



# ALFRED'S BASIC GUITAR THEORY

# 1 & 2

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Guitar photo courtesy of Taylor Guitars.

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# Notes

Notes are the basic units of music. Written music uses various shapes to indicate the different types

Open Note



Whole Note

Open Notes with Stems



Half Notes

Closed Notes with Stems



Quarter Notes

Closed Notes with Stems and Flags



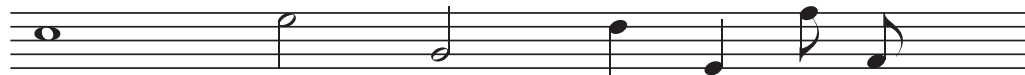
Eighth Notes

Write examples of the above notes in the spaces provided:

Continue across

		Whole Notes
		Half Notes
		Quarter Notes
		Eighth Notes

Notes are placed on a five-line staff:



Music for the guitar is written in the treble clef.

The treble clef sign is placed before each five-line staff. The treble clef sign looks like this:

It is derived from the Gothic letter G:

Here's how to make it: First, draw kind of a long skinny J. Then add the rest of the sign; make sure the tail curls around the second line of the staff.

Continue across

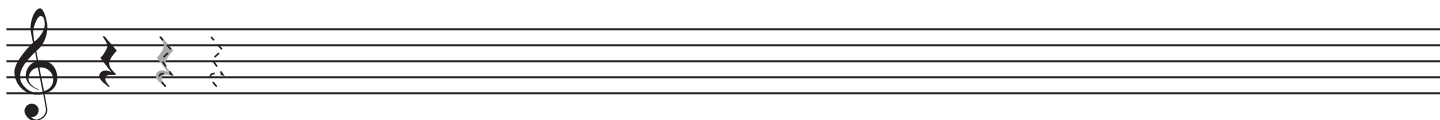
Bar lines are vertical lines that divide the staff into measures. The measures show the basic pulse of the music and make reading music easier by dividing the notes into shorter groups.

Bar Lines

\*This Theory book is correlated page-for-page with Alfred's Basic Guitar Method, books

# Rests

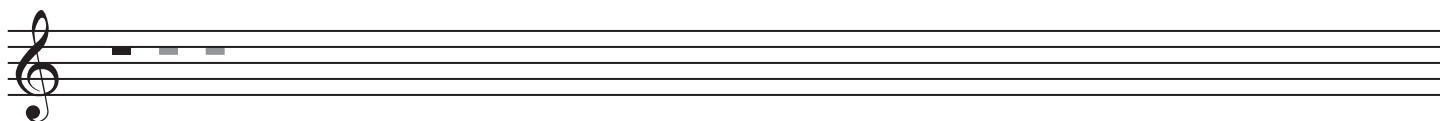
Rests in music are very important. They give the melody a chance to “breathe” and help the music achieve a graceful flow. Rests can also be very dramatic after a turbulent passage. The quarter rest  $\text{z}$  has a value of one beat. In most cases it is centered on the staff between the 2nd and 4th lines. Practice writing a series of quarter rests on the staff below.



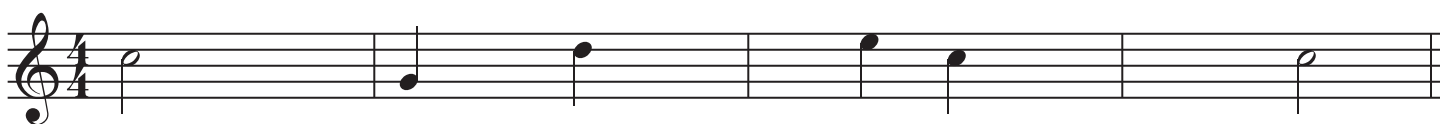
The half rest  $\text{—}$  has a value of two beats. It is like a box that sits on the 3rd line of the staff. Practice writing it below:



The whole rest  $\text{—}$  has a value of the number of beats in a complete measure. That is, in  $\frac{4}{4}$  it gets 4 beats; in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time the whole rest gets 3 beats. The whole rest is like a box that hangs from the 4th line of the staff. Practice writing it below:



In the following example some measures are missing beats. Complete them by inserting the appropriate rests. Important: the half rest is only used in  $\frac{4}{4}$  time; if a two-beat rest is required in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, 2 quarter rests are

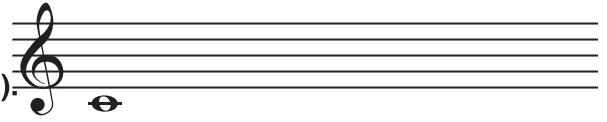


An easy way to remember the difference between half and whole rests is that the whole rest is heavier (longer) than the half rest, so that's why it hangs below the line. The half rest being lighter (shorter) floats on top of the line.

