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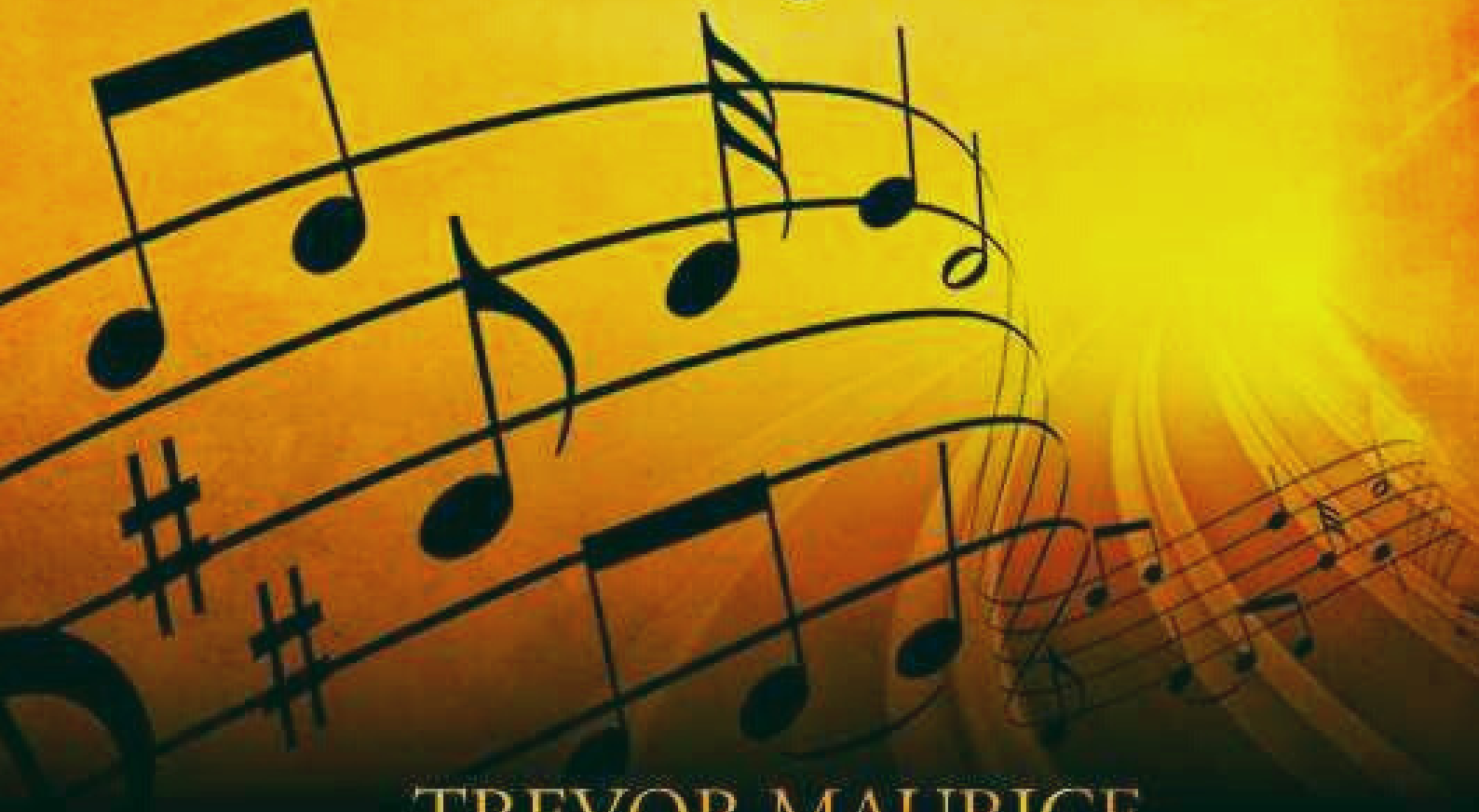
THE Music Notation PRIMER

Your Quick Reference Guide To Reading Music!



TREVOR MAURICE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Many people are often uneasy when it comes to learning music notation, yet it is the best tool we have if we're to fully understand the composer's intention for the performance of the music in question, at least in classical music.

With just a little perseverance and application, ANYONE can learn musical notation, thus opening a world of joy and pleasure previously closed off to them.

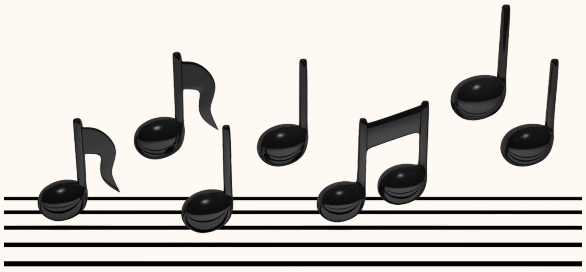
To rely only on your ear, or the use of tablature, restricts you from fully appreciating music, in my opinion.

Although, both ear development and tablature are important tools in their own way, you should strive to have more 'tools' in your Armory, so to speak - not less!

And understanding musical notation is a very powerful tool to get to the 'heart' of a musical performance – one that everyone should strive for that is even remotely interested in music and our great instrument, the classical guitar!

CHAPTER - 1

NOTES AND PITCH ON THE STAFF



Music notation is made up of notes and their equivalent rests and is written on the staff (or stave) to indicate the pitch (low to high sounds) of those notes.

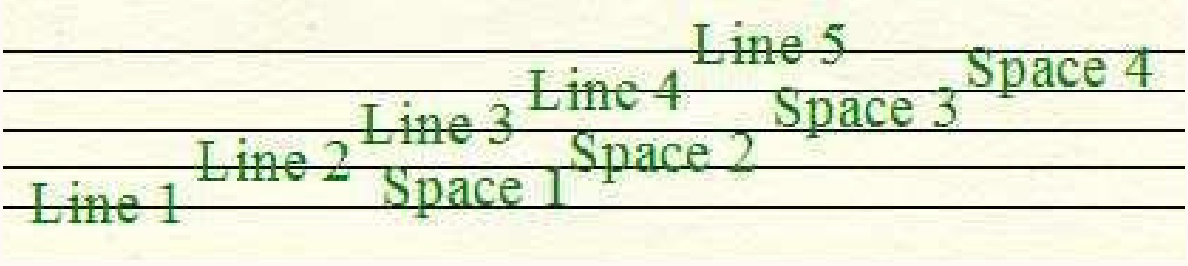
The musical note 'alphabet' is very easy to remember as it is much shorter than our normal reading alphabet.

Indeed, it is easier to remember because it's named in a similar fashion to our reading alphabet, namely:

A; B; C; D; E; F; G.

Those names are allocated to a note when it is positioned on the musical staff, or stave. Each line and space on that staff accounts for a different note.

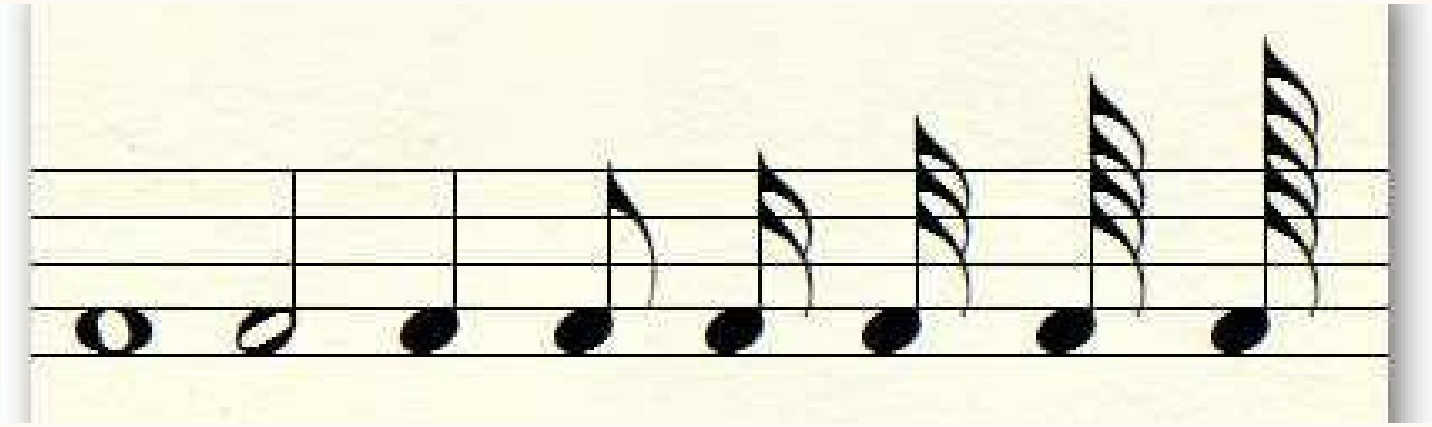
The following diagram shows exactly where those notes 'live'...



As you can see, there are 5 lines and 4 spaces on the musical staff. The lower the line or space on the staff the lower the pitch of the note is and vice versa.

In ***Chapter 3***, I'll show you just what notes are on the lines and spaces of the staff when we learn about the treble clef.

But first, we need to look at the actual notes themselves and their lengths...



- whole note
- half note
- quarter note
- eighth note
- 16th note
- 32nd note
- 64th note
- 128th note

They are distinguished from each other by the following criteria:

- whole note = circle (oval)
- half note = circle and stem
- quarter note = circle, stem, circle blacked in
- eighth note = as above + 1 tail
- 16th note = as above + 2 tails
- 32nd note = as above + 3 tails
- 64th note = as above + 4 tails
- 128th note = as above + 5 tails

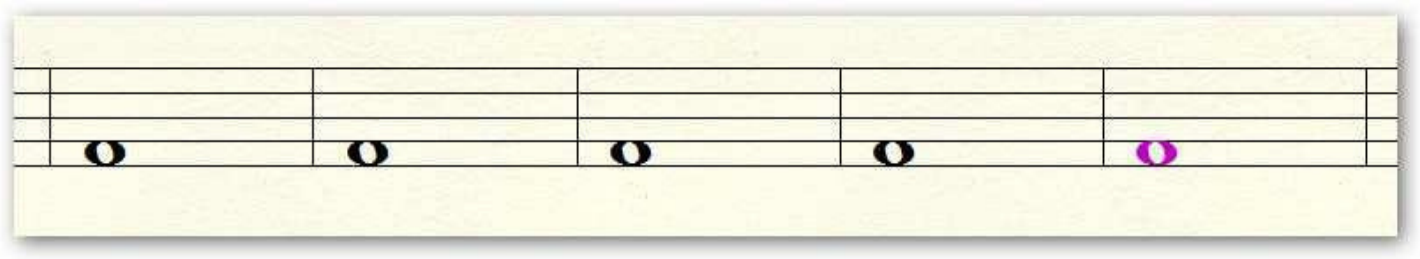
You can also see the mathematical pattern developing in the notes i.e. as the notes get smaller in time value (halving in its time duration from the previous note) the number doubles.

This is an easy pattern to remember. Additionally, there is only one criterion change for each note type change e.g. circle colored in/one more tail, etc.

Sometimes the note positions can be confusing on the staff. The good thing is when you learn the position of notes you've learned it – it NEVER changes!

One more point about the staff. You'll notice it's divided into bar lines. The number of notes in each bar depends on the time signature, which we'll cover more fully in ***Chapter 5 – Beat and Rhythm Explained***.

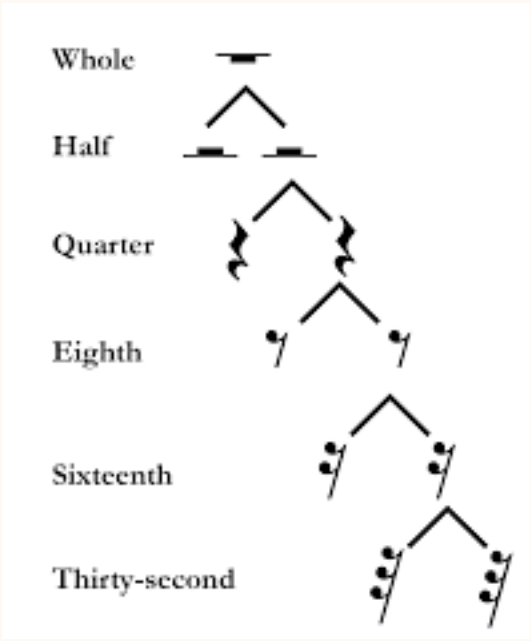
For now, here's a graphic of the staff with bar lines to separate each section...



Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

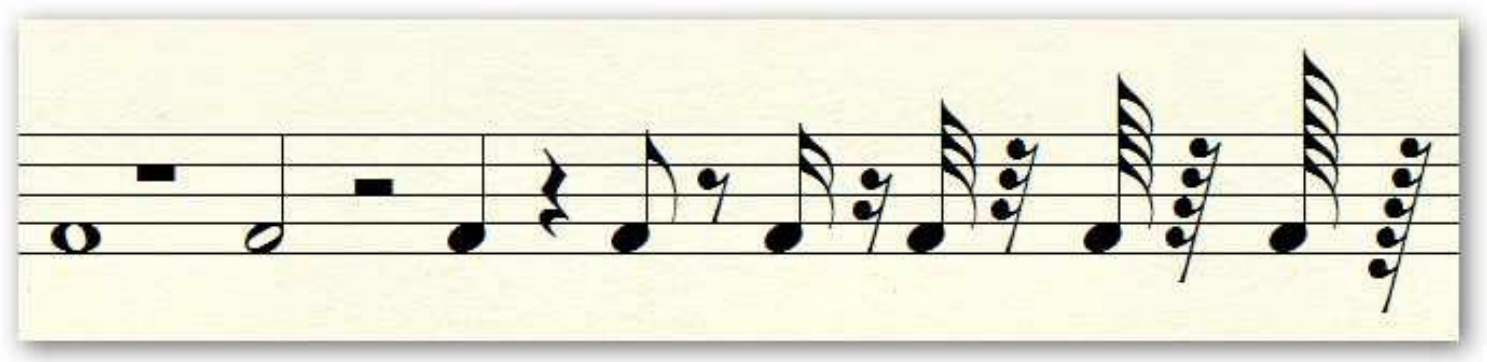
CHAPTER 2



EQUIVALENT NOTE RESTS

For each note in music notation, there is an ***equivalent note rest***. And just like the criteria for the difference in notes so too in note rests.

Following is a graphic that shows each note and its equivalent
rest...



You can see the whole note rest as a small dark rectangle "hanging" from the 4th line. The half note rest looks exactly the same as the whole note rest except that it 'sits' on the 3rd line.

The quarter note rest almost looks like a letter but there's no other rest that looks like it so it is easy to distinguish.

From the eighth note to the 128th note the rests are similar but distinguished by one more tail each time e.g. one to five tails.

Don't worry, you become accustomed to distinguishing them from one another pretty easy with practice.

It's just not as hard as everyone initially thinks. I have, up to this point, used the American note names for each note because I find them much easier to use and explain compared to the English/French note names which are somewhat outmoded in my opinion.

But for the sake of supplying the equivalents here they are:

Whole Note = Semi-Breve

Half Note= Minim

Quarter Note = Crotchet

Eighth Note = Quaver

Sixteenth Note = Semi-Quaver

Thirty Second Note = Demi Semi Quaver

Sixty-Fourth Note = Hemi Demi Semi Quaver

One Hundred Twenty-Eighth Note = Quasihemidemisemiquaver

or, **Semihemidemisemiquaver**

See what I mean???!!!

Chapter Review Points

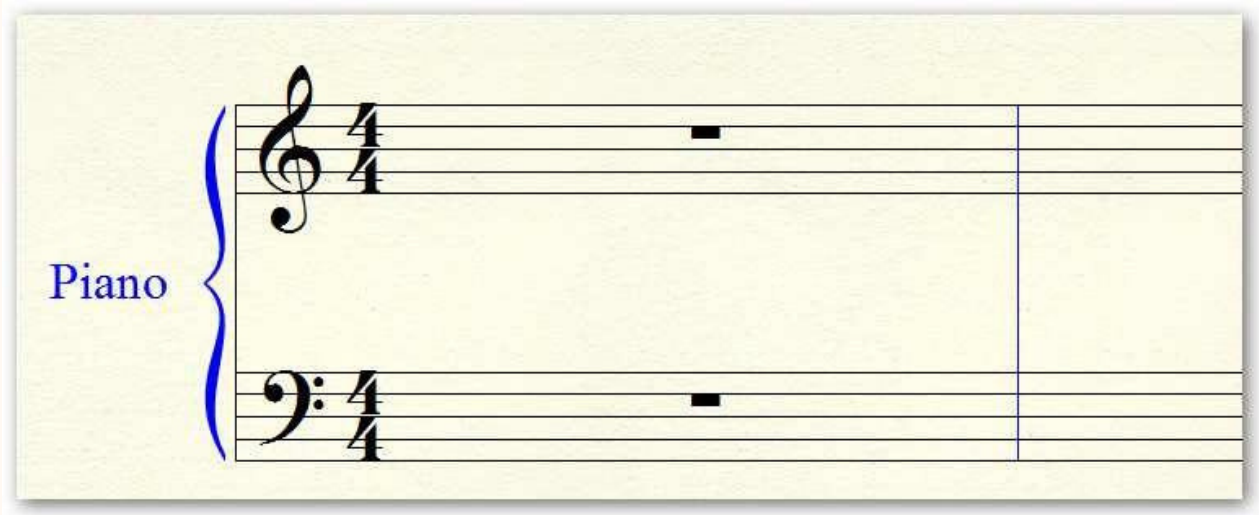
What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER - 3

TREBLE CLEF FOR GUITAR

Guitar music is written in the ***treble clef*** a.k.a. the ***G clef***.

