

MAJOR SCALE

There is a phone number to remember: 2-2-1-2-2-2-1 Don't forget it!

OK, it isn't really a phone number but it represents the interval structure of a Major scale. This lesson refers to a piano keyboard and a picture of that is provided in a separate file.

Fundamentals:

1. The unit of measure for music theory is the half step. To intermix "whole" and "half" introduces confusion so everything is measured by the number of half steps. Each fret on your Ukulele or Guitar is one half step.
2. All of the keys on a piano keyboard are one half step apart. Only the white keys have permanent name; the black keys are unnamed until they are used. Moving right or up: from "C" to the next key, which is black, is a half step. Starting three letters up from C: "E" to "F" is a half step and note that there is no black key between the E and F so they are a half step apart as are B and C.
3. Music only uses 7 notes: A through G. These are the white keys on the piano and are identified by the letters beneath them. The black keys do not have names until they are used and the name they get is determined by how one of the white keys next to it is altered. More on that later.
4. Intervals are identified by the number of named notes between and the beginning and ending notes are counted. For example: C to E is a third. Counting C as "1", D as "2", and E as "3". C to A is a 6th.

The C Major scale is a good starting point because it is only the white keys. Start with the C on the left of the keyboard and, moving right, simply play all the white keys up to the next C. This is C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C. Observe that when the music alphabet is exhausted, the letters repeat. After "G" comes "A" again.

Take a look at the intervals while moving to the right (up in tone):

Starting on C, there is a half step up to the (unnamed) black key and another half step up to D. That is the first "2" of the phone number. (Each fret is also a half step. Something to remember)

From D up to the black key and up to E is 2 half steps.

Note that there is no black key between E and F so they are 1 half step apart.

So far this is 2-2-1.

Continuing on F through C will complete the phone number: 2-2-2-1.

This phone number is used for all major scales of which there are 13. A scale can start on any of the 7 white keys or any of the 5 black keys but the structure, the intervals, are always the same.

Review this to make certain it is understood. In the next session, a different scale will be created using the "phone number" which will show how the black keys are used and named.

Questions are expected and welcomed and none are silly or dumb.