

Lesson 3 – Major Keys and Scales (DVD 1)

In This Lesson: In this lesson we'll learn how to construct a major scale, and the subtle difference between a scale and a key.

Now you'll start to see why your mental model of notes is so important as we begin to construct scales using whole steps and half steps.

A few things to remember about building major scales that help to make sure you're doing it right:

1. You'll use one of every letter. None will be left out, none will be duplicated. You'll usually need to use at least one sharp or flat to make it work.
2. You'll never mix sharps and flats in the same scale.
3. You'll never use “double sharps” or “double flats” in a scale. Technically these exist, but not in standard keys.

Make sure you use the pattern:

1 (WS) 2 (WS) 3 (HS) 4 (WS) 5 (WS) 6 (WS) 7 (HS) 8/1.

The way I like to remember it – and this comes in handy later – is that everything is a whole step except the 3 to 4, and the 7 to 8/1.

The major scale is more precisely called the *diatonic* major scale. The label *diatonic* means that it represents the key in its entirety... no notes are added or left out.

By contrast, the pentatonic major scale only has 5 notes. Since some of the notes from the key are left out (there are 7 unique notes in the key) it is not diatonic.

This brings up the subtle difference between a key and a scale. When we are talking about diatonic major scales (or just “the major scale”) there really is no difference between a key and a scale. The way I think about it is the key is all the notes that are available to you, grouped up together in no particular order.

Once you take those notes and put them in order with the most important note first, then you have a scale.

Lesson 3 Exercise

This is pretty simple, you're going to write out every major scale using the correct system of Whole Steps and Half Steps.

C Major: C _____

D Major: D _____

E Major: E _____

F Major: F _____

G Major: G _____

A Major: A _____

B Major: B _____

Bb Major: Bb _____

Eb Major: Eb _____

Ab Major: Ab _____

F# Major: F# _____

C# Major: C# _____

Db Major: Db _____

Gb Major: Gb _____

After you've gone through the process of building these major scales, you'll likely want to learn how to play them.

In the "How To Play The Major Scale" video segment I'll walk you through some of the most common fingerings of the major scale.