You've probably seen piano music with its joined staves. The lower one is the bass clef for the left hand and the upper one is the treble clef for the right hand...



The logical reason the guitar has only one clef is that its range of notes can be written within that one clef and guitar notes don't go as low as the piano bass notes.

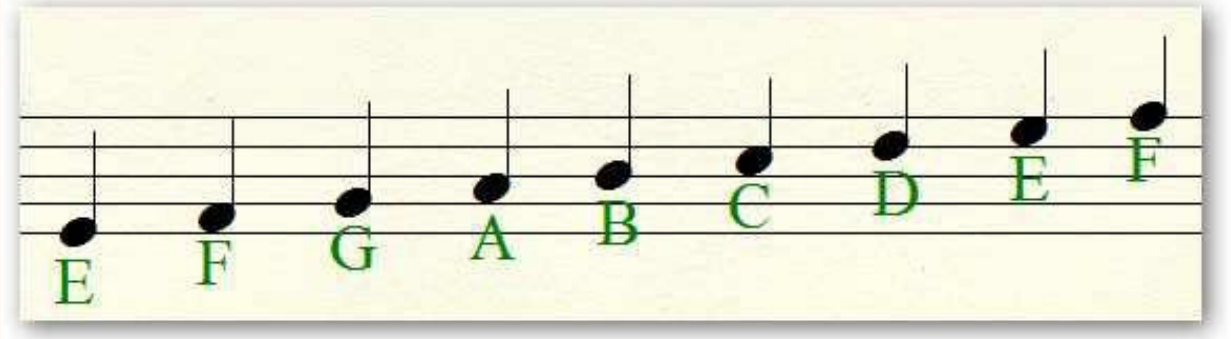
You do, however, have to have leger lines to accommodate both lower bass notes and higher treble notes on the guitar but I'll cover that in the next chapter.

A good way to remember how the treble clef is positioned is that the tail of the clef wraps around the 'G' line of the staff, hence the term 'G clef'.

Here is what the treble clef looks like...

You can see the end of the tail wrapping around the second line known as the 'G' line.

Let's now look at all the other lines and spaces and indicate what letter of the musical alphabet 'lives' on that line or space...



You can see the musical alphabet starting on the second space. I know it looks strange, but you have to remember that the musical alphabet keeps repeating from line to space.

As it starts lower in the bass clef that explains why, for us guitarists, the alphabet starts on an 'E'.

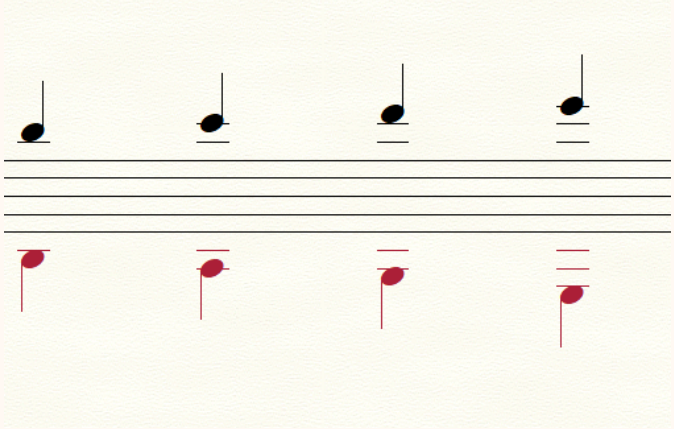
You'll get a clearer picture in the next chapter of how that pattern keeps repeating when we look at leger lines. For now, use the graphic below to practice drawing some G clefs to see if you can get it exactly right...

TREBLE CLEF FOR GUITAR

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER 4

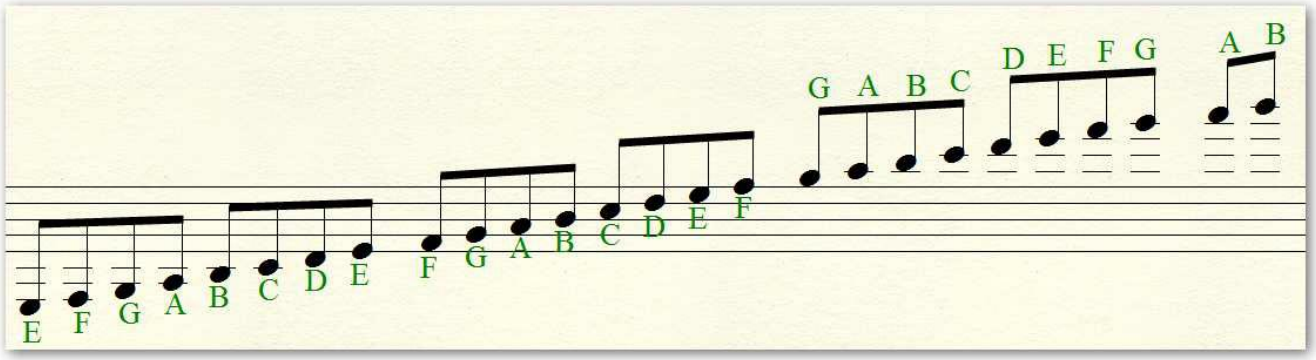


LEGER LINES

A ***leger line*** is a small line above and below the normal staff to indicate a pitch that is higher or lower than the normal staff.

On guitar, we must put in quite a few leger lines if we want to show what note pitch to play.

Following is a little graphic that shows the note range on guitar written on the staff with leger lines from the lowest open (no fingering used) E note on the 6th string to the B note on the 1st string near the soundhole of the guitar (17th fret)...



You can clearly see from this graphic that the musical alphabet just keeps repeating, and the use of leger lines makes it possible.

Don’t forget that these 'homes' for each note NEVER changes, so it’s both easy to remember AND work out.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER - 5

BEAT AND RHYTHM EXPLAINED

Everyone seems to get confused between beat and rhythm but, although they are related, there is actually an important distinction.

The ***beat*** is the ***underlying pulse*** or 'heartbeat' of the music if you will, and ***rhythm*** is the ***notes played or sung***.

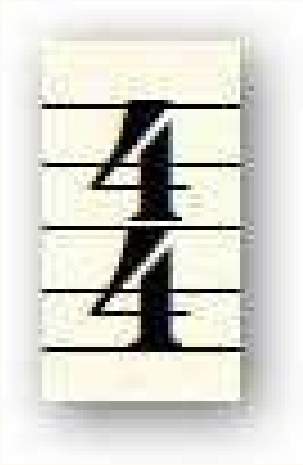
Therefore, the beat remains steady, regular, and predictable on most occasions.

Rhythm, on the other hand, can be wildly irregular and seemingly unplayable at times. But as with everything, practice makes perfect.

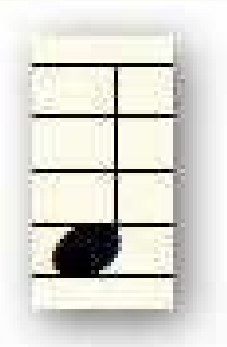
The number of beats in a bar depends on two things: what ***time signature is used*** and the ***speed of the performance***.

The time signature tells you two things as well: The ***number of beats*** and; ***what type*** of beats they are.

For example, in time the top number means there are 4 beats in the bar and they are quarter notes.



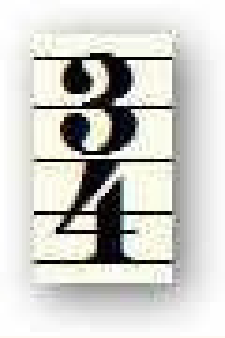
You'll remember from Chapter 1 the quarter note looks like this...



When you think of it, it is just simple math and very logical.

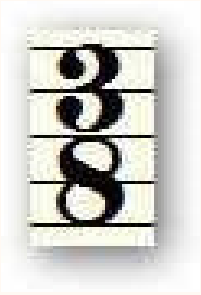
A whole note lasts for the whole bar so it follows that there would be four quarter notes in the same bar.

Here's another example:



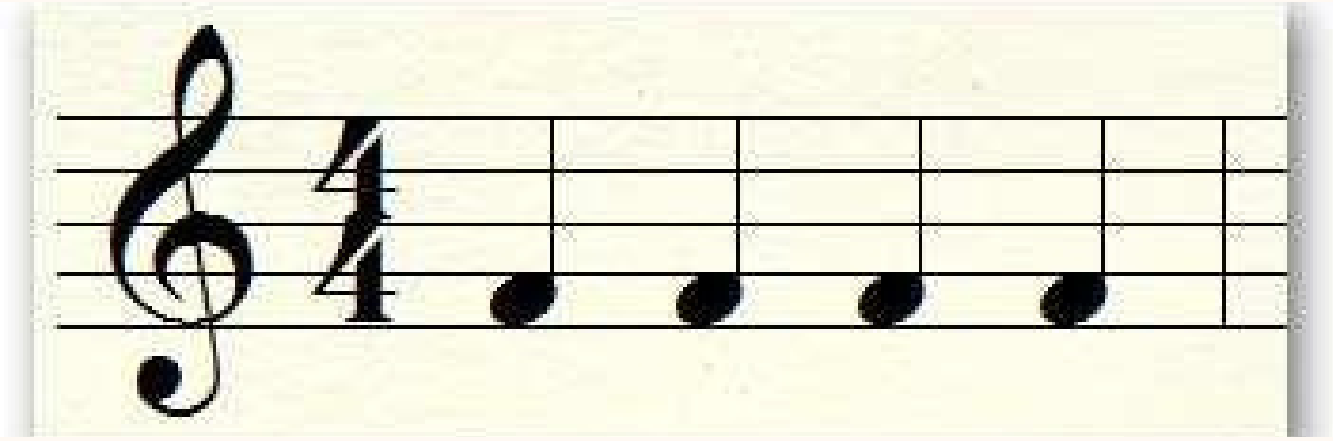
This means there are 3 beats in the bar, and they are quarter notes.

And another: Three/Eight-time which means there are only 3 beats in the bar, but they are eighth notes...

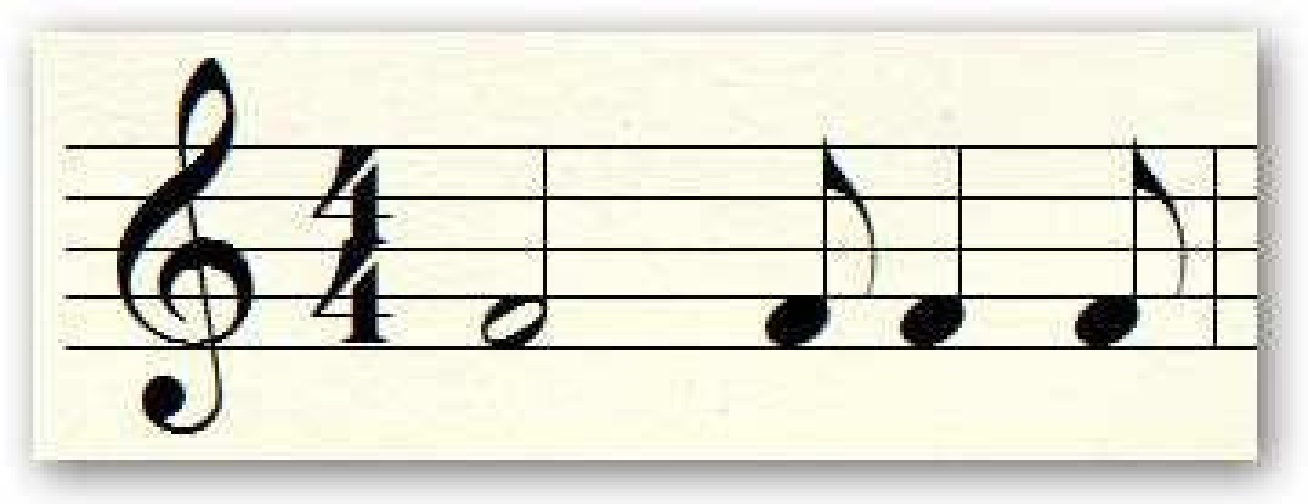


Are you getting the drift? Good, now let's talk about rhythm.

Rhythm is the notes you play, or how notes are grouped if you like. In this case, the rhythm is the same as the beat...



Whereas in this one the rhythm is different from the beat...



If you clapped the first example you'd hear four regular claps, the same as the beat... 1, 2, 3, 4.

In the second example just pretend there are 'and's' spoken between the beats. You'd hear claps on the following red-colored numbers...

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Click here to hear what this sounds like on a midi file...

http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/midi-rhythm-example

And click here to listen to the first example...

http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/four-beat.midi

For extra information on time signatures and rhythms check out this

extra Time Signature page...

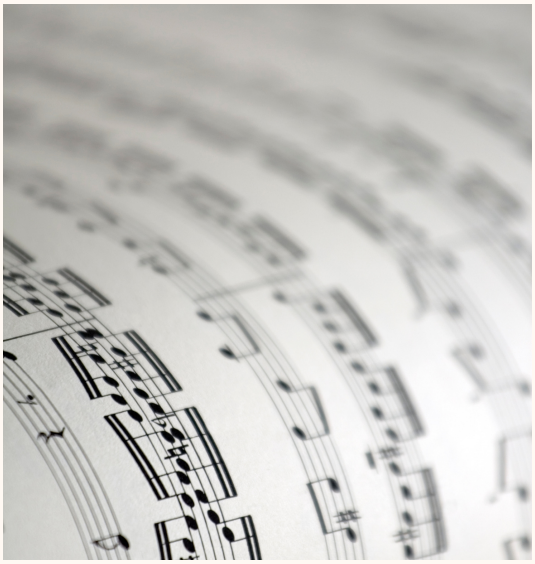
http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/Time-Signatures

Are you starting to understand the difference between beat and rhythm? Great! Let's move on.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER 6



HOW TO GROUP NOTES AND RESTS

Musical notes and rests are usually ***grouped in a logical way***.

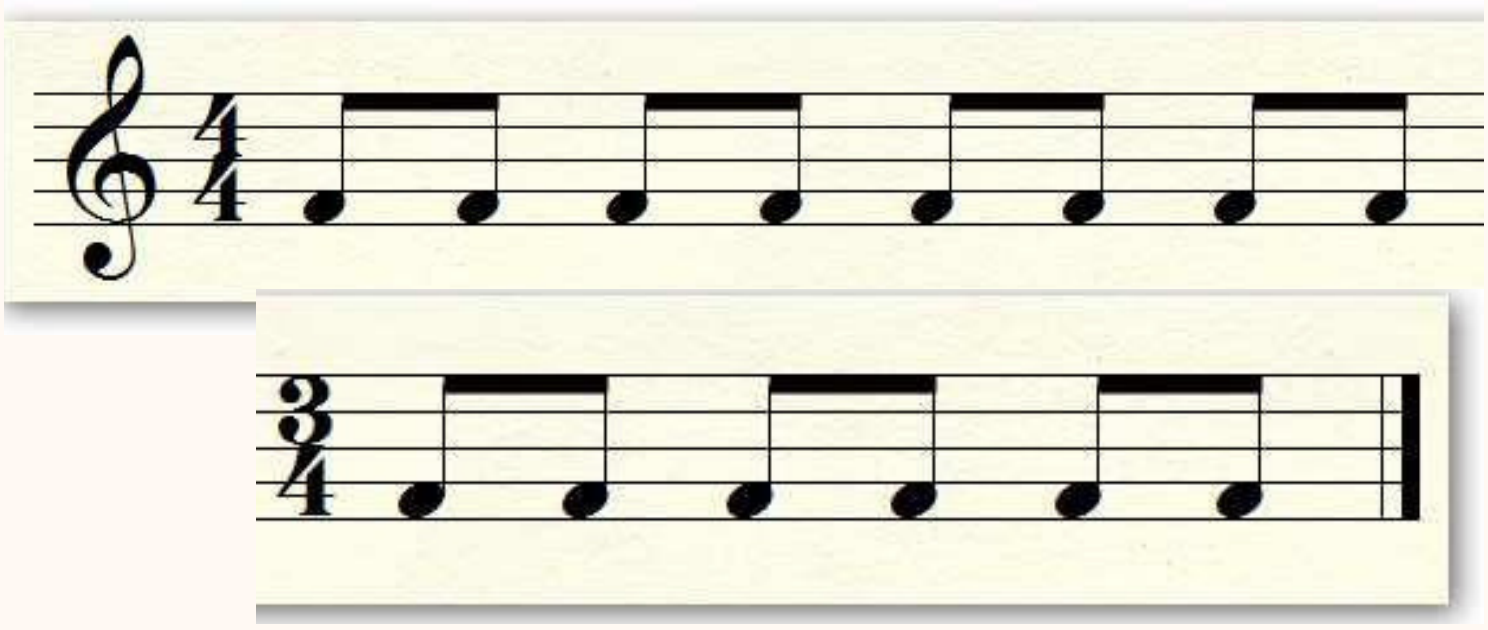
This is for ease of reading and understanding of course, but it does take a bit of practice to understand and recognize what you're looking at.

When you're used to how notes and rests are grouped you'll ***read new music much faster***.

