

Intervals 1

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An interval is the pitch distance between two notes in melody or harmony. Understanding intervals is fundamental to learning more about music theory. It is similar to learning the alphabet in order to understand language.

This will be a series of lessons in which you will focus on one or two intervals in each lesson and apply your knowledge to pieces that you are playing.

The first lesson will deal with half steps, the smallest interval in Western music, and whole steps. The music of some other cultures use intervals that are smaller than our half-steps.

A half-step is also called a minor second, indicated by m2. Lower case letters are used to indicate minor and capital letters are used to indicate major. A whole step, which is two half steps, is called a Major Second, and is indicated by M2.

A chromatic scale is all half steps. Sharp signs raise a note a half step and flat signs lower a note a half step. The intervals between b and c and e and f are natural half steps.



Practice playing the chromatic scale below and practice playing in half steps from the bottom of your range to the top of your range until you can do it fluently. Notice that sharp signs are used when the note that follows is higher and flat signs are used when the note that follows is lower.

Chromatic Scale



chromatic scale, however, has all half steps and will sound chromatic in starting from any note.

In “Ode to Joy” below, continue the marking of all the minor seconds (m2) and major seconds (M2). Play the piece and focus on the sounds of m2s and M2s.

Ode to Joy Beethoven

The image displays a musical score for the first system of 'Ode to Joy' by Beethoven. The score is written in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff has interval markings above it: m2, M2, M2, m2, M2, M2, M2, M2. The second staff has an M2 marking above the first measure. The third, fourth, and fifth staves do not have interval markings. The score is presented on a light yellow background.

Assignment

In a piece that you play frequently, mark at least 4 of the m2s and 4 of the M2s and think about the sound of each interval when you play. There will be other intervals in the piece that are not either m2s or M2s. They will be studied in later lessons.