
Levels (13)	Allegro (height of jump vs. floor); contrast between plié and relevé; high/medium/low body positions in creative warm-up
Timing (14)	Spring points rhythm; changements; waltz triplet phrasing; musical response in all combinations

Student Readiness Checklist: Advancing to Level II

A student is ready to move to Level II when they can demonstrate the following **consistently and without reminder**:

Alignment & Posture

- Maintains a neutral pelvis and lifted sternum through all barre exercises
- Standing leg is fully active (not passive) during all working-leg exercises
- Head and neck are free of tension during single-leg balances

Barre Technique

- Demi pliés in 1st, 2nd, and 3rd with knees tracking correctly over the 2nd toe
- Tendus show full foot articulation: heel → ball → point out; reverse on the close
- Dégagé brushes cleanly off the floor with a straight knee and pointed foot
- Rond de jambe traces a smooth, continuous half-circle, movement from the hip

Centre & Allegro

- Lands sautés and changements with a controlled plié, heels reaching the floor
- Paddle turns show a clear spot (habit matters more than precision at this stage)
- Pas de bourrée shows three distinct, intentional weight shifts
- Waltz triplets show genuine relevé on counts 2 and 3

Musicality & Flow

- Moves between positions with continuous energy, no pause-and-stop between exercises
- Responds to changes in musical tempo and dynamics
- Révérence is performed with attention, not just executed perfunctorily



© RPM Dance · Level I Lesson Plan · All rights reserved