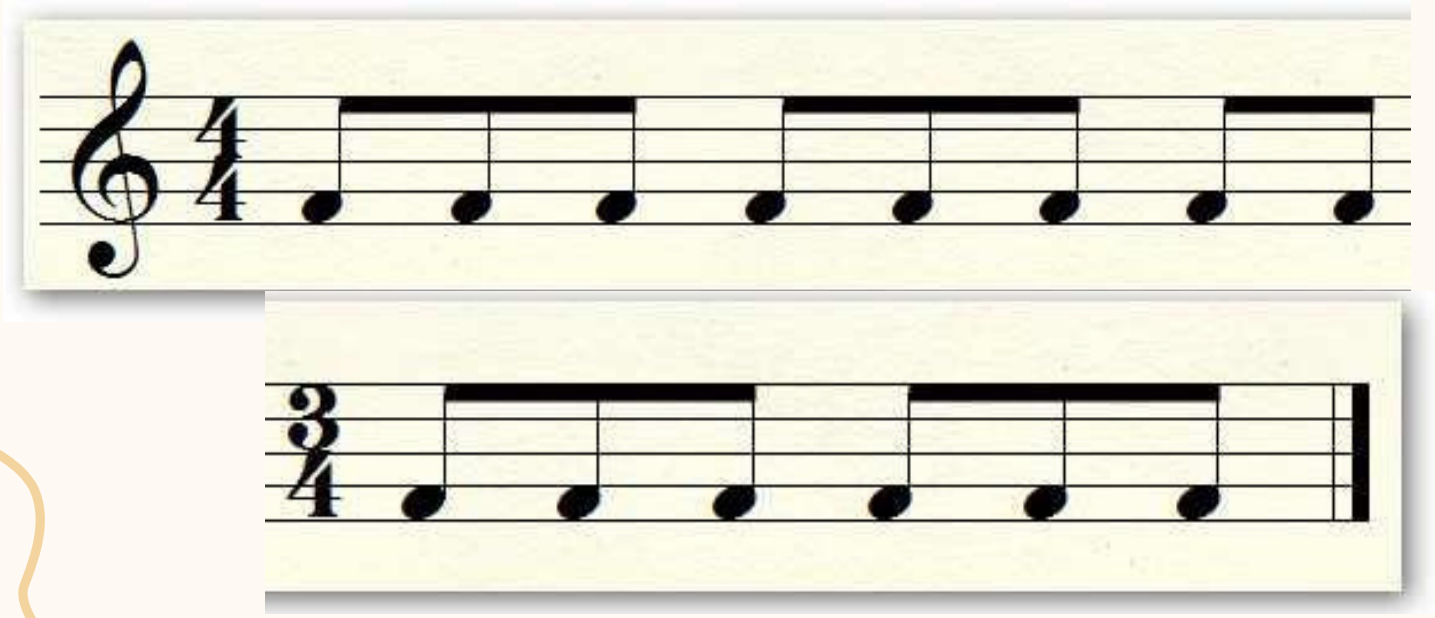
Additionally, you do this in both ***simple time*** and ***compound time***.

Simple time uses a time signature with 2, 3, or 4 as its upper number e.g. 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 (simple duple, simple triple, and simple quadruple respectively) whereas compound time uses time signatures such as 3/8, 6/8, and 9/8.

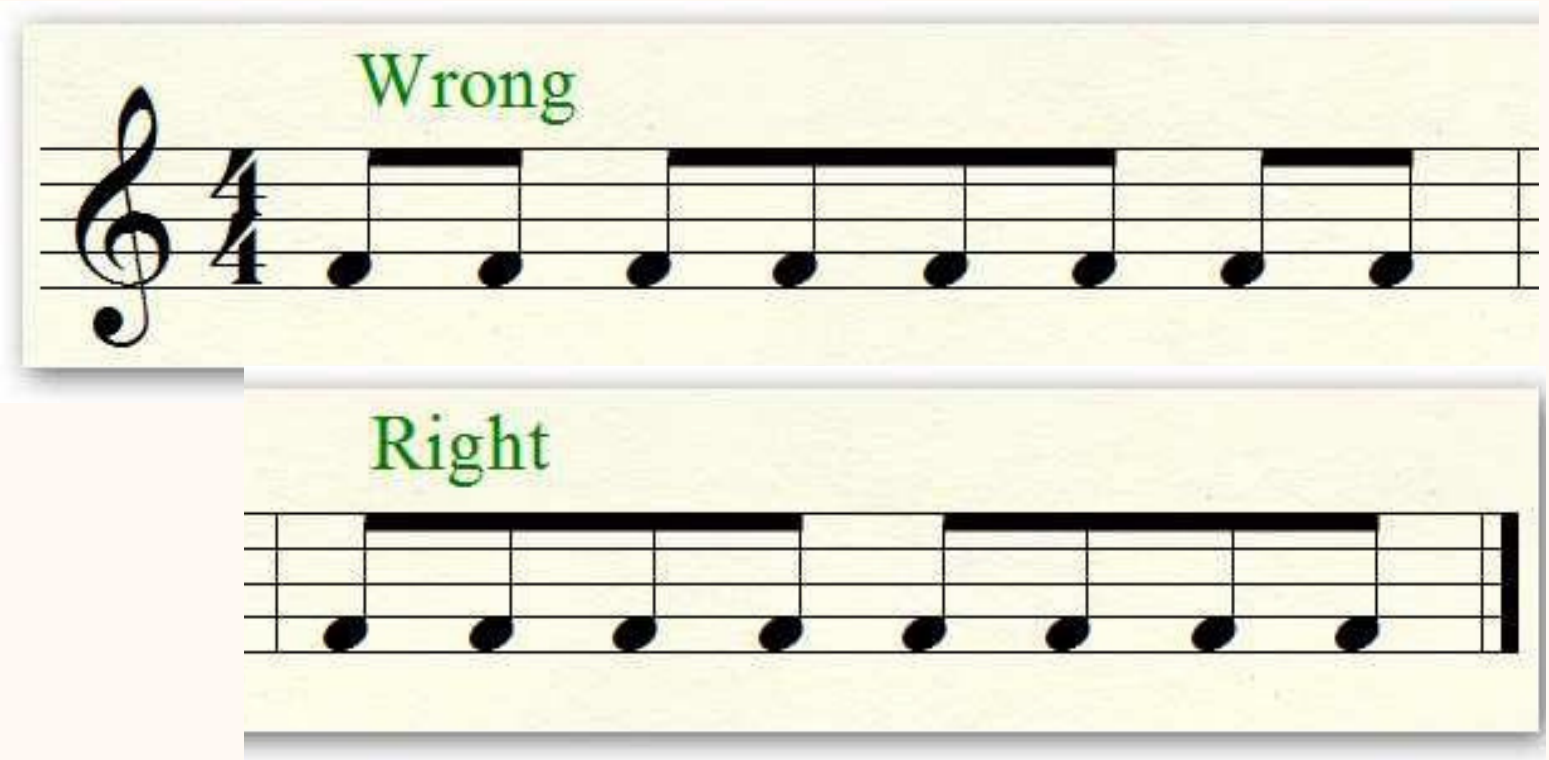
In simple time for instance, when you group notes such as eighth notes, they usually add up to quarter notes. Here's how you would group 8th notes in 4/4 time and 3/4 time...



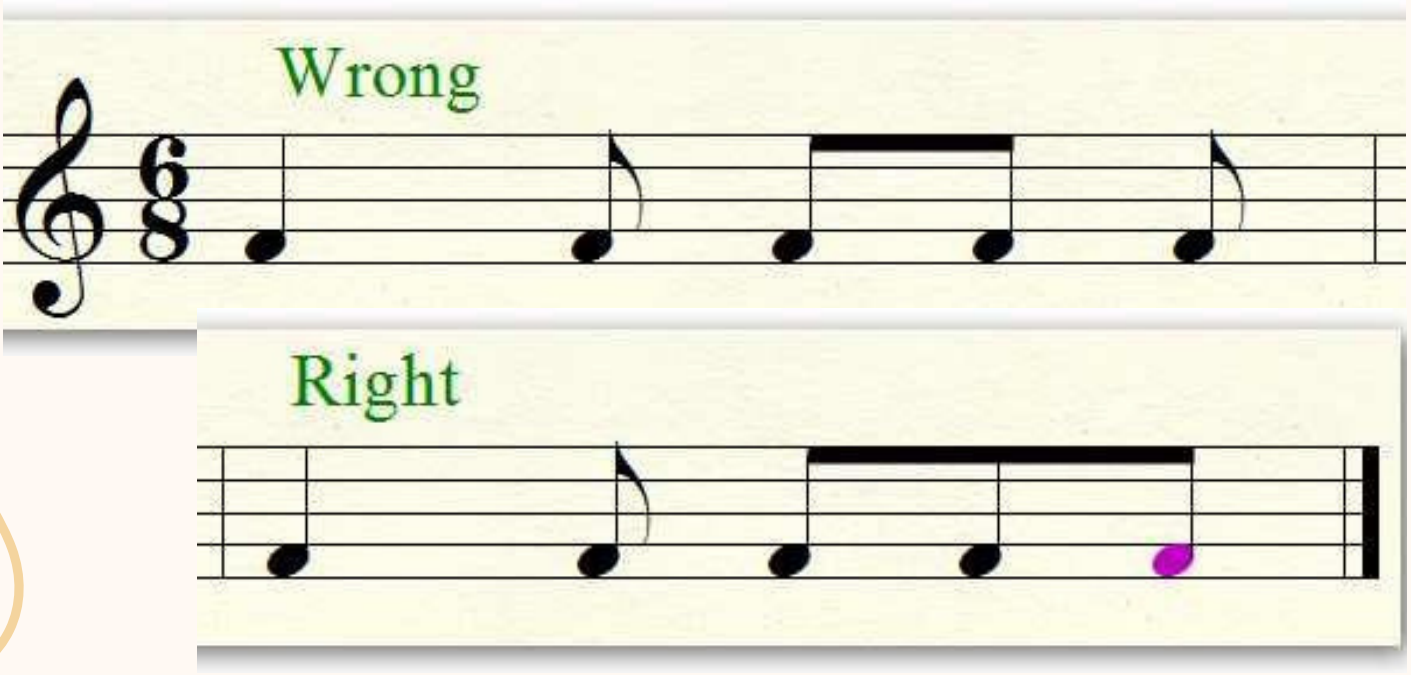
When grouping this way, it is easier to see just where the beats in the bar lay. If you did it this (wrong) way it'd be much harder to read...



When you join quavers together in simple time across beats in 4/4 you do it on the first and second beats or third and fourth beats ***NOT*** across the second and third beats...

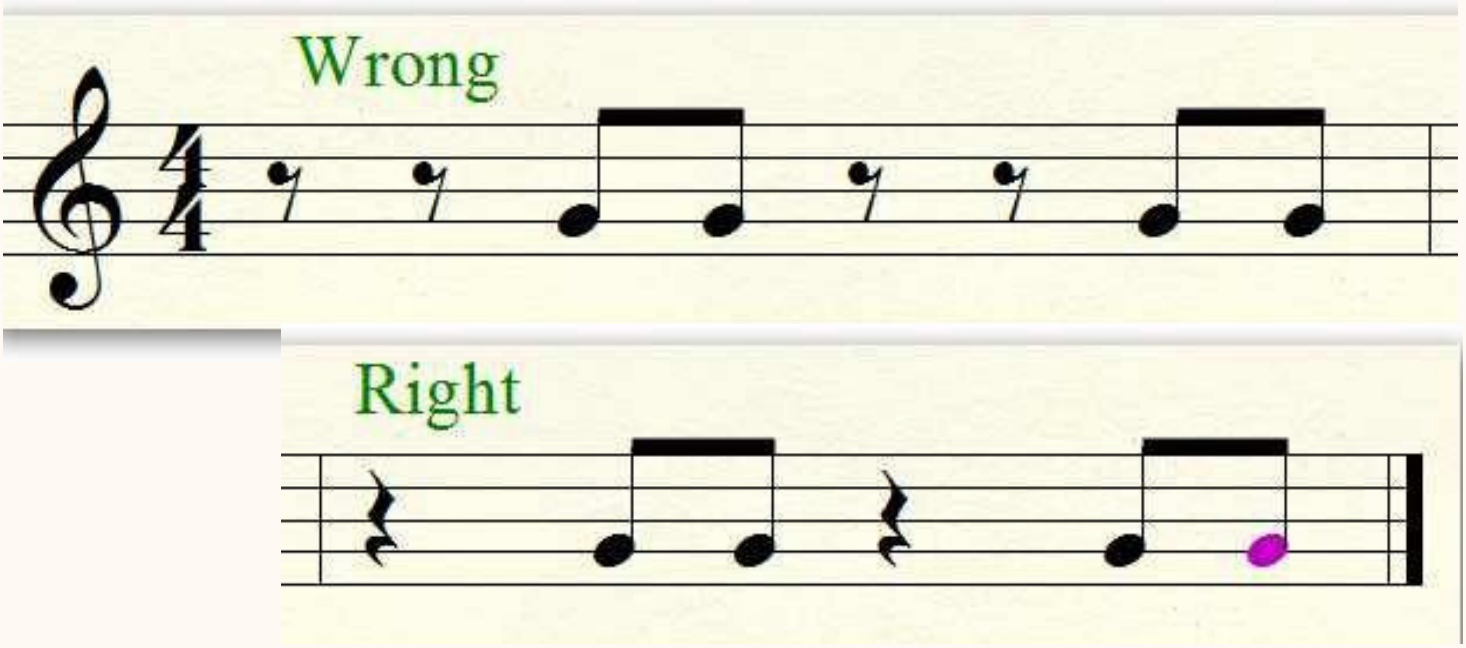


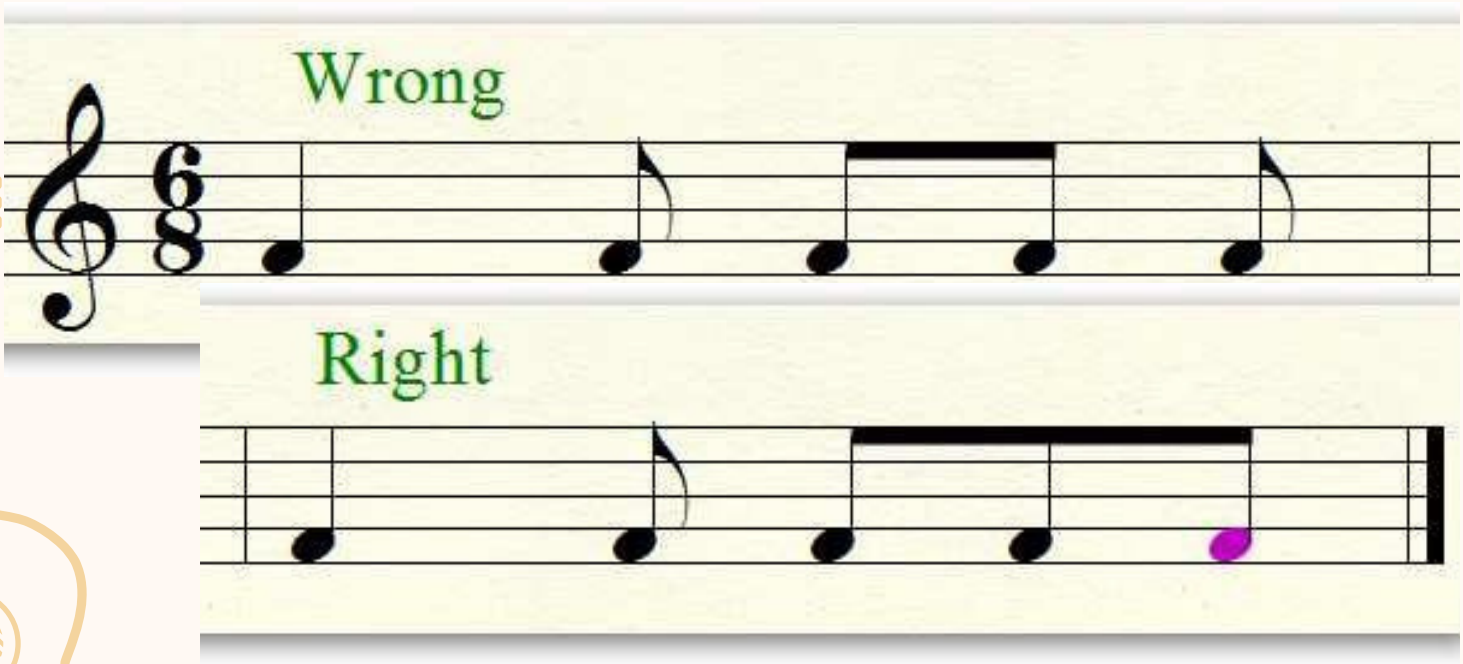
In Compound time here is an incorrect and correct way to group notes...



Rests also need care when being grouped in both simple and compound time. There is a right and wrong way to do this as well.

Here are some incorrect and correct ways to do it...