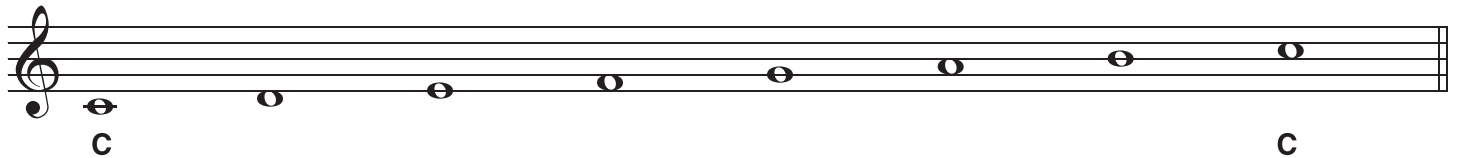
# Building the C Major Scale

When building the C major scale  
(or any major scale) use the following procedure:

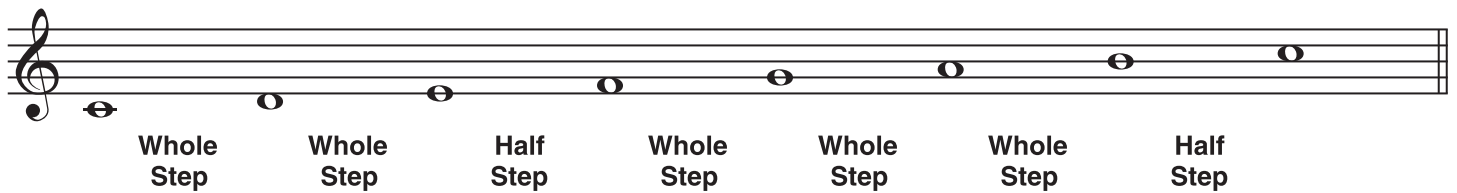
1. Write down the keynote, the note that names the scale (C).



2. Add 7 more notes going up stepwise without skipping or repeating any letters (D E F G A B C).  
If you've done this correctly, the last note will have the same name as the keynote.



3. Write down the names of all the intervals in the scale (whole steps and half steps).

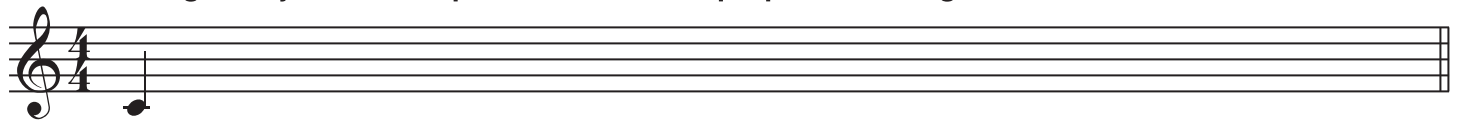


4. Check the intervals. They must occur in this order: whole, whole, half, whole, whole, whole, half.

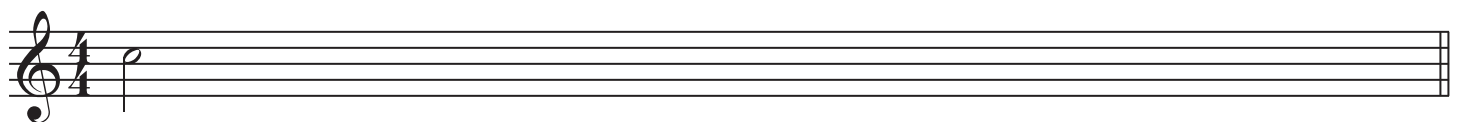
Since the intervals in the C scale above do occur in the proper order, we now know that the notes of a C major scale are C D E F G A B and C. If the intervals did not occur in the proper order, we would still have a scale, but it would not be a major scale.

