

Structure of Major Scales

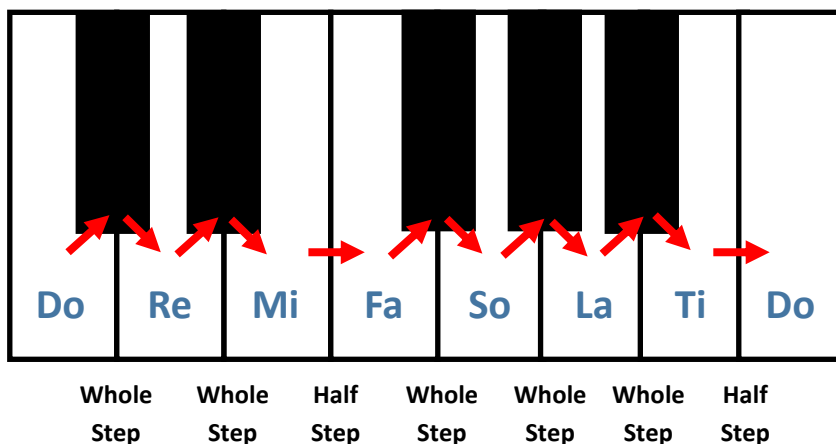
Western Major Scales are composed of a certain sequence of steps. A major scale can start on any note at the piano. Different sequences of half steps and whole steps can create different types of scales.

If you sing a western major scale, it matches the following set of pitches:

Do—Re— Mi— Fa— So— La— Ti— Do

This sequence of sung pitches is called solfege. Solfege was made popular in the movie, “The Sound of Music” with the song, “Do—Re— Mi” by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II and sung by Julie Andrews.

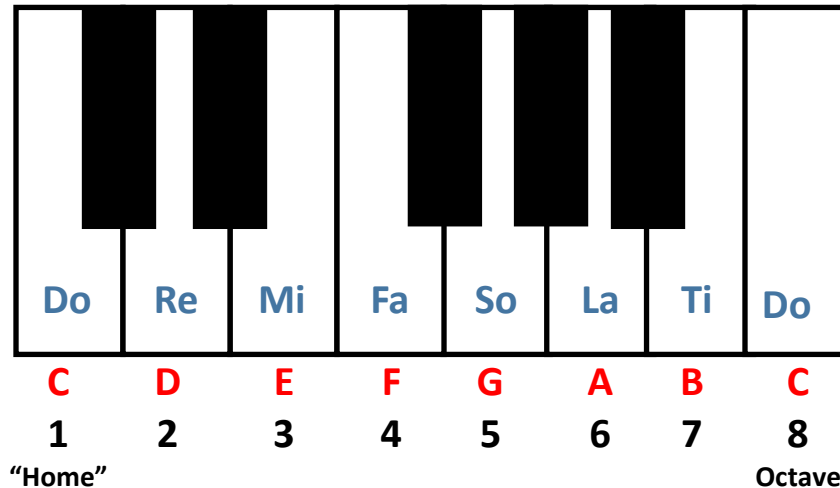
If you sing your major scale using solfege, all the notes will be a whole step apart except for Mi— Fa and Ti—Do, which are half steps. Plus, it will always be a Major Scale if these sequence of whole steps and half steps are the same no matter which note is the starting pitch.



Solfege	Do	Re	Mi	Fa	So	La	Ti	Do
Scale Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Scale Degree Name	Tonic	Super Tonic	Mediant	Subdominant	Dominant	Submediant	Leading Tone	Octave

Characteristics of a Major Scale

A major scale has a positive sound to the ear and is commonly used in compositions to depict happy, joyful, or optimistic feelings. Below is the C Major Scale because the first note of the scale is a “C” and it consists of the standard major scale pattern of half steps and whole steps.



1. "Do" – First Scale Note – Tonic

The most important note in any scale is "Do" or the tonic of a major scale. This is your "home note" in musical compositions. In fact, scales are named based on the first note or "Do" of the scale. Most pieces will use this note more often than any other note in the music and will almost always end the composition on this note to give a piece a sense of finality.

2. "Re" - Second Scale Note – Supertonic

Super means "above" in Latin. This note is often used as a "passing" note in melodies.

3. "Mi" - Third Scale Note – Mediant

This note is called the mediant because it is half-way between the dominant (5th) and the tonic. This note also has a large influence on whether the scale is considered major or minor and therefore the "mood" of a piece.

4. "Fa" - Fourth Scale Note – Subdominant

This note is called the subdominant because it is right below the dominant. In relation to the tonic of a scale, it creates a sonorous interval to the ear and pieces can often end by playing the subdominant to the tonic.

5. "So" - Fifth Scale Note – Dominant

This note is called the dominant and is second in importance only to the tonic. The tonic to the dominant of a scale has historically been considered the most pleasing interval to the ear and the dominant to tonic interval is the most common ending to a piece of music.

6. "La" - Sixth Scale Note – Submediant

The Submediant is halfway between the Subdominant and the octave. The sixth to tonic is often considered an interesting and pleasing interval.

7. "Ti" - 7th Scale Note – Leading Tone

This note is called a leading tone because when you hear it, you tend to want the next note to be the tonic.

8. "Do" - 8th Scale Note – Octave

Octave or the next "Do" on the keyboard. The octave is perceived to be a duplicate of the tonic. It is exactly twice (or half) the frequency of the tonic and we perceive the octave to be basically the same note as the tonic.