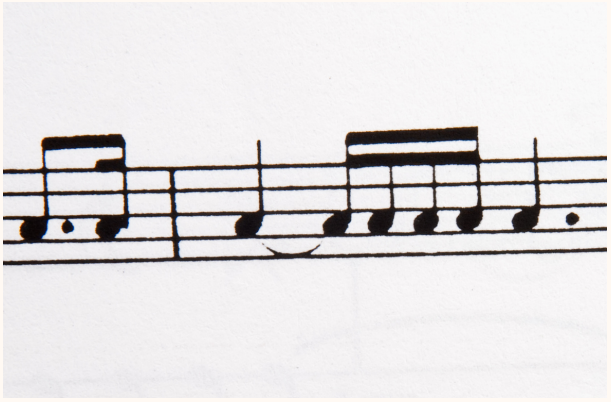
Of course, there are many variations on these above examples, but if you apply logic and common sense you won't go far wrong when looking at groups of notes.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER - 7

DOTTED NOTES, TIES AND SLURS

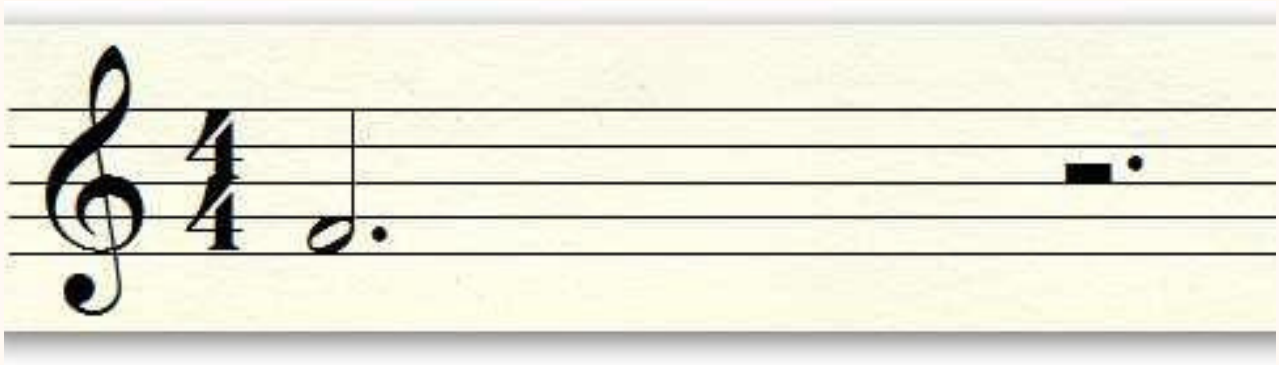


After learning about the grouping of notes it's time to take it a little further with ***dotted notes***, ***ties***, and how ties different from ***slurs***.

A dot placed behind any note, or rest, will add **another half of the original value** of that note to it.

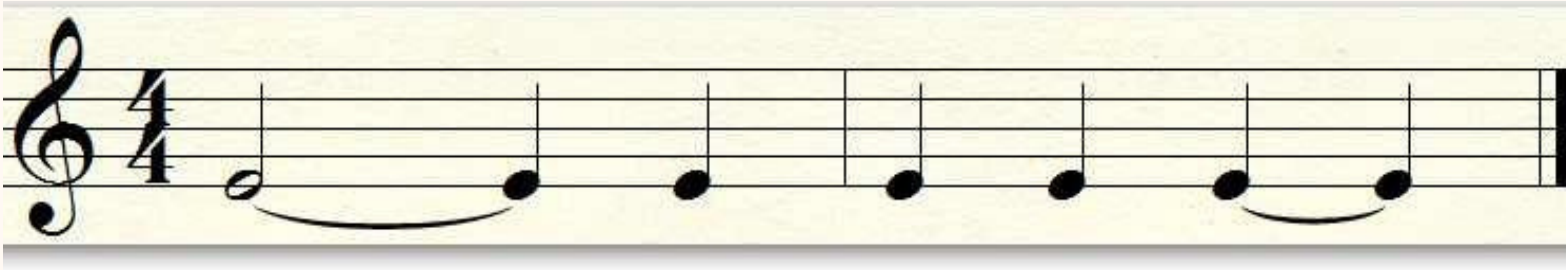
For example, if you have a dotted half note in 4/4 time that equals 2 + 1 = 3 beats. The same with a half note dotted rest.

You can see what it looks like in notation here...



Another way notes may be grouped is using a tie. A tie works in a similar way to a dotted note in that it extends the duration of a note that is played.

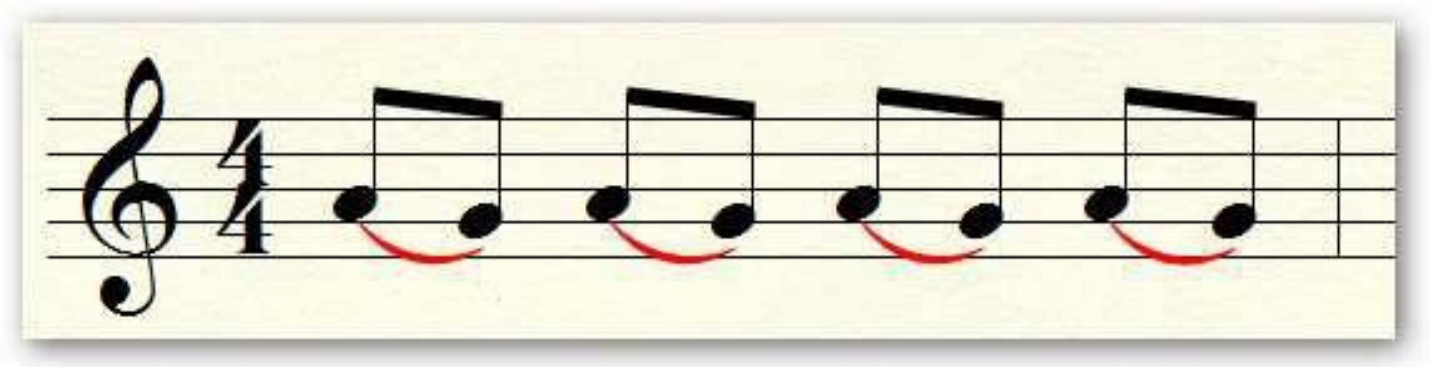
Here is a group of tied notes...



In the first bar, you would play the E note and let it ring on for 3 beats of the bar before you play the next E note.

In the second bar you'd play the first three notes but the fourth rings on from the third.

A slur, on the other hand, is often confused with the tie because it looks very similar. The difference is that the ***slur*** is connected to a note of ***different pitch***...



The slur can be a ***hammer-on*** or a ***pull-off***, or a continuous movement of these two – the ***trill***. You can see more on slurs and trills here...

http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/trill.html

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

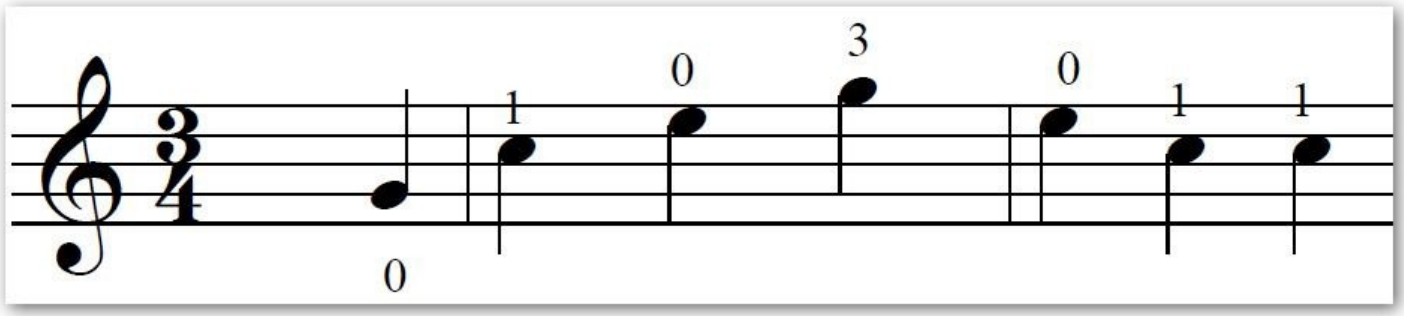
CHAPTER 8

WHAT IS AN ANACRUSIS?

The ***anacrusis*** is a way of accented another beat in the bar other than the first.

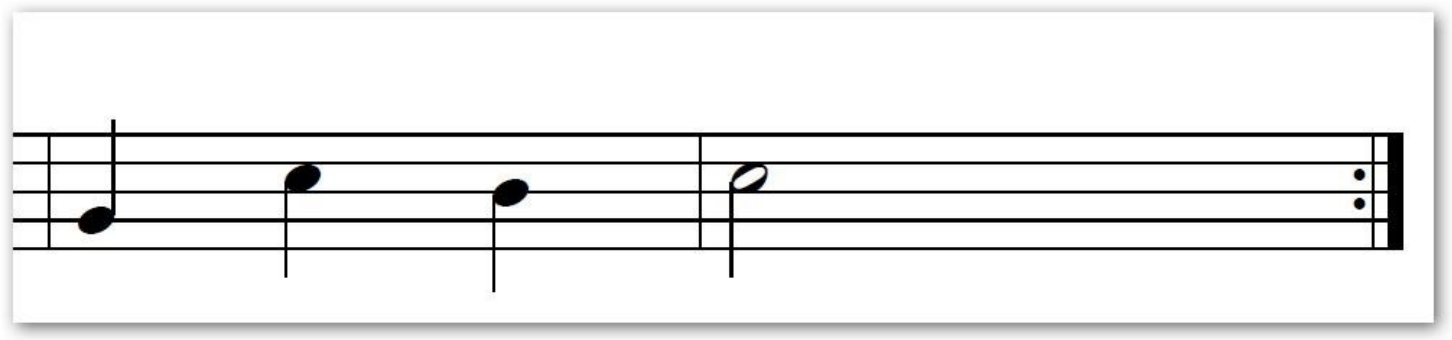
If you've worked your way through the... BEGINNER'S COURSE, you'll see a piece called The Ash Grove.

In it, you'll notice an anacrusis at the beginning like this...



The 'C' note in bar 2 is the strongly accented beat not the 'G' note in the first bar.

It does mean, however, that the last note in the last bar is 'missing' because you need to take it from there to keep the notes over the whole piece in balance...



You can see there's only a half note beat in the last bar because the third beat is put into the first bar by itself to create the anacrusis.

Here's the wikipedia definition of anacrusis...

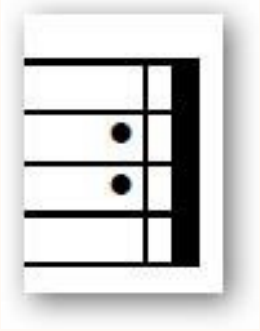
"In music, it is the note or sequence of notes which precedes the first downbeat in a bar.

In the latter sense, an anacrusis is often called a pickup, pickup note, or pickup measure, referring to the syncopation.

A piece of music beginning with an anacrusis will often end before the last beat of the last bar, in order to keep the number of bars in the entire piece at a whole number."

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anacrusis

You probably noticed in the second graphic above that there are a couple of strange-looking things in the last bar...



The two dots between the 2nd and 3rd spaces is a ***repeat sign*** and means that you repeat the music from the beginning of the section.

The dark black line is a double bar line and means the end of a section of music.

Now you know about the anacrusis!

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER - 9

TONES AND SEMITONES

A ***tone*** in music notation is worth two ***semitones***.

So, what's a semitone then?

A semitone is the ***shortest distance (interval) between two notes***, either above or below.

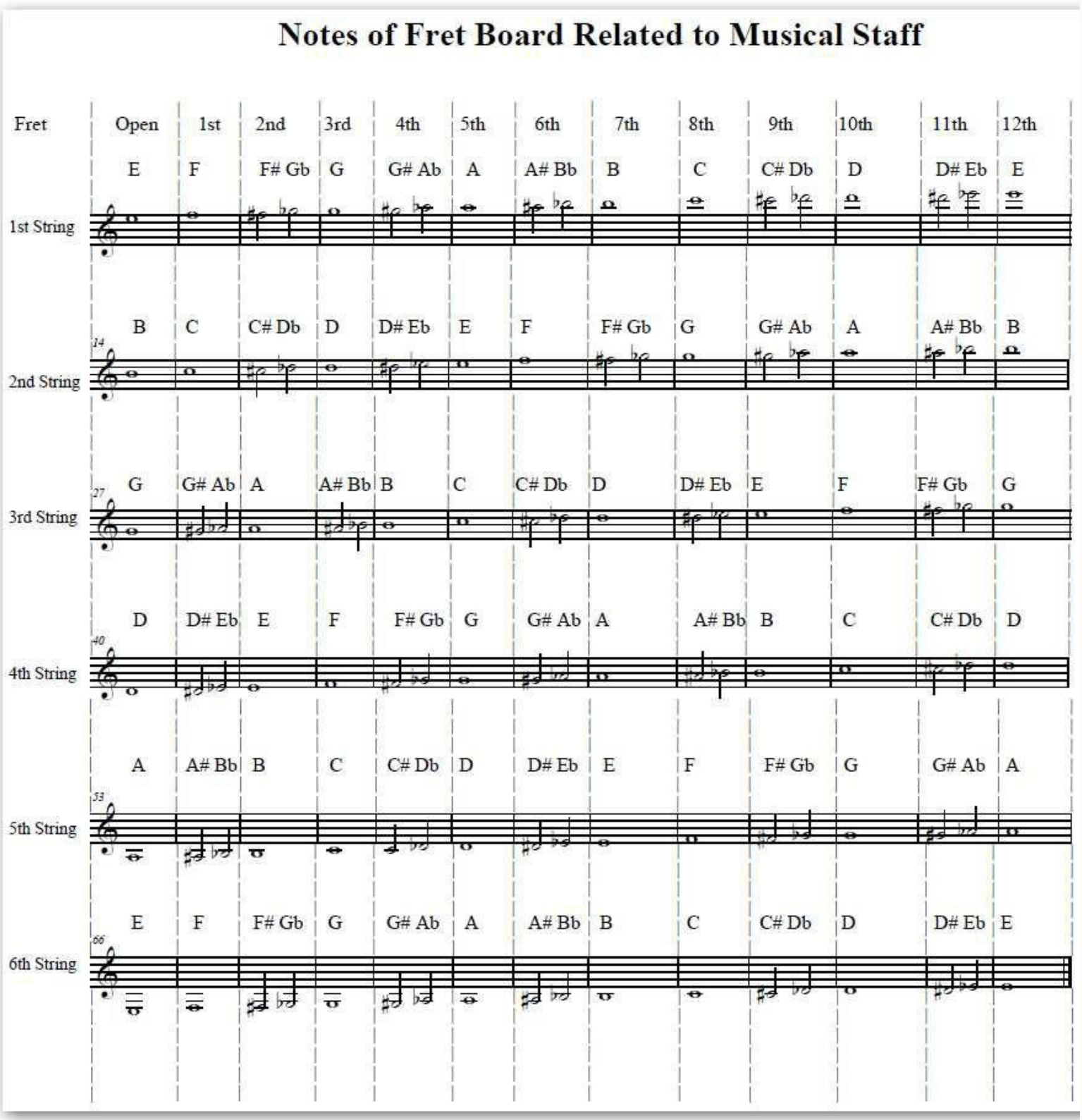
On a piano, you can see a semitone very clearly because it's the distance between a white note to a black note or a black note to a white note.

Sometimes there are two white notes a semitone apart e.g. E to F or B to C.

On guitar, a semitone is a distance of each fret e.g. F to F# or F# to G. Therefore a tone is two semitones e.g. F to G.

The term 'semi' means half so you can easily see it's a halftone.

The following are the tones and semitones on the guitar fretboard and their equivalents on the musical staff...



You'll notice that there are entries here such as F# and Gb. These are known as enharmonic notes.

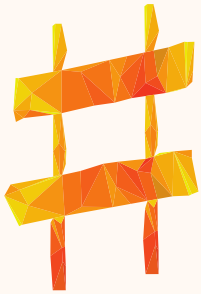
They are in fact the same pitch but they have different names because they belong to a different key signature.

We'll go into more detail about the key signature in chapter 12. This discussion about tones and semitones leads us naturally on to the idea of sharps and flats in music.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER 10



SHARPS, FLATS AND NATURAL NOTES

Following on from the previous chapter we'll now discuss ***sharps, flats, and accidentals*** in music notation.

A sharp note just means that a note is raised one semitone.

For example, the 'F' note on the first fret of the first string of a guitar can be sharpened by playing the F# on the second fret, one semitone higher.

Similarly, a flat note means you would lower the note by one semitone.

Therefore, a 'G' note on the third fret on the first string would be flattened by playing the Gb on the second fret.

You would've noticed that it's the same fret as the F# mentioned previously.

Again, this is because the note is ***enharmonic***. That is, it has ***two names*** depending on the key you're talking about.

