

Scales in Music

Ordered notes that build melodies and musical keys

A scale is a sequence of pitches arranged upward or downward according to a particular pattern of intervals. Its starting note is the **tonic** (home note). Many scales span an octave, ending on the same note name at a higher or lower pitch.

Scales help musicians create melodies, understand keys, improvise and build chords. A **whole step (W)** equals two semitones; a **half step (H)** equals one semitone. One semitone is the distance between adjacent piano keys, including black keys.

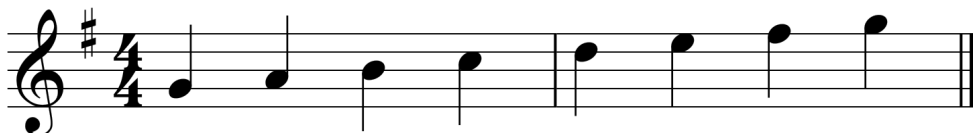
1. C major - treble clef



Notes: C - D - E - F - G - A - B - C. Degrees: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 1.

Major pattern: W - W - H - W - W - W - H. C major uses no sharps or flats.

2. G major - treble clef



Notes: G - A - B - C - D - E - F sharp - G. The major pattern stays the same.

The key signature places F sharp on the correct staff position, after the clef and before 4/4.

3. A natural minor - bass clef



Notes: A - B - C - D - E - F - G - A. Pattern: W - H - W - W - H - W - W.

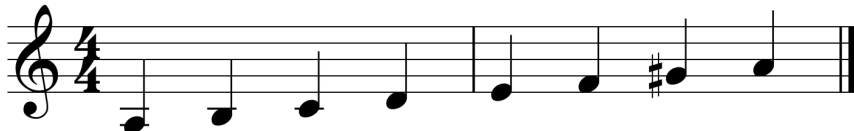
A minor and C major are relative keys: they share the same key signature but have different tonics.

Reading the notation: The treble clef identifies G on line 2; the bass clef identifies F on line 4. Count lines from the bottom. Notes move through successive lines and spaces; ledger lines extend the staff. Every example is in 4/4: each bar totals four quarter-note beats. The rhythm is chosen for practice; it does not define the scale.

More Scale Colours

Minor forms, pentatonic and blues

4. A harmonic minor



Notes: A - B - C - D - E - F - G sharp - A. Raise degree 7 of natural minor.

Pattern: W - H - W - W - H - 3 semitones - H. G sharp leads strongly back to A.

5. A melodic minor - ascending and descending



Up: A - B - C - D - E - F sharp - G sharp - A. Raise degrees 6 and 7.

Down: A - G - F - E - D - C - B - A. This is the traditional classical form.

6. C major pentatonic



Notes: C - D - E - G - A - C. Use major-scale degrees 1 - 2 - 3 - 5 - 6.

Pentatonic means five notes; the final C repeats the tonic. Hold it for 2 beats, then rest for 1.

7. C minor blues scale



Notes: C - E flat - F - G flat - G - B flat - C. Degrees: 1 - flat 3 - 4 - flat 5 - 5 - flat 7.

The G flat is the added blue note. Play the final C for 1 beat, then rest for 1 beat.

Practice: Count 1-2-3-4 while playing the quarter notes. For melodic minor, count "1-and, 2-and, 3-and, 4-and" for the eighth notes. Keep the pulse moving through rests.

Remember: An accidental appears immediately before its note; a natural cancels a sharp or flat. In jazz, melodic minor commonly keeps its raised 6th and 7th in both directions. The blues example here is the six-note **minor blues scale**; other blues scales also exist.