

# Major Scales

A scale is any group of notes in alphabetical sequence either ascending or descending. The scale type or "mode" is determined by its sequence of whole and half tones. Normally we view a scale as having 8 notes because there are only 7 letters in the musical alphabet so at the "octave", we have returned back to the same letter as the starting note. The scale gets its letter name from its starting note or "tonic" note.

Over the course of centuries of musical history, the major scale (or Ionian Mode) has evolved as the primary scale in western music. It is not the only scale in music but for now, it is the important one. The major scale is the familiar: do re mi fa so la ti do which we learn to sing even as children.

C major

1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

The Major scale is a group of 8 notes in alphabetical order where the sequence of tones and semitones is:  
whole-whole-half-whole-whole-whole-half  
The scale on the left is C Major.

E (Phrygian mode) not major

1/2 1 1 1 1/2 1 1

This scale is an E scale but not E Major because the sequence of tones and half tones is not correct.

E major

1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

Here is the E Major scale and notice that four notes have been modified with sharps to place the tones and half tones in the correct spots.

F major

1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

A major scale can begin on any note. This is the F Major scale and notice that it only needs a flat on the note B to conform to the tone sequence.

Eb major

1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

A scale can begin on a flat note as in this case, the Eb Major scale. This scale needs a couple more flats to make it conform to the tone sequence.

F# major

1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2

Here, the F# Major scale hosts a bundle of sharps to make it fit the pattern.

The only major scale in music which contains no sharps or flats is the C Major scale. The notes in a major scale are called by these technical names:

1=Tonic 2=Super-tonic 3=Mediant 4=Sub-dominant 5=Dominant 6=Sub-mediante 7=leading tone.