Intervals

Every interval from a unison to an octave, measured up from **C**. Two counts name any interval: **count the letters** (both ends) for the number, then **count the half steps** for the quality (Handouts 04 and 05). Each figure shows the interval one note after the other, then together.

P1



Perfect unison

0 half steps

Two voices on the very same note.

m2



Minor 2nd

1 half step

The narrowest interval there is: next-door keys (05)

M2

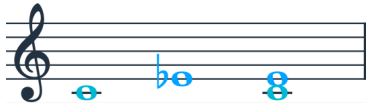


Major 2nd

2 half steps

♪ "Mary Had a Little Lamb" walks in these steps (04)

m3



Minor 3rd

3 half steps

♪ "Kumbaya": its second hop, E up to G (04)

M3



Major 3rd

4 half steps

♪ "Kumbaya": its first hop, C up to E (04)

P4



Perfect 4th

5 half steps

♪ "Here Comes the Bride" opens with it (13)

A4



Augmented 4th · the tritone

6 half steps

Three whole steps: restless, wants to move (209)

d5



Diminished 5th · the tritone

6 half steps

Same keys as A4, spelled as a 5th: B–F in B° (209)

P5



Perfect 5th

7 half steps

♪ "Twinkle, Twinkle": twin-kle C up to G (14)

m6

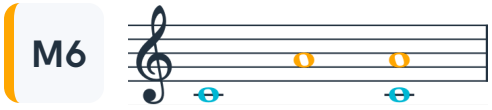


Minor 6th

8 half steps

A major 3rd flipped upside down (228)

M6



Major 6th

9 half steps

♪ "My Bon-nie": the first two notes (65)

m7



Minor 7th

10 half steps

Lives inside every G7 chord: G up to F (65)

M7



Major 7th

11 half steps

A half step under the octave — Cmaj7's top (223)

P8



Perfect octave

12 half steps

♪ "Some-where over the rainbow" opens with it (65)

P perfect · **M** major · **m** minor · **A** augmented · **d** diminished top note = its **scale-degree color** in C major ♪ song hook (Handouts 04, 13, 14, 65; up and down: 375)

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Intervals, continued

Flip an interval and you get its **inversion**; stretch it past the octave and you get a **compound** interval. Both follow rules simple enough to do in your head (Handout 228).

INVERSION PAIRS — the bottom C jumps up an octave (coral)



P1 → P8
Perfect unison → Perfect octave
1 + 8 = 9 · 0 + 12 = 12 half steps



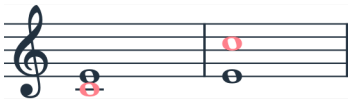
m2 → M7
Minor 2nd → Major 7th
2 + 7 = 9 · 1 + 11 = 12 half steps



M2 → m7
Major 2nd → Minor 7th
2 + 7 = 9 · 2 + 10 = 12 half steps



m3 → M6
Minor 3rd → Major 6th
3 + 6 = 9 · 3 + 9 = 12 half steps



M3 → m6
Major 3rd → Minor 6th
3 + 6 = 9 · 4 + 8 = 12 half steps



P4 → P5
Perfect 4th → Perfect 5th
4 + 5 = 9 · 5 + 7 = 12 half steps



A4 → d5
Augmented 4th → Diminished 5th
4 + 5 = 9 · 6 + 6 = 12 half steps

FOUR RULES FOR EVERY INVERSION

Numbers add to 9
2 ↔ 7 · 3 ↔ 6 · 4 ↔ 5 · unison ↔ octave

Major ↔ minor
a big interval flips into a small one, and back

Perfect stays perfect
P4 ↔ P5, P1 ↔ P8

Augmented ↔ diminished
A4 ↔ d5: the tritone flips into itself, 6 half steps both ways

Why 9 and not 8? Both intervals count the shared letter, so one letter is counted twice. The **half steps** add up exactly: the pair always fills **12**, one octave.

COMPOUND INTERVALS — an octave plus a simple interval



m9
Minor 9th
= m2 + octave
13 half steps



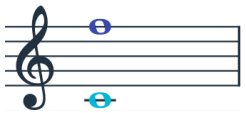
M9
Major 9th
= M2 + octave
14 half steps



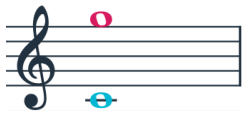
m10
Minor 10th
= m3 + octave
15 half steps



M10
Major 10th
= M3 + octave
16 half steps



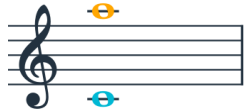
P11
Perfect 11th
= P4 + octave
17 half steps



P12
Perfect 12th
= P5 + octave
19 half steps



m13
Minor 13th
= m6 + octave
20 half steps



M13
Major 13th
= M6 + octave
21 half steps

Subtract 7 to find the simple interval inside a compound one; the quality comes along unchanged. A 9th is a 2nd an octave higher, so it wears the 2nd's color. (Add 12 half steps for every octave.)

Practice: Exercises 04, 05 and 06 (name the interval), Exercise 33 (hear it). **Learn more:** Handouts 04, 05, 13, 14, 65 and 228.

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