

Musical Intervals

What Is A Musical Interval?

A musical interval is the distance between two notes. An interval has two names:

Last Name = Count the distance between the letter names of the notes.

Ex. from C to E is a third.

First Name = Major, minor, perfect, diminished, augmented - depending on the actual distance between the notes.

Intervals – Number of Whole Steps

	Diminished	Minor		Major	Augmented
Second	0	1/2		1	1 1/2
Third	1	1 1/2		2	2 1/2
Sixth	3 1/2	4		4 1/2	5
Seventh	4 1/2	5		5 1/2	6
			Perfect		
Unison			0		1/2
Fourth	2		2 1/2		3
Fifth	3		3 1/2		4
Octave	5 1/2		6		6 1/2

The Major Scale

do re mi fa sol la ti do
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1(8)

Whole Whole Half Whole Whole Whole Half

From the root the intervals of the major scale are:

1 M2 M3 P4 P5 M6 M7 P8

In words that would be:

do – do = Unison

do – re = Major Second

do – mi = Major Third

do – fa = Perfect Fourth

do – sol = Perfect Fifth

do – la = Major Sixth

do – ti = Major Seventh

do – do = Perfect Octave

Rules for making intervals bigger or smaller

Decrease a Major interval by $\frac{1}{2}$ step and it becomes Minor

Decrease a Minor interval by $\frac{1}{2}$ step and it becomes Diminished

Increase a Major interval by $\frac{1}{2}$ step and it becomes Augmented

Decrease a Perfect interval by $\frac{1}{2}$ step and it becomes Diminished

Increase a Perfect interval by $\frac{1}{2}$ step and it becomes Augmented

Note:

There is no such thing as a Major or Minor Fourth

There is no such thing as a Major or Minor Fifth

The Sound of Ascending Intervals

Major Second: ARE YOU sleeping?

Minor Third: WHAT CHILD is this

Major Third: MICH – AEL ROW

Perfect Fourth: HERE COMES the bride

Perfect Fifth: TWINKLE, TWINKLE little star

Major Sixth: IT CAME upon a midnight clear, “NBC” = 1 6 4

Minor Seventh: THERE’S A place for us (from West Side story)

Major Seventh: All at ONCE AM I, several stories high

Octave: SOME-WHERE over the rainbow

Major Triad (1 3 5): “Mich – ael - Row” or sound of major chord