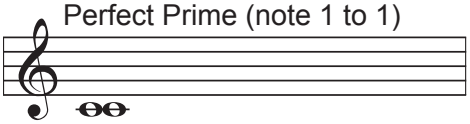
(Book 3) Lesson 12a.
Intervals in Detail

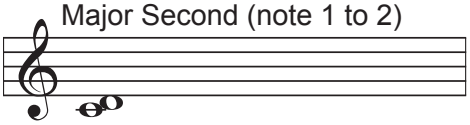
To continue the study of chords, we must have a basic knowledge about "intervals." An interval is the distance between any two notes. (space in pitch) Identifying this interval is normally carried out by using the major scale.

Perfect Prime (note 1 to 1)



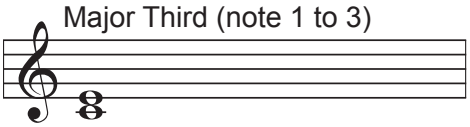
The numerical degree of the interval is determined by counting the number of alphabetical names between the notes, including the two notes in question. i.e. C to G = 5th (CdefG = five letters)

Major Second (note 1 to 2)



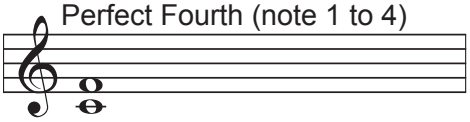
Major Intervals: Where the upper note belongs to the Major Scale of the lower note but not the other way around. Notice that 2nds, 3rds, 6ths and 7ths fall into this category.
i.e. C to A = Major 6th. The note "A" belongs to the C Major scale but the note "C" does not belong to the A Major scale. ("C" is sharp in the Key of A Major)

Major Third (note 1 to 3)



Perfect Intervals: Where both notes belong to the Major Scales of both notes in question. Notice that primes, 4ths, 5th and Octaves fall into this category.
i.e. C to F = Perfect 4th. The note "F" belongs to the C Major scale and the note "C" belongs to the F Major scale.

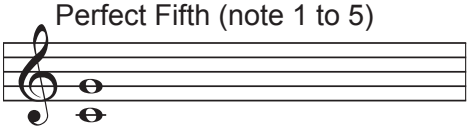
Perfect Fourth (note 1 to 4)



Any interval can be altered. In these alterations, we'll try to be practical rather than academic.

Any Major Interval will become Minor when the upper note is lowered by a half step. (C to E = Major 3rd. C to Eb = Minor 3rd)
(Raising the lower note by a half tone while keeping the original high note would produce the same result, namely, a minor interval.)

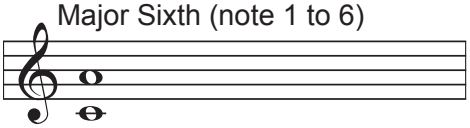
Perfect Fifth (note 1 to 5)



If the higher note of the Major Interval is lowered by a whole tone, the result is a Diminished Interval. (C to E = Major 3rd. C to Ebb = Dim 3rd.)

Any Major Interval will become Augmented if the higher note is raised by one half tone. i.e. C to E = Major 3rd. C to E# = Augmented 3rd.

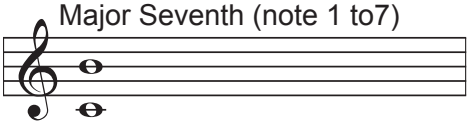
Major Sixth (note 1 to 6)



The Perfect Intervals follow a slightly different plan.

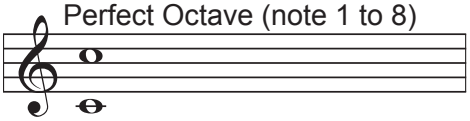
Any Perfect Interval will become Diminished when the upper note is lowered by a half tone. i.e. C to G = Perfect 5th. C to Gb = Dim.5th. Lowering the upper note of a Perfect Interval by a whole tone results in a Doubly Diminished Interval. i.e. C to Gbb = Doubly Diminished 5th.

Major Seventh (note 1 to7)



Any Perfect Interval will become Augmented when the upper note is raised by a half tone. i.e. C to G# = Augmented 5th. When the upper note is raised by a whole tone, the interval will be Doubly Augmented. i.e. C to Gx = Doubly Augmented 5th.

Perfect Octave (note 1 to 8)



One might wonder about the redundancy of this system. i.e. C to F = Perfect Fourth. C to E# = Augmented 3rd. This will become clearer as you proceed in your learning process.