

## Degrees

Understanding primary and relative keys establishes a foundation for learning all styles of songwriting. In order to learn more about music theory and composition, the next step will be to understand how chords and scales are actually constructed, and this is done through the application of *degrees*.

### The Primary Scale

The Major scale is the *primary scale* that provides the foundation or basic ‘blueprint’ for all music theory. Many music students will practice the Major scale in its chronological order (‘*Do, Re, Mi...*’) without ever viewing it as anything more than an exercise, but in order to understand more-advanced aspects of theory and composition, it will be essential to know how the primary scale is derived from intervals and degrees.

### Intervals/Steps

The Major scale consists of a specific arrangement of *intervals (aka steps)*. *Intervals/Steps* are measurements of distance between notes. On guitar, steps can be measured by frets. A *half-step* is the distance of one fret. A *whole-step* is the distance of two frets.

### Guitar Intervals

Half Step = 1 Fret  
Whole Step = 2 Frets

### The Major Scale Interval Pattern

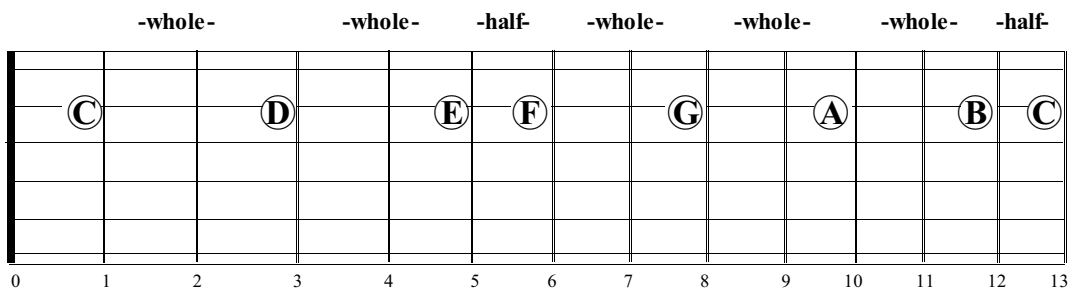
Steps/Intervals can be arranged into various interval patterns. *Interval patterns* are essentially the foundation or building blocks that all chords and scales are derived from. Below is the interval pattern for the Major scale. (*H = half step, W = whole step*)

**W - W - H - W - W - W - H**

**Major Scale Interval Pattern**

### ‘C’ Major Scale Interval Pattern

Below is the *interval pattern* for the ‘C’ Major scale starting from the second string/first fret:



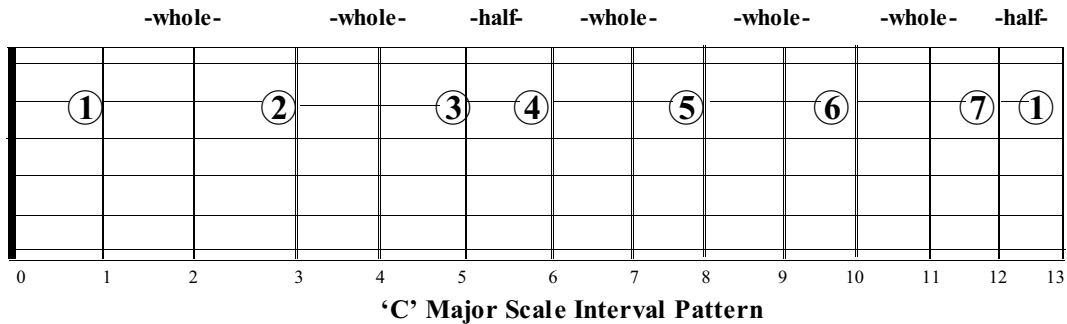
**‘C’ Major Scale Interval Pattern**

### Interval Patterns Are Universal

The ‘*W-W-H-W-W-W-H*’ interval pattern is *universal*, meaning it can be applied to any instrument where Major scale intervals are played. Once this interval pattern is memorized, the next step will be to go into more detail by applying degrees to the Major scale.

## Degrees & Numbers

*Degrees* are numbers used to describe notes or intervals within a scale. To determine the degree of a particular note within the Major scale, simply follow the interval pattern ('W-W-H-W-W-W-H') and 'count-up' the pattern starting with number '1'. Below is an example of how degrees are applied to the 'C' Major scale example from the previous page.



## Degrees: 'C' Major Scale

Below is a comparison of how letter notes, degrees, and the 'Do', 'Re', 'Mi' tones match or 'sync-up' with the 'C' Major scale. For example, in the Key of 'C' the fourth degree ('IV') would be 'F'.

<b>Letter Name</b>	'C'	'D'	'E'	'F'	'G'	'A'	'B'	'C'
<b>Degree</b>	'1'	'2'	'3'	'4'	'5'	'6'	'7'	'8'
<b>Tone</b>	'Do'	'Re'	'Mi'	'Fa'	'Sol'	'La'	'Ti'	'Do'
<b>Interval</b>		-W-	-W-	-H-	-W-	-W-	-W-	-H-

## Degrees Are Universal

Any letter note from any major scale will correspond to a degree by simply 'counting up' the Major scale interval pattern ('W-W-H-W-W-W-H'). What is the second degree in the Key of 'F' Major? From any 'F' note on the guitar, count up the Major scale interval pattern and substitute degrees for letter notes. With 'F' being the first degree, the second degree would be 'G'. By continuing to count up the 'F' Major scale, the third degree would be 'A', and the fourth degree would be 'B<sup>b</sup>'.

<b>Letter Name</b>	'F'	'G'	'A'	'B <sup>b</sup> '	'C'	'D'	'E'	'F'
<b>Degree</b>	'1'	'2'	'3'	'4'	'5'	'6'	'7'	'8'

## Naming Chords

Degrees are essential in describing how chords are constructed and named. Any chord name that includes a number ('G7', 'Dsus4', etc.) is actually describing what specific degrees makeup the chord. For example, an 'A' power chord ('A5') consists of an 'A' root note combined with the fifth degree ('E') from the 'A' Major scale.

## Power Chords = '5'

	A5	A5	A5
1			
2			
3			
4	7	'A'	'1'
5	7	'E'	'5'
6	5	'A'	'1'