

Scales I - Building Scales Step-By-Step

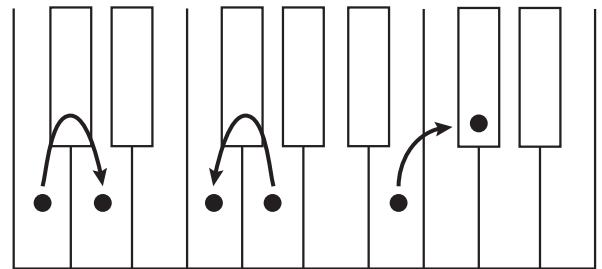
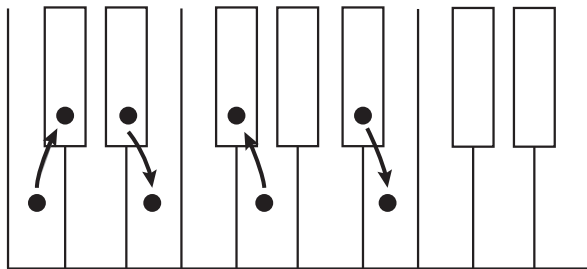
There are two basic ways to understand your scales. In this lesson we'll think of the intervallic shape of the scale (in other words, the pattern of whole steps and half steps), and we'll carefully build them one note at a time. I sometimes like to call this the "inchworm" method.

In our next lesson we'll start learning key signatures, which take a sort of inventory of the sharps and flats that appear in the scale. A good musician can use both methods, with one double-checking the other!

Half Steps and Whole Steps

We discussed this in Handout #4, but let's review. A *half step* (or semitone) is the distance between any two adjacent piano keys.

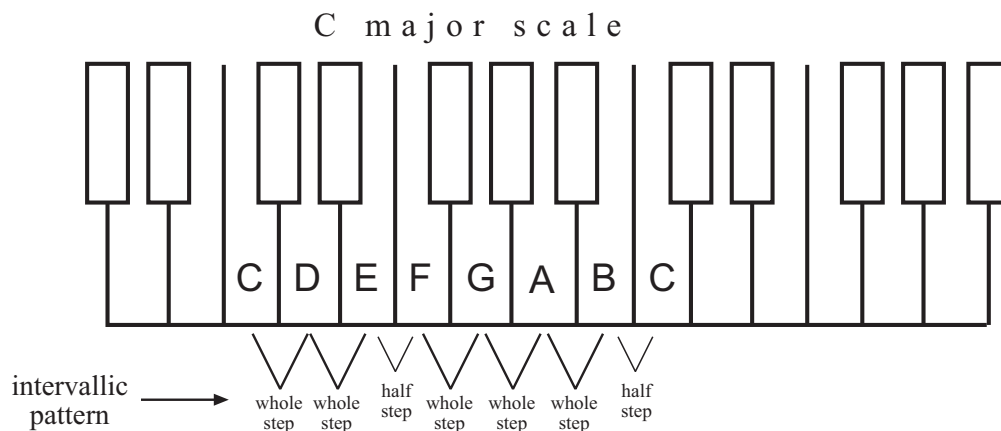
A *whole step* (or whole tone) is two half steps.



We'll build our scales out of these two intervals.

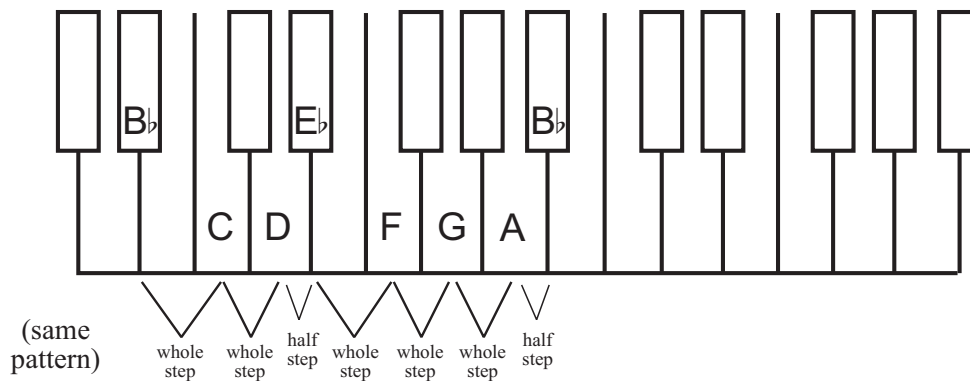
The Major Scale Pattern

You probably know that the C major scale is all the white notes from one C to the next. We can look at it and see the pattern that all major scales make.



Most people jot down the pattern as WWHWWWH.

So if you want to build a major scale on a note other than C, you can pick your starting note and carefully build the WWHWWWH pattern. Here's a B \flat major scale.



Scales must hit every letter

Major and minor scales proceed sequentially through our musical alphabet. No letter is used twice and no letter is skipped over. For major scales you will use only sharps or flats, never both.

CORRECT B \flat C D E \flat F G A B \flat

INCORRECT B \flat C D D \sharp F G A B \flat

two D's, no E

On the staff the notes should proceed through every line and space.

YES



NO