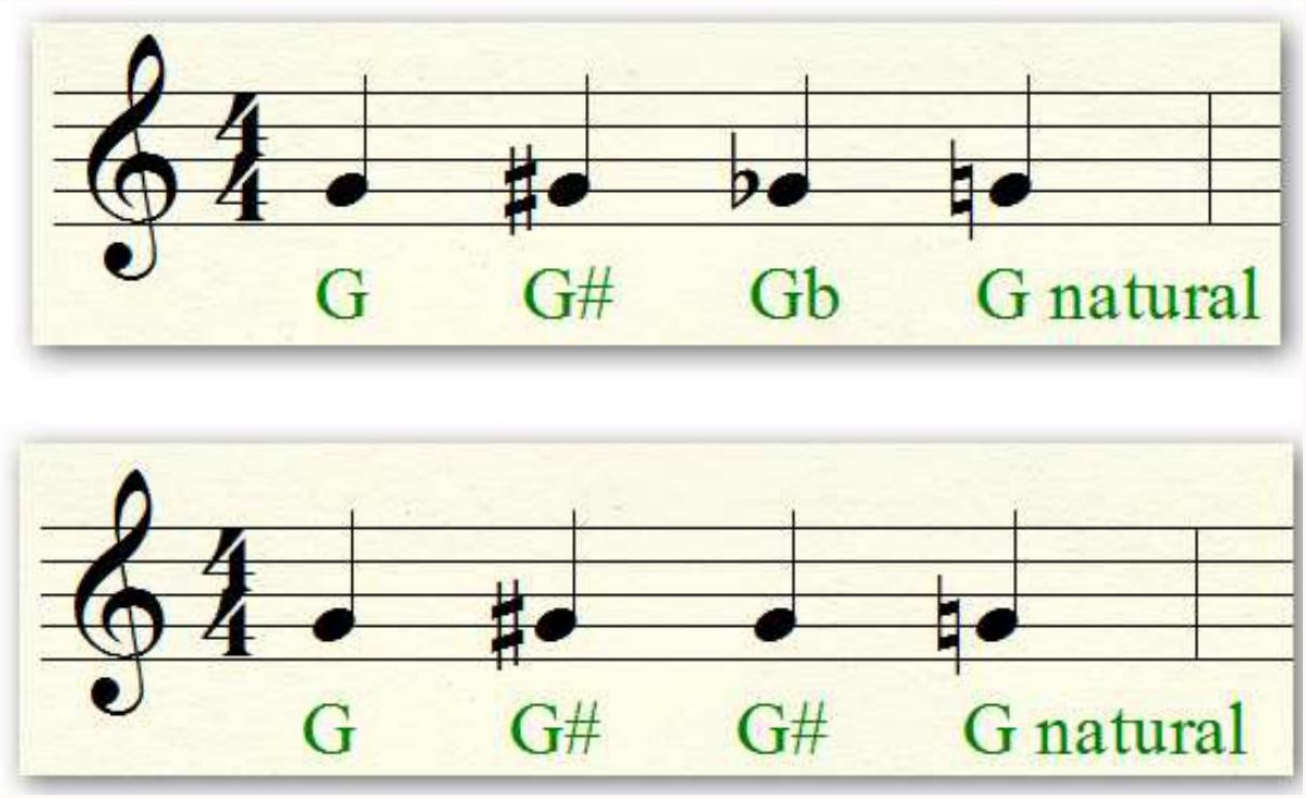
A ***natural note*** is when you restore a note to its original pitch **AFTER** it has been sharpened or flattened. This may happen either in the bar or across the bar depending on the situation.

All the above-mentioned notes are examples of ***accidentals***.

An accidental is not normally part of the key signature but used in certain bars where needed. Accidentals only remain active in the bar where they're situated.

As soon as you leave the bar the music reverts to the ***'laws'*** of the key signature.

Here's a graphic example of these accidentals...

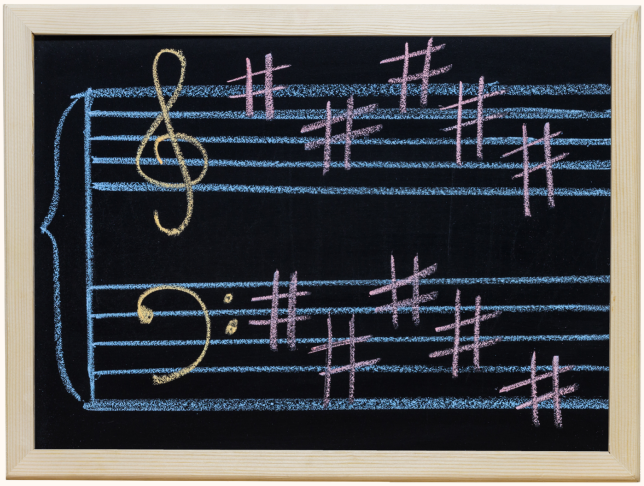


Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER - 11

THE MAJOR SCALE



Music notation is made up of several elements but one of the basic and integral 'building blocks' of music is the ***scale***.

There are, of course, many types of scales but one of the main ones we use in Western Music is the ***major scale***.

So just what makes a major scale?

The type of common scale we're going to discuss now is the ***diatonic major scale***. It is used, along with diatonic minor scales, in about 99.9% of all the music you're likely to play.

It consists of the tones and semitones we discussed in the earlier chapters but the **ORDER** of those tones and semitones are what gives the scale its character and identity.

In a diatonic major scale the order is:

Tone; Tone; Semi-Tone; Tone; Tone; Tone; Semi-Tone

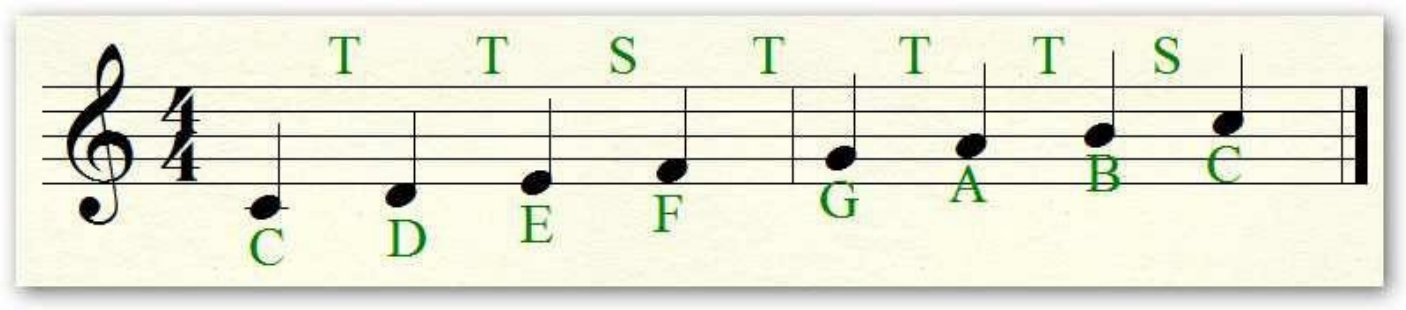
If you're thinking in terms of piano it would be:

white key; white key; black key; white key; white key;

white key; black key.

On guitar it would be; 2 frets; 2 frets; 1 fret; 2 frets; 2 frets; 2 frets; 1 fret.

So, let's look at a C major scale...



You can see the tones between C & D & E, a semitone between E & F, 3 more tones between F & G & A & B, and another semitone between B & C.

ALL diatonic major scales have this pattern.

As you'll see in ***Chapter 13 on Keys in Music***, this pattern is the reason we have sharps and flats, but more of that later.

Here are the common major scales from the keys that make up western music with their sharps and flats:

1. C major - C D E F G A B C (no sharps or flats)

2. G major - G A B C D E F# G (1 sharp)

3. D major - D E F# G A B C# D (2 sharps)

4. A major - A B C# D E F# G# A (3 sharps)

5. E major - E F# G# A B C# D# E (4 sharps)

6. B major - B C# D# E F# G# A# B (5 sharps)

7. F# major - F# G# A# B C# D# E# F# (6 sharps)

8. C# major - C# D# E# F# G# A# B# (7 sharps)

9. F major - F G A Bb C D E F (1 flat)

10. Bb major - Bb C D Eb F G A Bb (2 flats)

11. Eb major - Eb F G Ab Bb C D Eb (3 flats)

12. Ab major - Ab Bb C Db Eb F G Ab (4 flats)

13. Db major - Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C Db (5 flats)

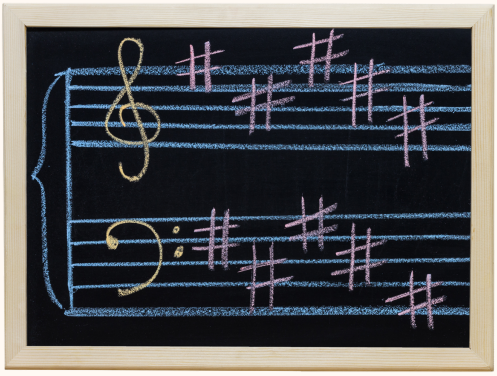
14. Gb major - Gb Ab Bb Cb Db Eb F Gb (6 flats)

15. Cb major - Cb Db Eb Fb Ab Gb Ab Bb Cb (7flats)

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER 12



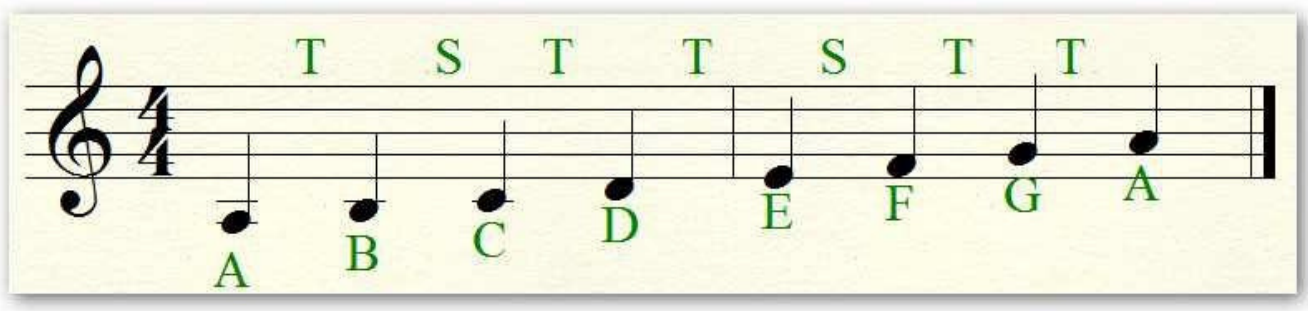
THE MINOR SCALE

The ***minor scale***, just like the major scale, has its own particular pattern of tones and semitones to give it its own sound and character.

There are, however, three common forms of the minor scale in use that we need to know about.

The first is the ***natural minor scale***, the next is the ***harmonic minor scale*** and the other is the ***melodic minor scale***.

Here is the natural minor scale of A with its pattern of tones and semitones...



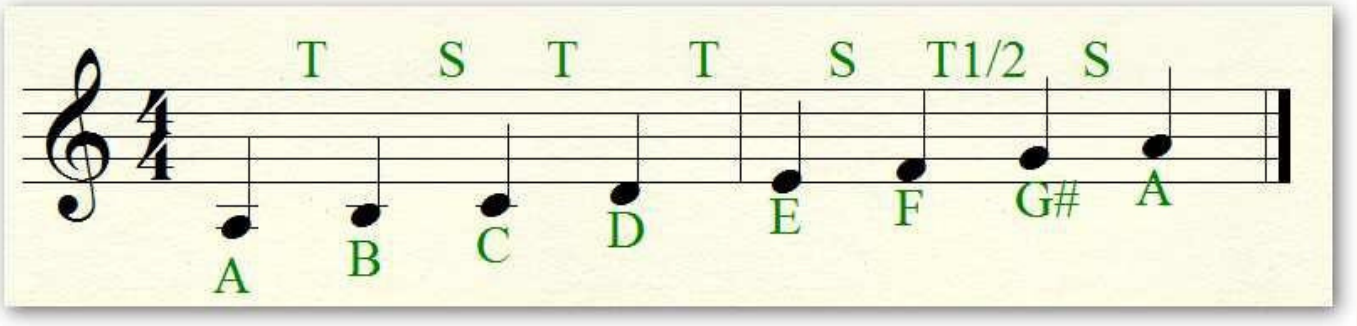
Again, this is to keep the sound of the minor scale a distinct one separate from the major scales.

The ***harmonic*** differs from the ***major*** and ***natural*** scale in this way:

Tone; Semitone; Tone; Tone; Semitone; Tone-and-a-half; Semitone

Did you notice the big jump of a Tone-and-a-half there between the 6th and 7th notes of the scale?

Here it is in music notation as 'A harmonic minor'...



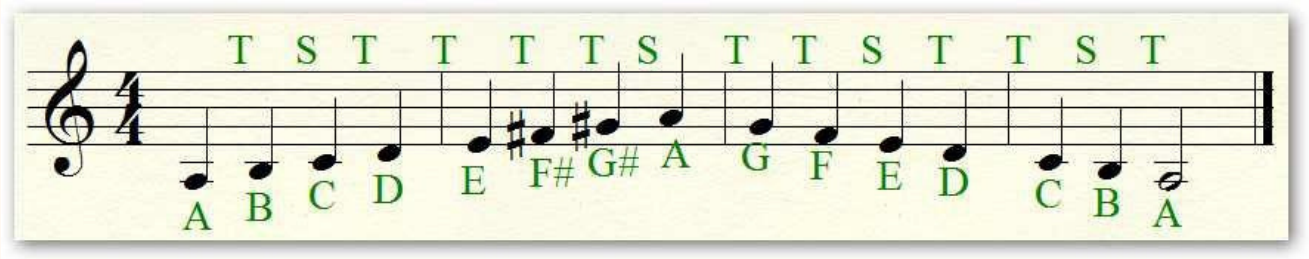
The important change from the natural harmonic minor to the harmonic minor scale is that the 6th to 7th note of the scale becomes quite a 'leap' of 3 semitones or, a tone and a half as it's usually described.

That also means there is a distance of a semitone between the 7th and 8th notes.

This ***fundamentally changes*** the sound of the scale to make it distinct from the major and natural minor scale.

In fact, you'll play more music in this form of the scale (harmonic minor) than in its natural form.

Let's look now at the ***melodic minor scale*** and its distinctive patterns because this needs further examination...

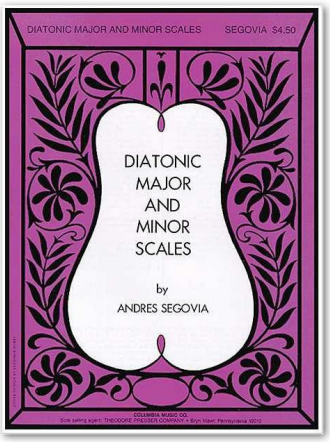


You'll notice that when the scale is ascending its 6th and 7th notes are sharpened but when it is descending those notes become natural again.

This is to give it its distinctive sound and 'flavor' if you will. After all, changing the pattern of tones and semitones is the way we create different scales.

Don't worry, because after playing through these scales you get used to their different forms and it becomes second nature as does anything with practice.

In fact, I strongly suggest you invest in a copy of the ***Segovia Scales*** ***(click to go there)*** to practice daily so you can become familiar with ALL the diatonic major and minor scales...



https://learnclassicalguitar.com/segovia-scales.html
(click to go there)

Here are the common minor scales from the keys that make up western music with their sharps and flats:

1. A minor - A B C D E F G A (no sharps or flats)

2. E minor -E F# G A B C D E (1 sharp)

3. B minor - B C# D E F# G A B (2 sharps)

4. F# minor - F# G# A B C# D E F# (3 sharps)

5. C# minor -C# D# E F# G# A B C# (4 sharps)

6. G# minor - G# A# B C# D# E F# G# (5 sharps)

7. D# minor -D# E# F# G# A# B C# D# (6 sharps)

8. A# minor - A# B# C# D# E# F# G# A# (7 sharps)

9. D minor - D E F G A Bb C D (1 flat)

10. G minor - G A Bb C D Eb F G (2 flats)

11. C minor - C D Eb F G Ab Bb C (3 flats)

12. F minor - F G Ab Bb C Db Eb F (4 flats)

13. Bb minor - Bb C Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb (5 flats)

14. Eb minor -Eb F Gb Ab Bb Cb Db Eb (6 flats)

15. Ab minor - Ab Bb Cb Db Eb Fb Gb Ab (7 flats)

In guitar, or classical guitar music, you won't get to play all of these scales or keys but it's good practice to learn about the theory to a deep level so you can understand how music is constructed and how the composer thinks and intends music to be played.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER - 13

KEYS IN MUSIC

You have in fact, in the last two chapters, been looking at keys in music.

A ***key*** in music is no more than the scales that belong to it. The problem with reading music that has lots of sharps or flats is that it would be near impossible to read.

So, to obviate the need for doing this we use keys, or key signatures if you like.

The ***key signature*** is at the beginning of the music just before the time signature.

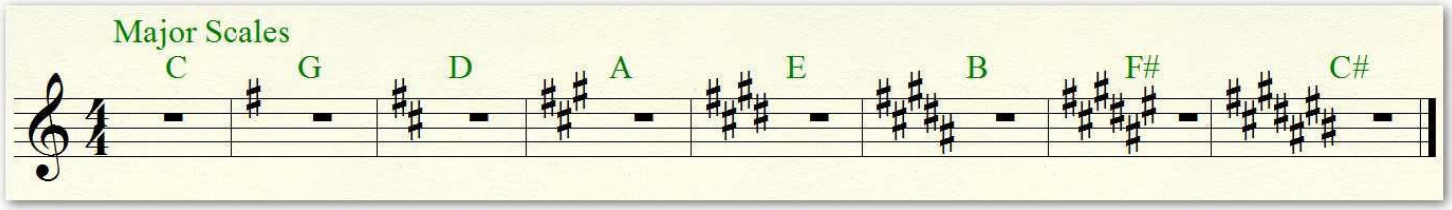
This is what the Collins Encyclopedia of Music says about the Key...

"A term used to indicate the precise tonality of music which uses as its basic material one of the major or minor scales and accepts certain relationships between the notes of the scale and the chords built on them..."

