

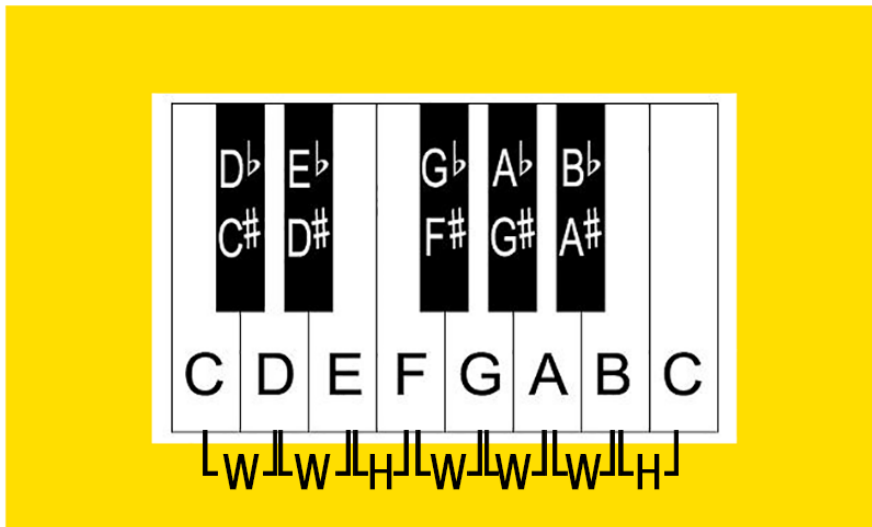
Constructing Scales Review

Gregg Mazel

Steps

W = Whole

H = Half



On a piano, the distance between a white key and the nearest black key is a half step.

Think of all the notes of the piano as a chromatic scale, all half steps. This is the main "stairway" on your instrument. You should know your chromatic scale and be able to start anywhere on it then move up or down in half steps. Try to visualize the distance between half steps and gain the physical memory on your instrument. Eventually you will be able to do this for whole steps and intervals.

All major scales share the same formula.

This is where music and math start to meet in the middle.

The formula is a specific pattern of whole steps and half steps.

The formula for a major scale is W W H W W W H.

So, with a bit of thought, you should be able to start anywhere on your instrument and construct a major scale. Say the starting note, play or sing it and then move according to the pattern. Do this for first 3 notes of every major scale (all 12). Practice these motives up and down, 1 2 3, 3 2 1, starting on random notes of the chromatic scale. Practice the pattern ascending, then descending in half steps.

For the Jazz Minor (Melodic Minor ascending), the formula is W H W W W W H.

We do these math tricks for practicing, to learn the physical scale patterns.

When you are improvising or playing written music, you just play the notes, because you will have discovered where you are.

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Scales

The formula for a major scale is W W H W W W H.

Major

Natural Minor

Harmonic Minor

Melodic Minor
Ascending =
Jazz Minor

The formula for a Jazz Minor scale is W H W W W W H.

Modes

Dorian

Phrygian

Lydian

Mixolydian

Aeolian

Locrian