On the open staves below, write the following:

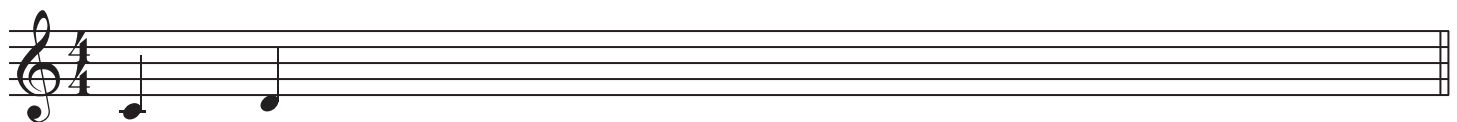
An ascending C major scale in quarter notes—use proper stemming.



A descending C major scale in half notes—start with third space C:

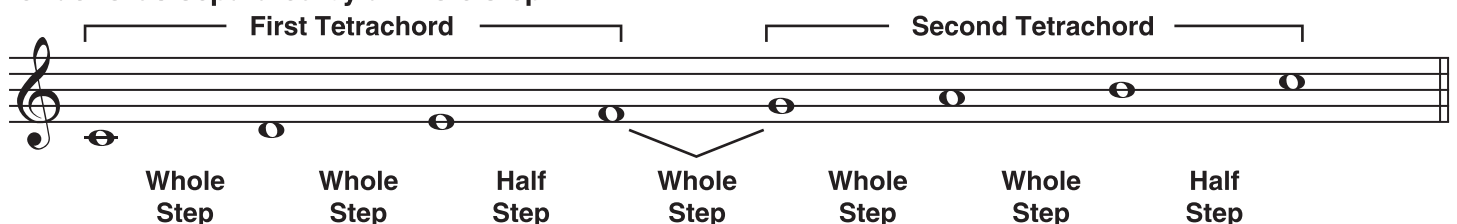


A C major scale in quarter notes that ascends from and descends back to low C:



## Tetrachords

A tetrachord (*tetra* means four) is a group of 4 consecutive notes separated by 2 whole steps and a half step. C D E F is a tetrachord. G A B C is also a tetrachord. Major scales can be thought of as 2 tetrachords separated by a whole step.



# The Key of E Minor

Pieces that are written in the key of E minor:

1. have a key signature of one sharp, the same as its relative key of G major. That sharp is F#, and this means that every F in the piece is played as F#, unless preceded by a natural. However, an accidental is often used to raise the 7th tone up a half-step—in this case, D#,
2. for the most part, make use of notes from the E minor scale: E F# G A B C D# E,
3. usually end on an E minor chord.

## The i, iv and V7 Chords in the Key of E Minor

Start with the two-octave E minor scale.

E F# G A B C D# E F# G A B C D# E  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15  
 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8)

The *i* chord starts on the 1st scale tone, E. Using the usual method (see pages 37 and 38), we get E (skip F#), G (skip A), B. The *i* chord in the key of E minor is an E minor chord, which consists of the notes E G B.

*i*  
Em

The *iv* chord starts on the 4th scale tone, A. Proceeding as usual we get A (skip B), C (skip D#), E. The *iv* chord in the key of E minor is an A minor chord, which consists of the notes A C E.

*iv*  
Am

The V<sup>7</sup> chord starts on the 5th scale tone. Proceeding as usual we get B (skip C), D# (skip E), F# (skip G), A. The V<sup>7</sup> chord in the key of E minor is B<sup>7</sup>, which consists of the notes B D# F# A.

V<sup>7</sup>  
B<sup>7</sup>

## Questions to Answer

What are the three principal chords in the key of E minor?

Name the notes in an A minor chord.

Name the notes in a B<sup>7</sup> chord.

Name the notes in an E minor chord.

Name three ways you can tell if a piece is in the key of E minor:

1. It has a key signature of .
2. It gets most of its notes from the  scale.
3. It usually ends on an  chord.