

DID YOU KNOW?

Barre class was created in the mid-1900s by ballet dancer Lotte Berk. Berk opened the first Barre studio in London as a way to combine ballet training with rehabilitation for an injury she suffered.

PHOTOS BY MIKE WILLIAMS PHOTOGRAPHY



Barre One at Sportsbarn

Barre for Beginners

The 411 on Chattanooga's Hottest New Workout Class

By Candice Graham



I was once so clueless about what barre class was that when I first heard my friends talking about it, I envisioned some type of new-aged workout involving dancing on a bar. A few embarrassing questions later, I learned that barre was technically called BarreAmped, was more ballet than booty dancing, and was a unique new workout that had recently taken Chattanooga by storm. To keep others from the same confusion I once had, I decided to attend the Barre One class at Sportsbarn to learn what the popular workout was all about. Here's what I found.

If you have ever dreamed of being a ballerina, this could be the class for you. There aren't any tutus or pirouettes, but the mirrored room and ballet barre may make you feel like you should have brought your satin shoes. (Bare feet are preferred for barre class, though, so leave your kicks at the door.)

Once you've picked your mat, you'll have the option of choosing weights for amped-up intensity. Body weight is the major means of resistance in barre, though, so if you *do* opt for dumbbells, I'd go for the one-pounders. (I chose threes, which seemed light enough, but after a minute or two my arms were definitely feeling the burn.) Because your core muscles are used in a different way than you may be used to, you'll likely experience shaking or vibrating. Fortunately, the instructor encouraged everyone to work at his or her own pace – so if you need to take a few seconds to shake it out, that's OK.

Other items incorporated into the workout were a strap for stretching and a ball for squeezing between your thighs and legs. Small pulsing movements and challenging postures – think squeezing an imaginary grape in between your bellybutton – made up most of the class. Moves influenced by Pilates and yoga, like relaxing poses and graceful stretches, were performed throughout. For beginners some moves will be tougher than others, but with time they can be built upon. Ultimately, barre class should shape longer, leaner muscles from head to toe and help improve your coordination and flexibility.

I walked out of the class feeling relaxed and not worn down like I do after some workouts. I may not be Nutcracker-worthy anytime soon, but my toned inner ballerina body may be just a few more barre classes away! **HS**



FUN FACT:

Can't make it to the studio? Barre workouts can be done at home using a kitchen chair or counter-top to keep your balance.

What You'll Use

BarreAmped is a workout that uses various accessories and props. Here's what you'll likely see in your class:

Weights – Small and light handheld weights are an option in Barre class.

Ball – Exercises incorporating the inflated rubber ball target areas in your inner thighs and seat.

Resistance Band – This band will help stretch your limbs and shape long, lean muscles.

Barre – The ballet barre, or stationary handrail, is used for support during certain poses.

Exercise Mat – For floor movements, the mat provides support and a cushioned surface.

Mirror – A mirror allows you to make sure you're in the proper position.