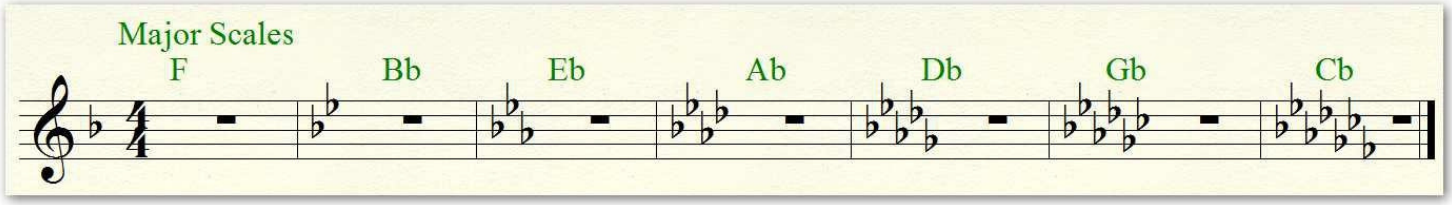
https://learnclassicalguitar.com/Collins-Encyclopedia-of-Music

Here are the key signatures of all the major and minor scales...

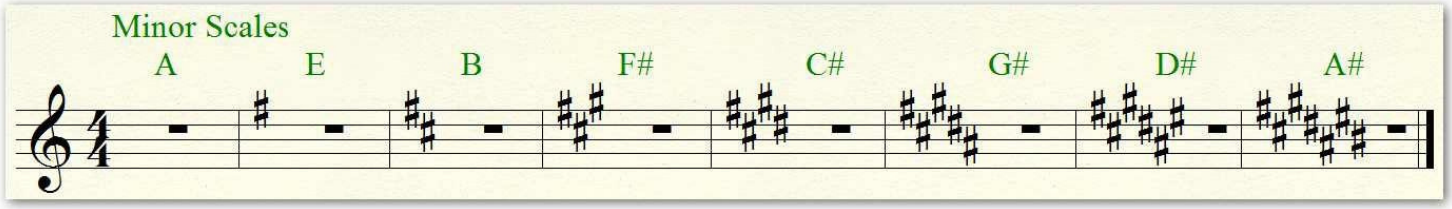
Major Sharp Scales:



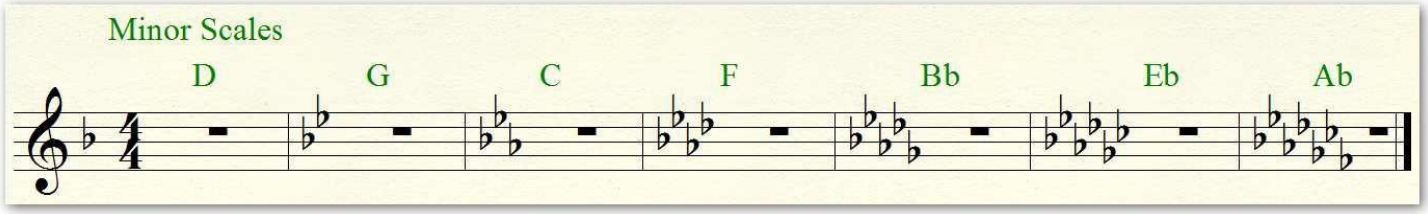
Major Flat Scales:



Minor Sharp Scales:



Minor Flat Scales:



Using these key signatures every note on the staff will be affected by it.

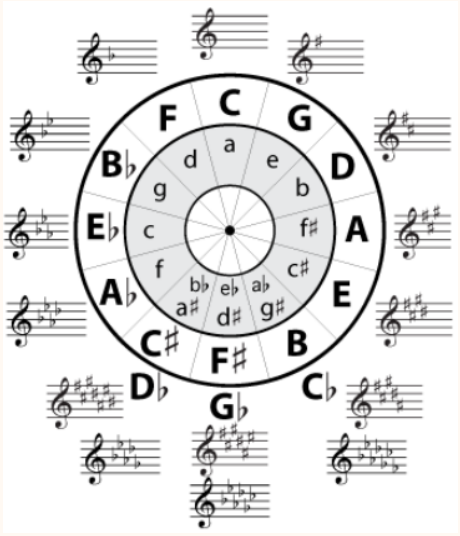
For instance, if you're in the key of Bb minor all the B, E, A, D and G notes will be flattened UNLESS otherwise indicated in a particular bar.

This might be via the use of an accidental e.g. a natural note. The notes return to the rules of the key signature as soon as the next bar is reached.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER 14



RELATED KEYS IN MUSIC

Now that we know the major and minor keys let's have a closer look at their family tree, so to speak. This chapter explains how, and which, keys are related.

Every ***major key*** has a ***relative minor key*** and vice-versa.

They are related because they share similar notes in their scale structure. You would have heard it a million times but perhaps could not have explained it.

When musical keys shift from a major key to a minor one and back again you notice the change, but it seems quite normal and natural.

As the scales of each key are similar it follows that the chords used in the music of both will be the same or very similar.

Here are the related major and minor keys...

C major and A minor (no sharps or flats)

G major and E minor (one sharp - F)

D major and B minor (two sharps - F, C)

A major and F sharp minor (three sharps - F, C, G)

E major and C # minor (four sharps - F, C, G, D)

B major and G # minor (five sharps - F, C, G, D, A)

F# major and D sharp minor (six sharps - F, C, G, D, A, E)

C# major and A sharp minor (seven sharps - F, C, G, D, A, E, B)

F major and D minor (one flat - B)

Bb major and G minor (two flats - B, E)

Eb major and C minor (three flats - B, E, A)

Ab major and F minor (four flats - B, E, A, D)

Db major and Bb minor (five flats - B, E, A, D, G)

Gb major and Eb minor (six flats - B, E, A, D, G, C)

Cb major and Ab minor (seven flats - B, E, A, D, G, C, Fb)

One trick for remembering the relative majors and minors are that the ***keynote*** of the minor scale is ***always three semitones*** below the major scale.

So, if you're in A minor then you count up three semitones to find the relative major i.e. A-B-C: so C major is the relative major of A minor.

Again E-F-G: G major is the relative major of E minor. This is true of all the scales.

One Special Note:

If you see music that has an F# for example and you're not sure if it's in G major or E minor look at the last bass note of the piece.

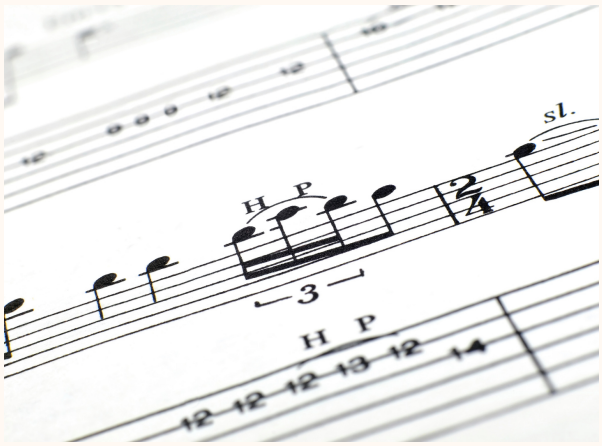
The ***last bass note*** will always return to the home key and so reveal the key of the actual piece.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

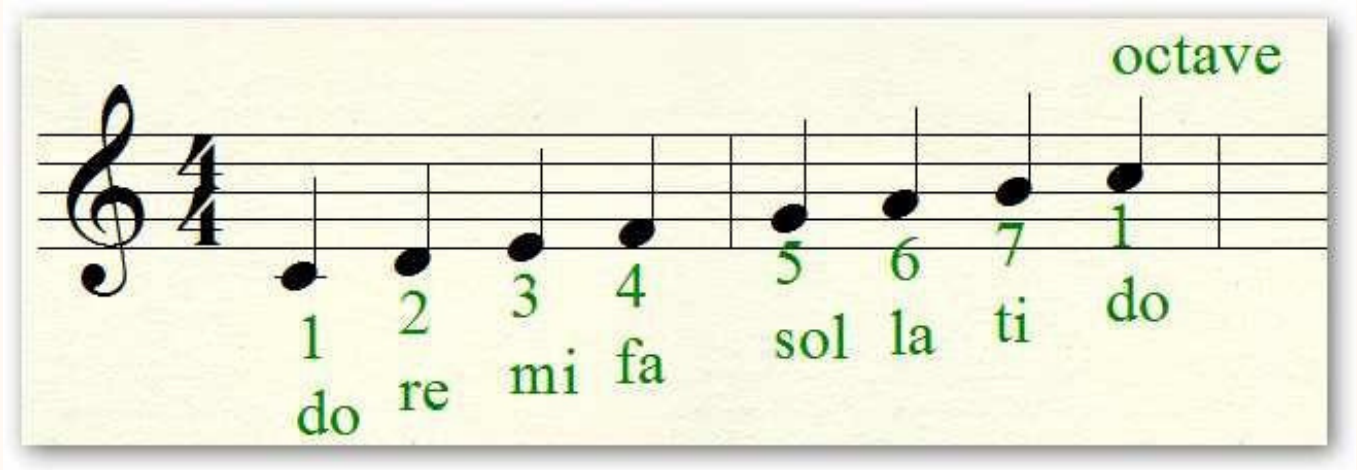
CHAPTER - 15

SCALE DEGREES AND INTERVALS



There are two ways to describe the ***scale degree*** number. One is by **numbering** it and the other is by the **Sol-fa symbols**.

Here are the scale degree numbers in C major from the lower C to its octave...



An interval in music is the distance from one note to another. When we learned about the semitone and tone previously, we found out they were one or two notes away from each other.

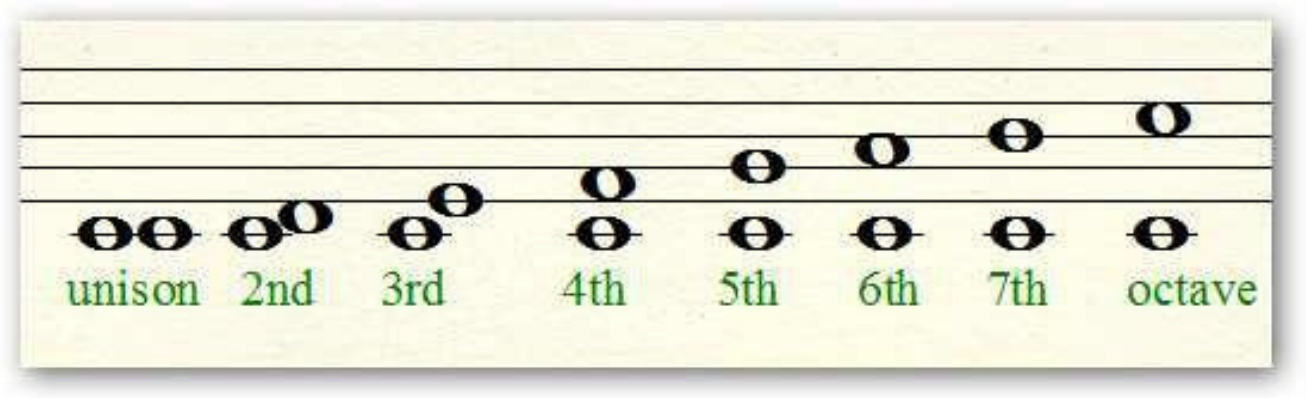
But what about notes that are further apart?

An ***interval*** is always measured from the ***lower note to the higher*** one. You also name its distance in numbers and the quality or type of distance.

Let's start with the ***type***.

You can have a: unison (same note); second; third; fourth; fifth; sixth; seventh; eighth (a.k.a. octave) etc.

Here is an example of note intervals from the lower to the higher note...



The ***quality*** of the interval can be major; minor; perfect; augmented; diminished.

There is an 'overlap' with the naming of these describers.

For instance, majors are used with intervals of a 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th when measured from the keynote (in ANY key by the way).

Minors can also be used with a 2nd, 3rd, 6th, and 7th.

Perfect is a term used with the 4th and 5th and the 8ve of the scale.

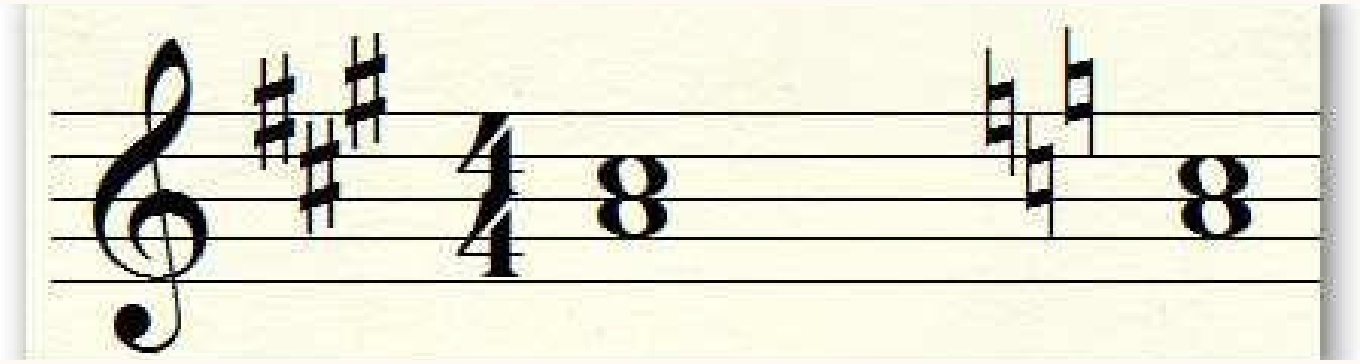
Don't forget, you are always measuring from the lower note to find the interval.

Important Note:
The type of scale we are in can determine what type of interval we use.

For instance, if we're using a major scale the 3rd will be a major 3rd and if we're in a minor scale then we'll be using a minor 3rd.

Makes sense, right?

Here's a graphic of the major and minor 3rd in the scales of both A major and A minor...



You can see that the major 3rd is from A to C# (4 semitones) and the minor 3rd is from A to C (3 semitones).

The ***diminished intervals*** are used when a ***perfect*** or ***minor*** interval is ***lessened*** by ***one semitone*** and the ***augmented interval*** is used when ***major*** or ***perfect*** intervals are ***increased*** by ***one semitone***.

As this subject can be a little 'tricky', and as this is just a primer, you'll need to read wider outside of this reference guide as there's not enough room to give examples for everything.

I'd suggest getting a very good musical encyclopedia like this one...

http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/Collins-Encyclopedia-of-Music

Additionally, you can get some great information on intervals using this PDF I have supplied for you...

http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/various-intervals

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER 16

WHAT IS A CHORD?

A ***chord*** in music is basically ***two or more notes harmonized*** together.

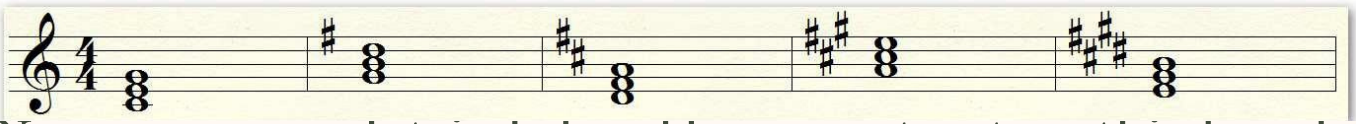
Rules can get pretty complex, but we'll stick with the foundational points so that you can progressively build on your knowledge.

Although it can be said that two notes together make a chord, it is ***more likely*** that you'll play chords that are ***made up of at least three notes***.

These chords are called ***triads*** and they consist of the root note, a third above, and a fifth above.

Here are five common triads you'll play in guitar music:

C major; G major; D major; A major; E major...

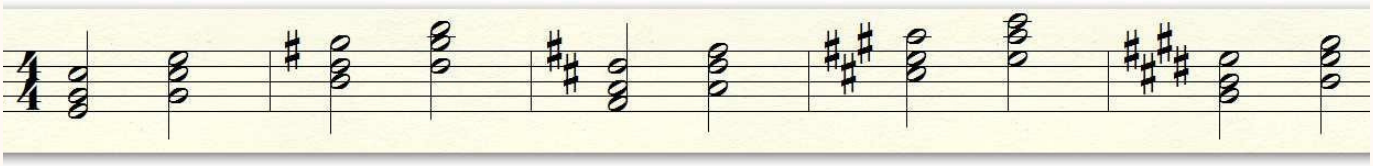


You can see each triad chord has a root note, a third, and a fifth above the root. Another name for this is the ***tonic triad***.

There are another two common variations on the triad that you should know about.

They are the ***1st and 2nd inversions*** of these triads. An inversion is where you take the bottom note and take it above the two upper notes.

Here are the first and second inversions of the above triads in C major, G major, D major, A major, and E major...



You can see how the top note in the tonic triad has now become the lowest note in the 2nd inversion triad.

By varying these triads throughout the chords, you play within the music you provide variation and thus, enjoyment and pleasure in the music.

It does get 'interesting' beyond the basics but just take your time and keep your learning moving along at an enjoyable pace and you'll keep enjoying it.

It's like the old hare and tortoise story – slow and steady wins the race.

Sometimes we become impatient and want to 'know it all – now!' but the reality is you'll probably learn more if you take your time at a steady pace, BUT with consistency.

To get more information on chord triads go to this PDF I have supplied for you...

 http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/various-triads

It might be a good idea to discuss the position of the chords in terms of the scale and key.

