

ESSENTIAL SCALE-TO-CHORD RELATIONSHIPS

Scales

A **scale** is a sequentially organized group of notes that begins and ends on a specific note. In Western music, the chromatic scale represents all the possible notes between a note and its octave. For example, here is the chromatic scale starting on C:

C–C[♯]/D[♭]–D–D[♯]/E[♭]–E–F–F[♯]/G[♭]–A–A[♯]/B[♭]–B–C

The **major scale** is the foundation of Western music. To create any major scale, we follow a specific pattern of half steps and whole steps. A **half step** is the distance from a note to the very next note; for example, C to C[♯]/D[♭] is a half step. A **whole step** is two half steps in a row; for example C to D is a whole step. The pattern for any major scale is always the same (W = whole step, H = half step):

W W H W W W H

In the key of C the notes are:

C W D W E H F W G W A W B H C

An important way of looking at scales is to think in terms of **scale formulas**. Think of the major scale as a template for every other scale. In any major scale, the starting note is referred to as 1; the second note is referred to as 2, and so on. When you reach the starting note again, it could be thought of as 8, but it can also be thought of as 1, starting the scale over in a higher octave.

In the C major scale, C is the root, or first note, D is the 2nd, E is the 3rd, etc.

C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 (1)

Here are all twelve major scales:

The image shows four musical staves, each representing a major scale. The first staff is for C major (no sharps or flats), the second for D[♭] major (two flats), the third for D major (two sharps), and the fourth for E[♭] major (three flats). Each scale is written as a sequence of eight quarter notes on a single staff, starting and ending on the root note.