

The Major Scale

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The Major Scale is made up of 8 **notes**. These 8 notes are separated by 7 **intervals** of **Whole Steps and Half Steps**.

For the purposes of guitar language a **Whole Step is 2 frets** and a **Half Step is 1 fret**.

There are **12 half steps in 1 octave**. This is why when you get to the 12th fret the notes begin to repeat. Half steps are also referred to as **Semi-tones**. Whole steps are also referred to as **Tones**.

This is how the pattern looks where **1 is the Tonic** (the first note of the scale and the note that gives the scale its name) and **8 is the octave** (the same note as 1 but higher in pitch):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
| **WHOLE** | **WHOLE** | **HALF** | **WHOLE** | **WHOLE** | **WHOLE** | **HALF** |

So, we can see that the major scale is made up of 5 whole steps and 2 half steps. This is exactly how it would look if you played the scale using only one string. If you started on the open string and followed this pattern you would arrive at the 12th fret, which would be the octave of the open string and would have the same note name as the string you started with.

This is useful to know because each degree of the major scale - the numbers 1 to 7 (8 is the same note as 1) has a chord that can be built on it. As long as you know which key you are in you will have an idea of the chords that are available to be used. These chords are known as:

The Diatonic Triads of the Major Scale:

Diatonic means “of the Tonic”. The Tonic is the first note of the major scale. A triad is made up of 3 notes (thus the word “tri”). This is the simplest chord you can make.

Here is what the diatonic triads of the major scale will look like:

/ **WHOLE** \ / **WHOLE** \ / **HALF** \ / **WHOLE** \ / **WHOLE** \ / **WHOLE** \ / **HALF** \
I ii iii IV V vi vii I
Major Minor Minor Major Major Minor Diminished

When referring to chords, roman numerals are used – capital letters for major chords and lower case letters for minor chords.