

Major Scales and the Circle of 5ths

How Major Scales Are Built

Let's figure out the pattern of whole steps and half steps in the C major scale. We'll start by measuring the distance between each note of the scale. Is it a half step or a whole step? Write 'W' for whole step or 'H' for half step on the corresponding blank space between notes. For instance, C-D is a whole step, so you will write 'W' on the first blank space below.

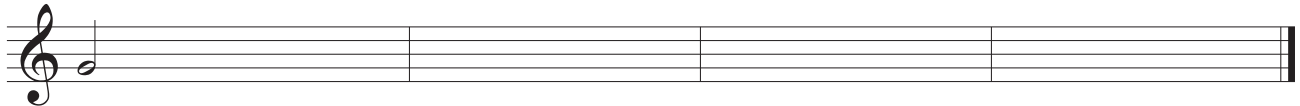
C Major



Every major scale has the same pattern of whole steps and half steps as the C major scale.

Let's build a major scale starting on G. Use the pattern of whole steps and half steps that you just wrote to figure out the next 7 notes. Write the rest of the scale as half notes on the staff.

G Major



Notice that we had to make one note sharp in order to keep the same pattern of whole steps and half steps. Which note was sharp? _____

Let's build a major scale starting on D. Use the pattern of whole steps and half steps that you wrote above to figure out the next 7 notes. Write the rest of the scale as half notes on the staff.

D Major



Notice that we had to make two notes sharp in order to keep the same pattern of whole steps and half steps. Which two notes were sharp? _____

There's a pattern here!

G major is 5 notes above C major - and we added one sharp (F#) to the scale.
 D major is 5 notes above G major - and we added two sharps (F# & C#) to the scale.
 Every time we move UP 5 notes on the keyboard from C, the scale will add another sharp.

It's a similar pattern for keys with flats (b).

F major is 5 notes below C major - the F major scale has one flat (Bb).
 Bb major is a 5 notes below F major - the Bb major scale has two flats (Bb & Eb).
 Every time we move DOWN 5 notes on the keyboard from C, the scale will add another flat.

We call this the "Circle of Fifths."