Depending on where they are in the scale or key they have a particular name for their position above the tonic or root note or chord. They are named:

Tonic - First degree of the scale

Supertonic - 2nd scale degree

Mediant - 3rd scale degree

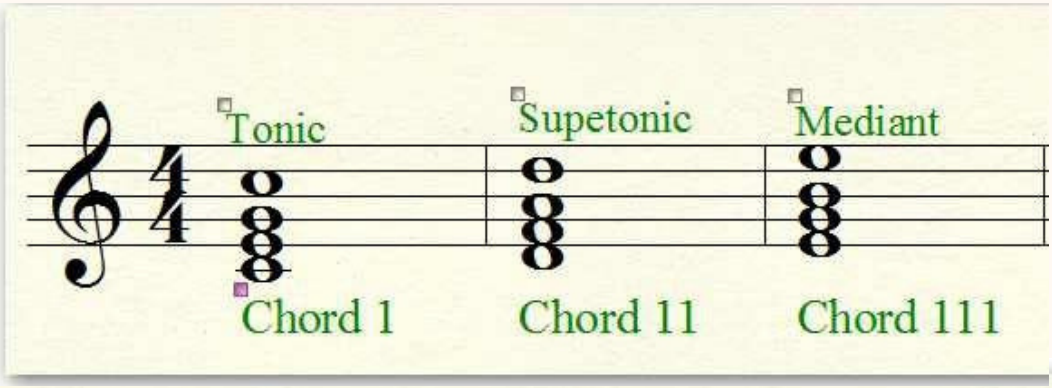
Subdominant - 4th scale degree

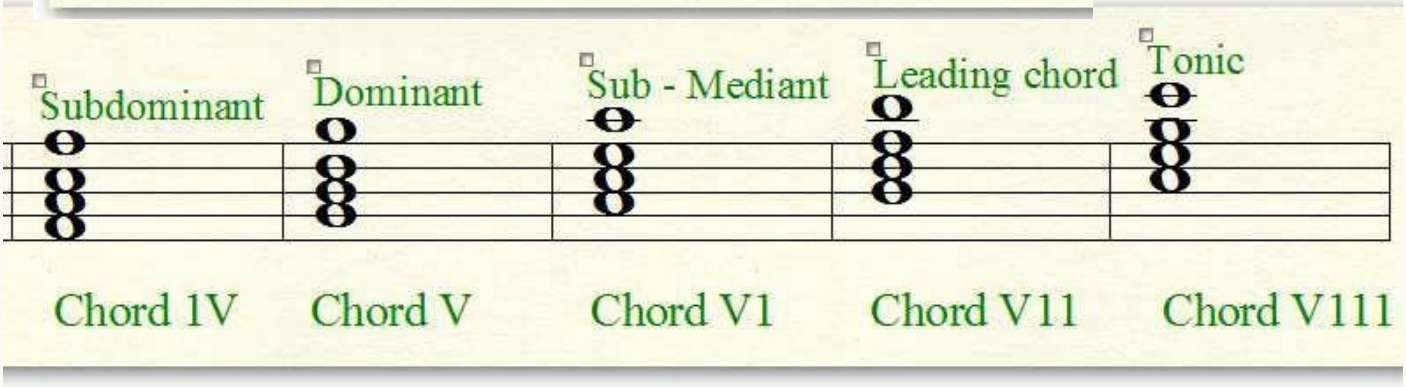
Dominant - 5th scale degree

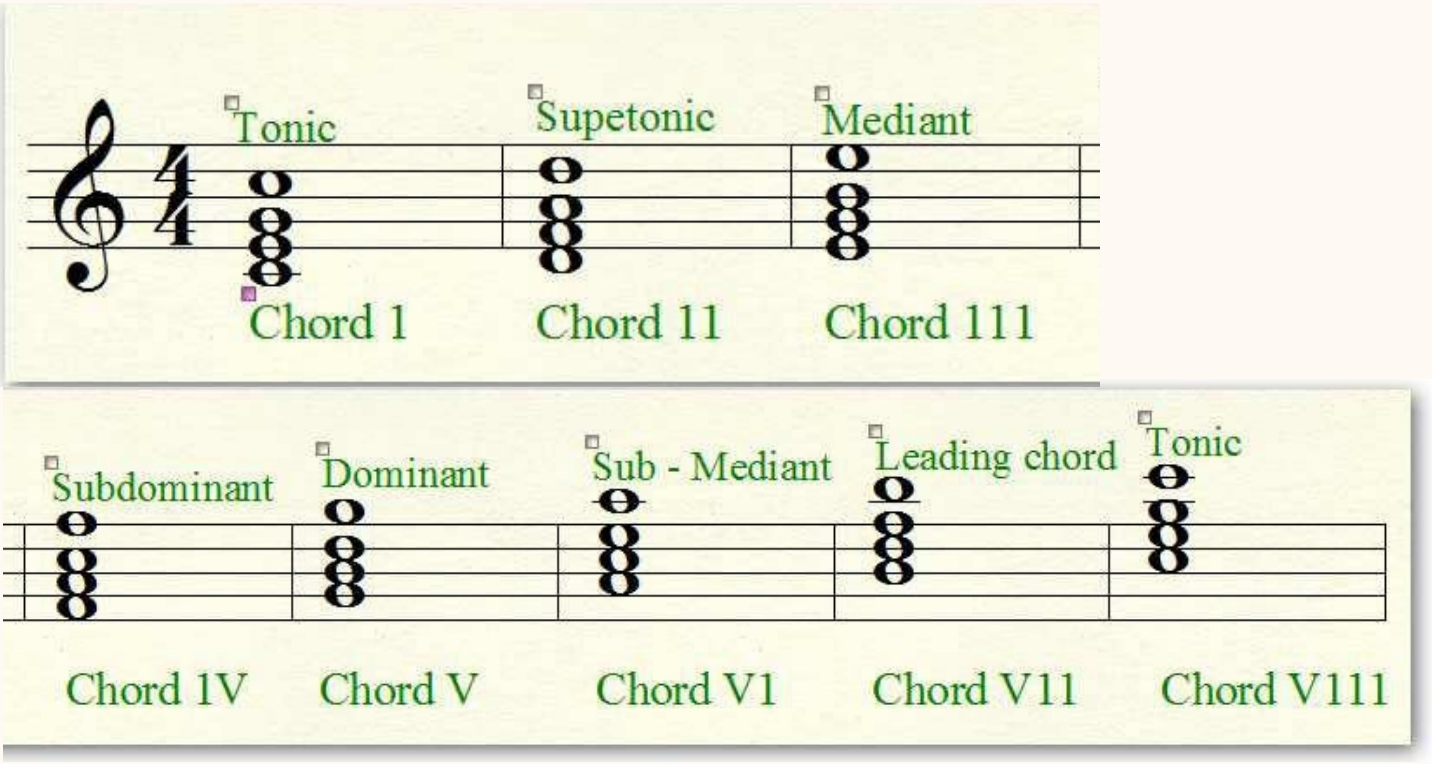
Submediant - 6th scale degree

Leading tone - 7th scale degree

Here is the chord scale degree in C major and E Major...





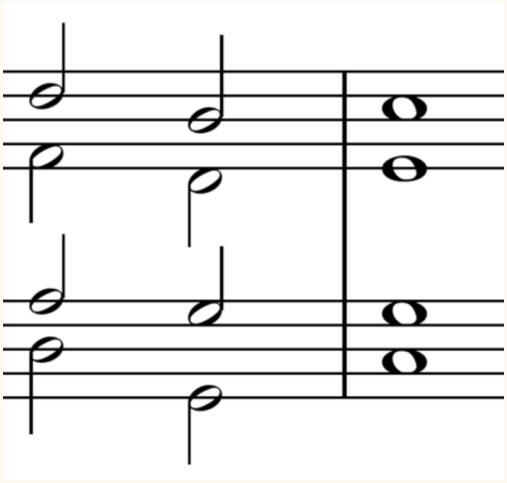


Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER - 17

TYPES OF CADENCES



A ***cadence*** in music is the equivalent of a period or full stop in a written sentence.

That is, where the music comes to a stop or close. This is usually achieved ***via two chords*** but other times a longer series of chords.

There are ***other types of cadences*** akin to the comma in written punctuation i.e. the music stops momentarily before moving on again in another phrase.

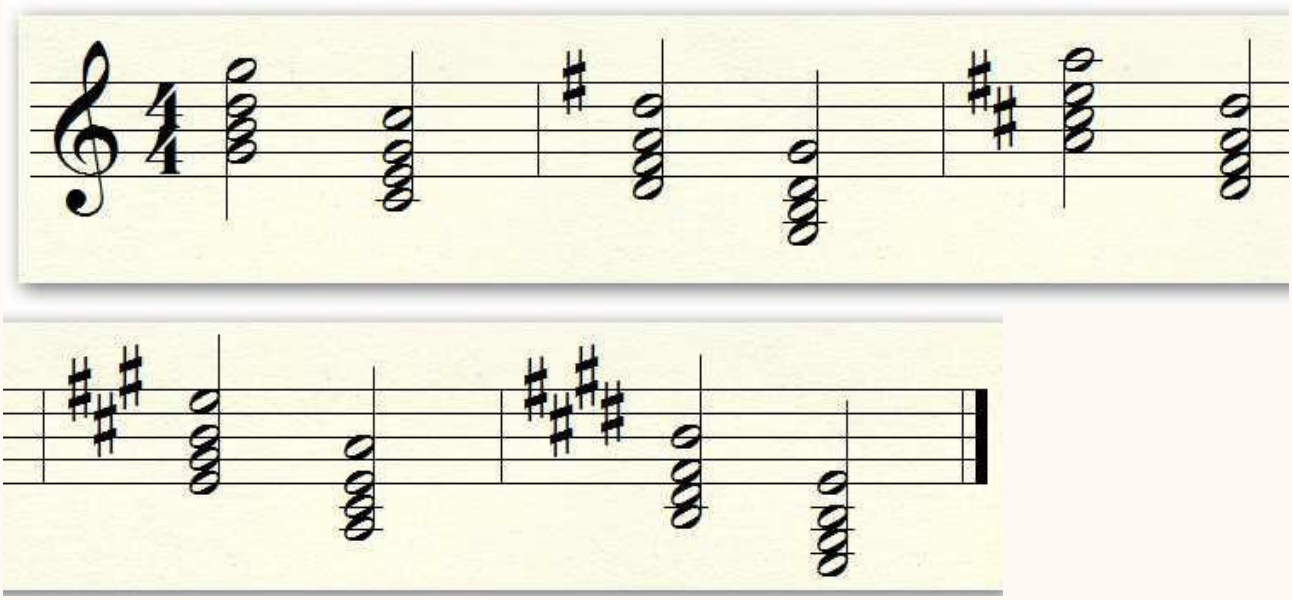
So just how many types are there and what are they called?

The two most common are called ***Perfect*** (also called authentic) and ***Plagal*** cadences.

The perfect cadence uses the chords V to 1 in the abovementioned series of scale degrees from chapter 16 a.k.a. dominant chord to tonic (home) chord.

You can also use the chords IV, V as a perfect cadence sequence.

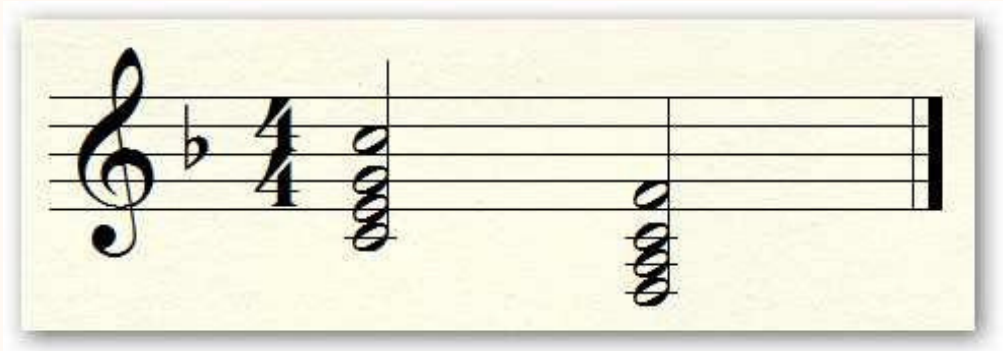
Here are a series of perfect cadences in different keys uses chords V and I for you to examine...



Click here to listen...

http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/Perfect-Cadence-Mid

Here is a plagal cadence in F major...



Listen to the plagal cadence here...

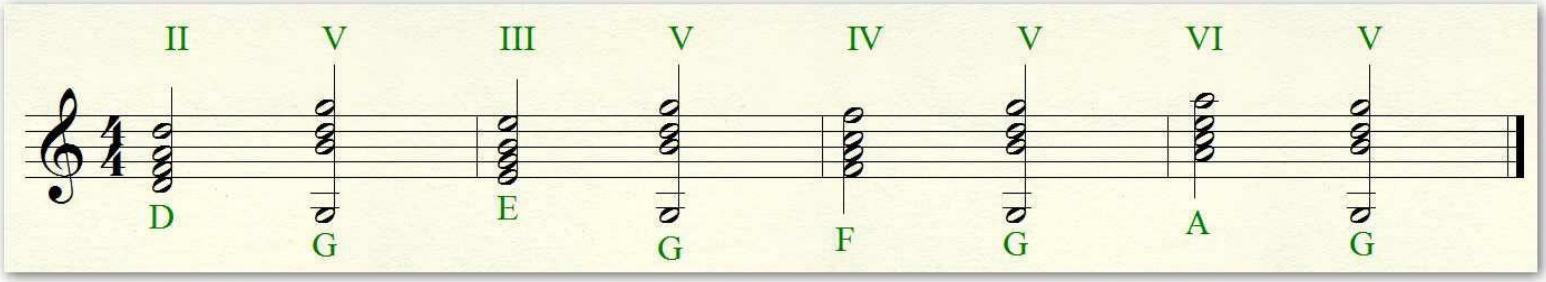
http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/Plagal-Cadence-Mid

You can see why after listening to the plagal cadence it is sometimes called the ***'amen cadence'*** because it's how many of the church hymns end.

Two other cadences in use are the ***Imperfect cadence*** (aka the ***Half cadence***) and the ***Interrupted*** (aka the ***Surprise*** or ***Deceptive*** cadence).

The imperfect cadence always ends on the dominant chord of the scale and can use different lead-up chords.

Here is an example of imperfect cadences in C major using different lead-up chords of II to V, III to V, IV to V, and VI to V...



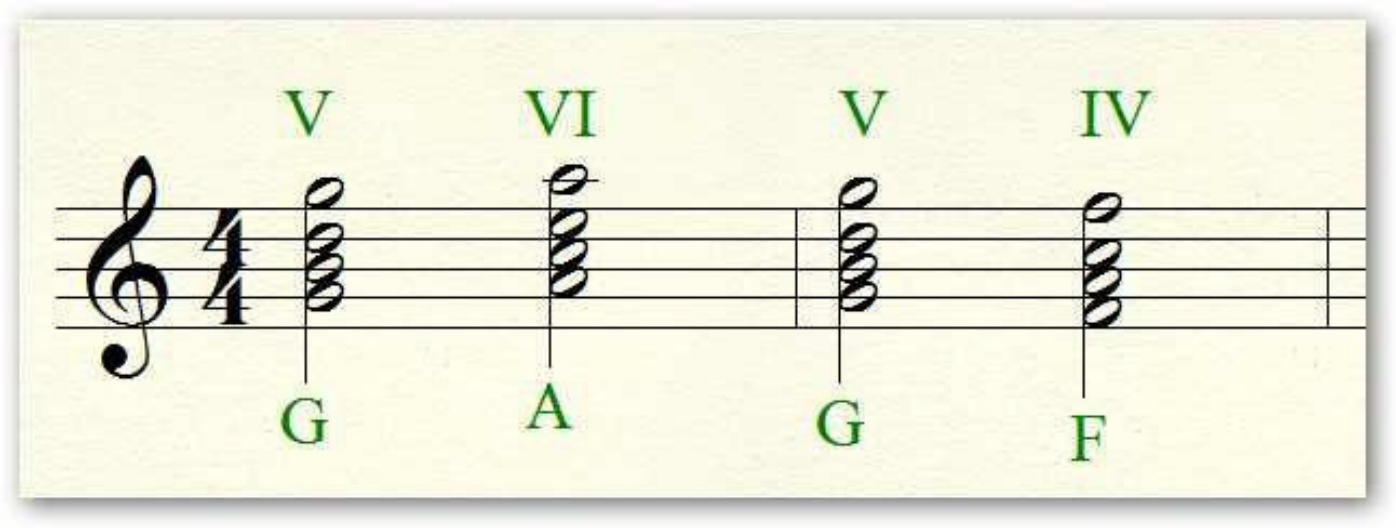
Listen to how they sound here...

http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/Imperfect-Cadence-Mid

The interrupted cadence always starts with the dominant chord (V) and then instead of ending on a home or tonic chord as you'd expect, it goes to a different chord thus 'interrupting' the expected cadence.

This is because the expectation is so strong in Western music for the music to resolve at the tonic chord. It sounds as if it wants to 'go home', as it were.

There are several chords you can use to achieve this effect but here are a few common methods in C major as an example...



