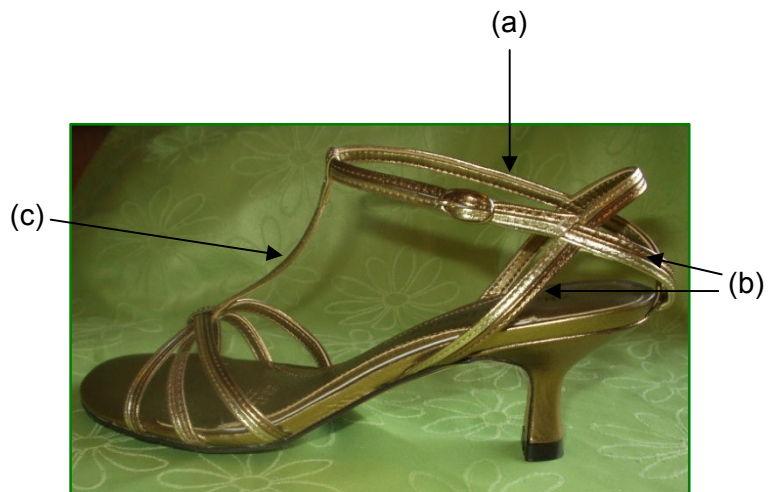


How to Buy Shoes and Bellydance in Heels

By Jewel

Choosing shoes for dancing

- Your dancing shoes should fit snugly – any give and they'll slop around as you move. With strappy shoes (which have a bit more give than court shoes), I usually buy 1/2 size smaller than my regular street shoe size
- Strappy shoes should offer several points that hold onto your foot. Ideally, straps should do the following (see photo below):
 - a) Straps go across both the front and back of the ankle;
 - b) The ankle strap should be joined to the shoe base;
 - c) The strap across the front of the ankle should also join to the straps going across the toe.



- If possible, get a squared heel. Even if it's narrow at the top, a flared bottom of the heel is more stable than a stiletto.
- Make sure the heel is not too high! It is especially hard to rise up onto your toes with a very high heel.
- I personally prefer buying dress shoes to ballroom shoes - they are less expensive, and the soles are sturdier than the suede on ballroom dancing shoes (especially if dancing outdoors or on carpet). I prefer my soles to have more grip rather than less.

Dancing in heels

- When you stand in heels, your knees are likely to be straighter and your hips tilted, arching your back slightly. Be very aware of keeping your knees soft and tucking the pelvis/ engaging the stomach muscles to straighten and protect the lower back.

- Practice various moves in your heels and feel how you need to adjust them. I find shimmies harder to sustain in heels (as my legs are straighter), but it's easier to lean back or bob down - moves in which I'd usually have to raise my heels and balance on my toes.
- If you are wearing heels with grippy soles and dancing on carpet, be careful when spinning – you can twist and strain your knees if your shoes grip too much. On the other hand, be very careful with slippery soles on a polished floor.
- When you step in heels, step onto the ball of your foot, or squarely onto the ball and heel. Don't walk heel-first and land on the edge of the heel.
- Dance on the balls of your foot for travelling moves and turns, so the heels don't grip too much.
- Be careful not to put your heel through your skirt hem - this can be a problem if you have a long skirt hem that's been decorated. Full circle skirts with sequinned and wired edges can really catch! Practice in costume to check for any likely issues.

Happy dancing!



Jewel dancing in heels, July 2008
(Photo courtesy of Kel Griffin)