

SCALES

A scale may be defined as the arrangement of pitches a musical composition is based on. Scales are usually expressed as a series of notes ascending ladder-like through one octave of the musical alphabet.

The following "C major" scale ascends alphabetically through one octave:

C D E F G A B C

3 0 2 3 0 2 0 1

There are many different types of scales used throughout the world. Most Western European and American music since the 1600's has been based on the "diatonic" major/minor system. Pentatonic (five tone) scales are also very commonly used.

The building blocks of scales are whole steps (whole-tones) and half steps (semi-tones). Half steps may be defined as two adjacent notes. For guitar, a half step can be formed by playing two notes on adjacent frets of the same string.

Half step

Whole step

Whole steps may be defined as two notes with a single note between them. For guitar, a whole step can be formed by playing two notes two frets apart on the same string.

The following are examples of half steps:

B C F G \flat A \flat A A B \flat

0 1 3 4 1 2 2 3