Listen to how they sound here...

http://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/Interrupted-Cadence.mid

There are other types of cadences as you'll appreciate, and you'd be wise to investigate them beyond this primer.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

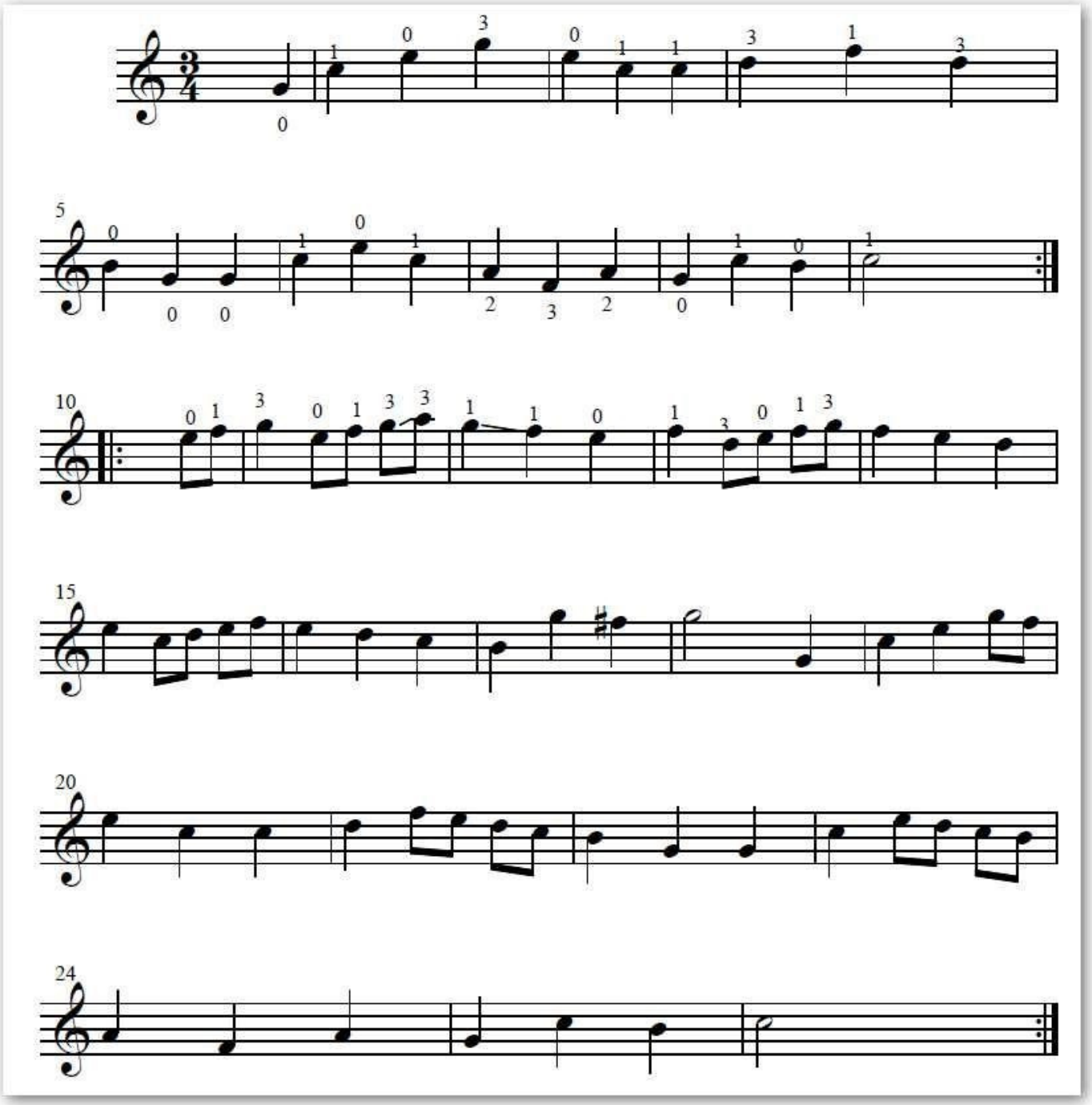
CHAPTER 18

FORM IN MUSIC

Form in music basically means how it is organized into balanced sections.

There are several different types of form that you'll no doubt encounter on your own musical journey. One simple form you'll definitely encounter is the ***Binary form***.

Examine this piece from the Beginner's Series I put together called ***The Ash Grove***...



As you can see in The Ash Grove, Binary form is where the music is divided into two distinct sections, often where each section is repeated.

For the most part, each of the two separate sections in binary form is of equal length and display differing, but related qualities or character. You could also call each section in binary form **A** and **B** sections.

The length of each section, however, is not always of the same length as you can see above.

You can clearly see that section B is longer than section A and has a different, though similar, character.

Another common form in music is the ***Ternary*** form.

The ternary form has ***three distinct sections*** that are labeled ***A, B, A***. The first and last sections obviously are the same or very similar, with the middle section giving the variation.

Another feature of the ternary form is that the 1st and 3rd sections usually end on the tonic note of the scale or at least of the tonic chord.

The 2nd middle section often ends on the dominant note of the scale, or V in terms of scale degree.

The third common form in music is that of the ***Rondo*** form. Rondo form is really just a variation and expansion of ternary form.

There are five sections named: ***A, B, A, C, A***.

This form though is often said to be more 'episodic' than the other forms and lends itself to more variation of the main theme in those episodes.

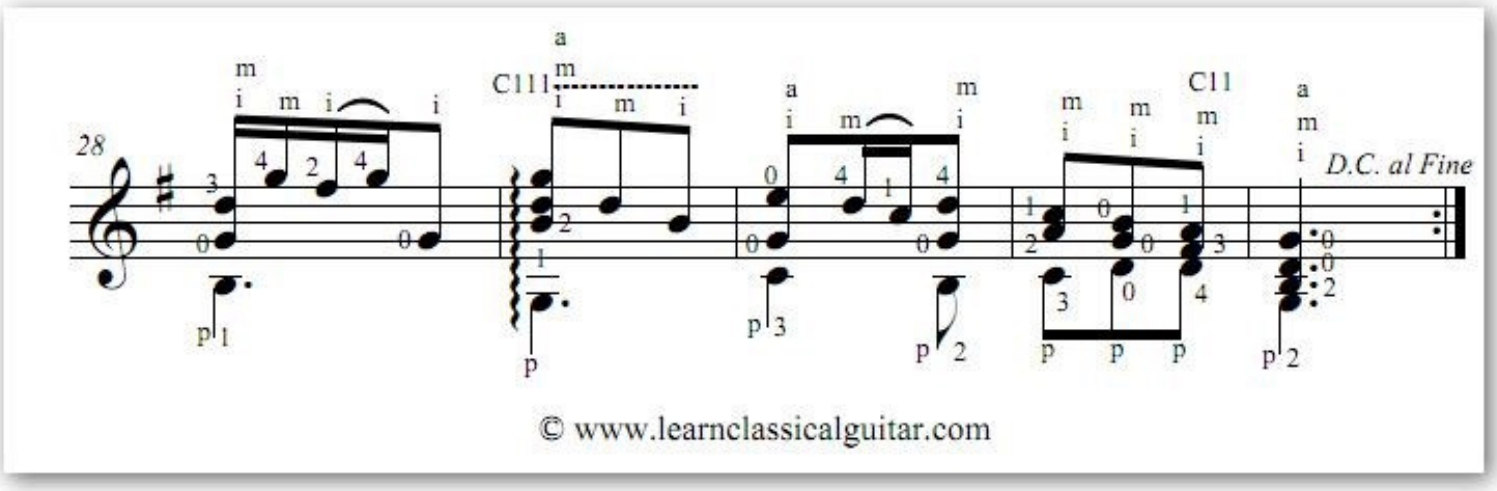
Other variations within all these forms can be **Da Capo al Fine** and **Dal Segno al Fine**.

Da Capo al fine means you play all the way through the music (including repeats) and then go back to the beginning and play through to the Fine sign (without the repeats this time).

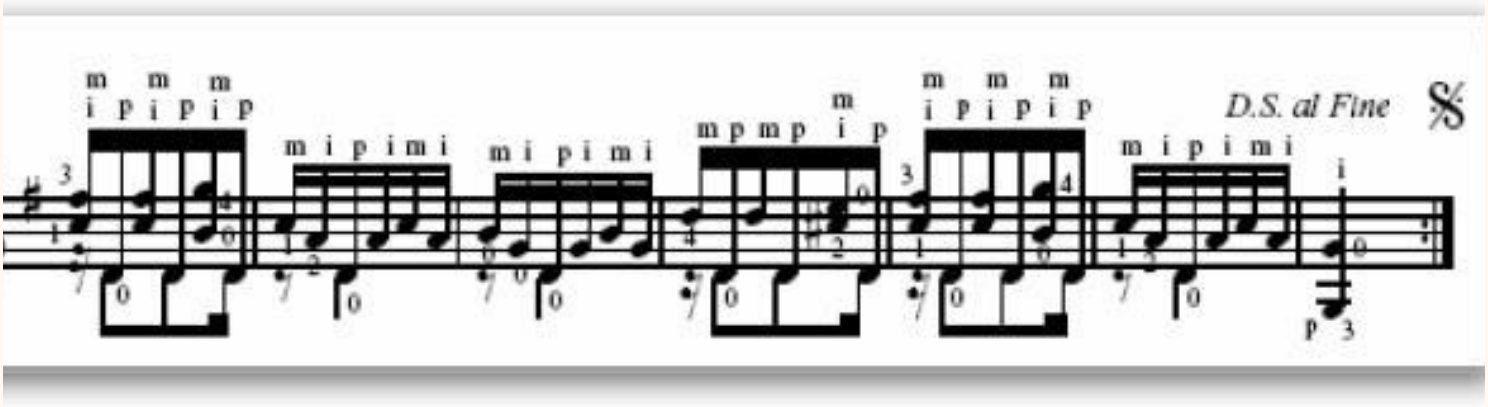
Dal Segno al Fine means go back to the sign after playing through the music.

The sign might be partway through the music and NOT at the beginning.

Here are some examples of both signs. This one's the D.C. al Fine from the Scarlatti Minuetto...



And here's what a Dal Segno al Fine looks like...

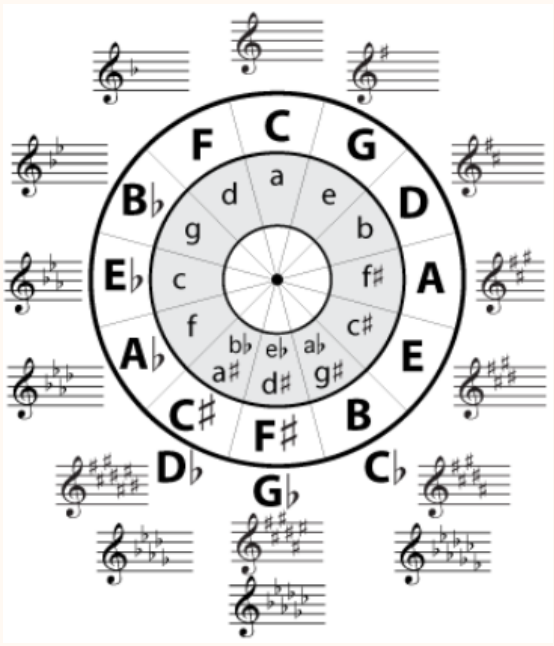


Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

CHAPTER - 19

THE CIRCLE OF FIFTHS



The ***Circle of Fifths*** is an excellent way to 'view' the relationships of all the keys to each other, including both major and minor keys.

If you haven't noticed, all keys are ***related to each other by 5ths***. For example, C to G is a fifth apart as is G to D. In the minor also A to E is a fifth and E to B also a fifth.

This is true even if you move the other way towards the flat keys e.g. C to F is a fifth, F to Bb is a fifth. And in the minor, A to D is a fifth as is D to G, etc.

Additionally, it is a good idea to start to memorize the order of the sharp and flat keys because it will help you recall them very quickly when analyzing your music.

To help with that I've got a little memory trick you can use. To learn the sharp key order just practice using this sentence:

68. ***Father Charles Goes Down And Ends Battle***

This is how the sharps fall on the staff as I've highlighted them in red.

Now we need to relate this to what we learned in chapters 11 and 12 about the major and minor keys
i.e. the keys as the sharps or flats appear:

1. C major - C D E F G A B C (no sharps or flats)

2. G major - G A B C D E F# G (1 sharp)

3. D major - D E F# G A B C# D (2 sharps)

4. A major - A B C# D E F# G# A (3 sharps)

5. E major - E F# G# A B C# D# E (4 sharps)

6. B major - B C# D# E F# G# A# B (5 sharps)

7. F# major - F# G# A# B C# D# E# F# (6 sharps)

8. C# major - C# D# E# F# G# A# B# (7 sharps)

9. F major - F G A Bb C D E F (1 flat)

10. Bb major - Bb C D Eb F G A Bb (2 flats)

11. Eb major - Eb F G Ab Bb C D Eb (3 flats)

12. Ab major - Ab Bb C Db Eb F G Ab (4 flats)

13. Db major - Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C Db (5 flats)

14. Gb major - Gb Ab Bb Cb Db Eb F Gb (6 flats)

15. Cb major - Cb Db Eb Fb Ab Gb Ab Bb Cb (7flats)

You can now see how the above sentence relates to the sharp keys.

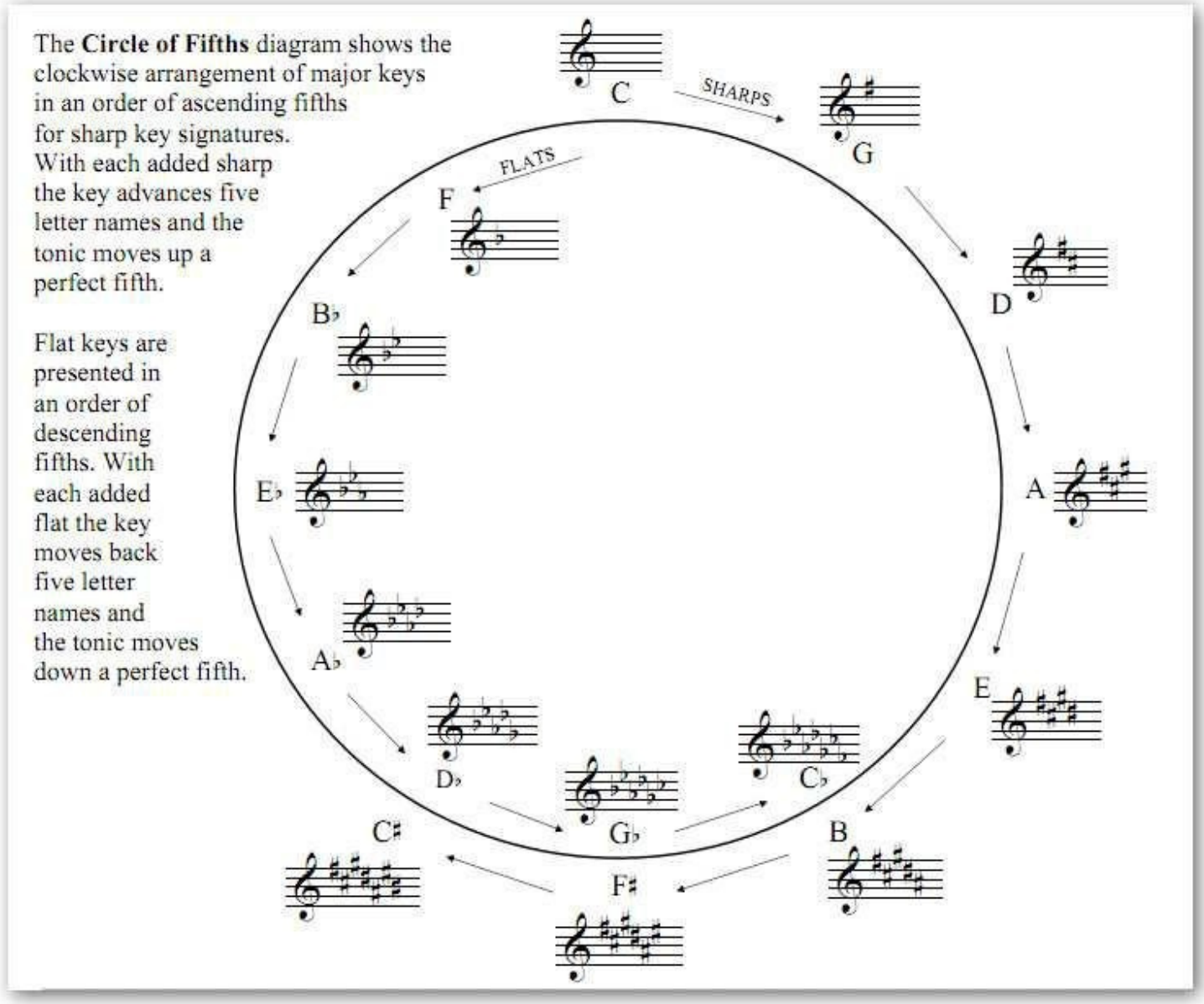
If you look back to the little diagrams in Chapter 13 about keys in music it'll make it even clearer. For the minor keys if you use the memory trick of **REVERSING** the above sentence!

Yes, that's right, just say it backward...

Battle Ends And Down Goes Charles Father

So, the order of flats is as per the red letters above. If you align that with the information in the chapter about the minor scale and commit it to memory, you'll soon be able to recall the key signatures with speed and precision.

Now, here is a diagram that demonstrates the circle of fifths for you to analyze and remember...



Don't forget, the sentences above don't include the keys that have no sharps and flats, namely: C major and A minor.

But you can see in the ***Circle of Fifths*** diagram how those sentences can be constructed.

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

Chapter Review Points

What did you learn in this chapter? Write your important points below...

I hope this book has helped you to gain a basic understanding of music notation and set you on the road to finding out more about this fascinating subject and adding to your personal growth!

If you have further questions or would like to see something added in future editions of this e-book let me know by using this contact form...

https://www.learnclassicalguitar.com/contact.html

(Click to go there)

I also hope to hear how this book has helped you and how you've improved.

Enjoy!

Here for you,
Trevor M.

Owner and Webmaster of https://www.learnclassicalguitar.com