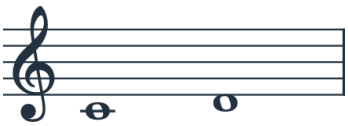
The major scale, step by step

How eight notes become one unmistakable sound — and the three degrees, tonic, subdominant and dominant, that the primary chords are built on.

A STEP IS JUST AN INTERVAL

Whole step

Major 2nd — 2 half steps



C to D looks like one little step, but a black key hides between them — the trip takes **two** half steps. That's a whole step, and in interval terms it's called a **major 2nd**.

Half step

Minor 2nd — 1 half step



E and F are true next-door neighbors — **nothing** between them. One half step: the narrowest interval there is. In interval terms, a **minor 2nd**.

THE RECIPE: W W H W W W H

Start on any note and follow this exact pattern of whole (W) and half (H) steps, and you'll always land on a major scale. On C major every note is a white key, so the two half steps land exactly where the keyboard runs out of black keys: E–F, and B–C.



MEET THE PRIMARY DEGREES

Every note in a scale has a number — 1 through 8 — but three of them do most of the harmonic work. They're called the **primary degrees**, and they're the notes primary chords (I, IV and V) are built on.



● **Tonic (1)** — the home note, the one the music keeps returning to. ● **Subdominant (4)** — steady and supportive, leans away from home without much tension. ● **Dominant (5)** — the pull; its chord, V, leans hardest back toward the tonic.

Try it Play the scale slowly and sing the numbers 1 to 8. Then pick out just the filled degrees above — **1, 4, 5** — and you're playing the roots of the three primary chords, I, IV and V.

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