

PENTACHORD SCALE -- a musical pattern containing 5 notes.

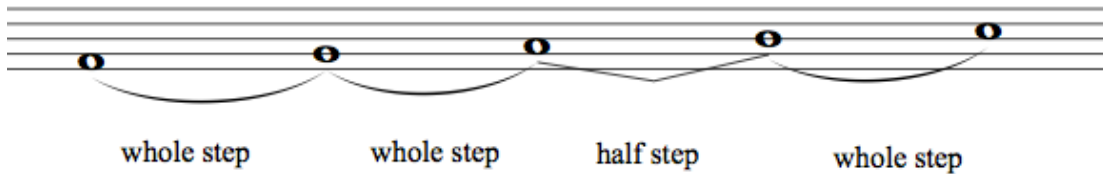
We usually play the scale up, then down, like this:



There are 5 notes in the pattern, and we use one finger per note. This scale fits nicely in our hands!

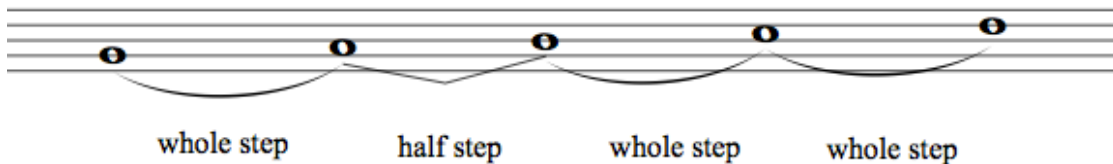
The first note (called **Tonic**) determines what **key** the scale is in. The kind of pattern determines what **mode** the scale is in.

MAJOR (MODE) -- a musical mode with a certain pattern of whole and half steps as described below. Major is the most commonly used mode in Western music.



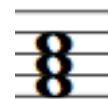
To practice a pentachord scale in the major mode, use C as the tonic, then play the next four white notes. Notice that these notes follow the pattern of whole steps and half steps described above. Not all scales use only white notes, though. Can you transpose the major scale to a D tonic? How about a Bb tonic? Remember to follow the pattern of whole and half steps.

MINOR (MODE) -- a musical mode with a certain pattern of whole and half steps as described below. Minor is the second most commonly used mode in Western music. Notice that for pentachord scales, the only difference between major and minor is the 3rd note.



To practice a pentachord scale in the minor mode, use A as the tonic, then play the next four white notes. Notice that these notes follow the pattern of whole steps and half steps described above. Not all scales use only white notes, though. Can you transpose the minor scale to a G tonic? How about an F# tonic?

TRIAD -- A chord containing three notes, each note an interval of a third higher than the previous note.



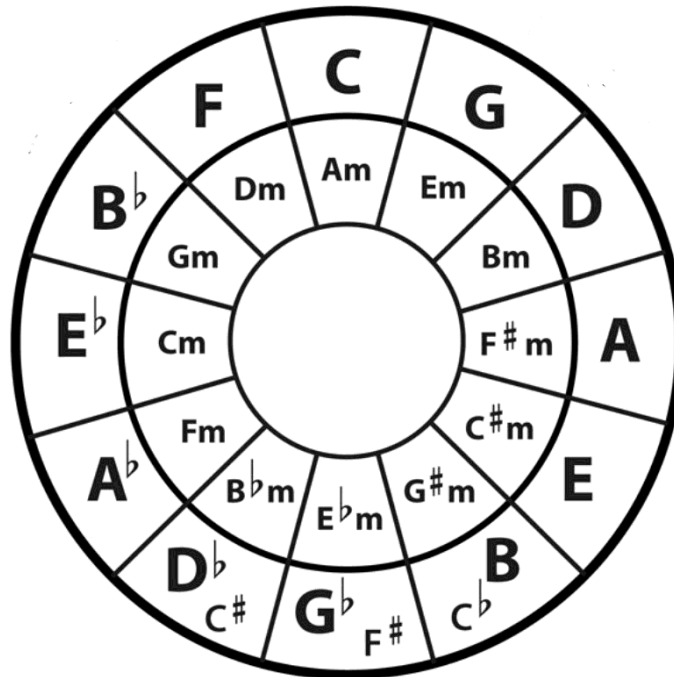
We often finish a scale by playing the triad. If your fingers are in the right position, playing the triad is simply a matter of pressing fingers 1, 3, 5 at the same time. One pentachord scale exercise with the triad sounds like this:



Eventually you will learn to play the scales in all keys and all modes! We can play scales in chromatic order (moving up one note at a time) or in the order of the circle of fifths. Playing them in the order of the circle of fifths provides a more natural progression, as they gradually become more complicated, and then gradually become less complicated, as the circle progresses.

CIRCLE OF FIFTHS

The musical keys are related by the interval of the 5th. If you start on one key, then move up a 5th, and keep on doing that, you will eventually end up at your original key. The brilliance of the circle of fifths will become more evident to you as you progress in your studies. For now, just understand that playing in the order of the circle of fifths makes the scales easier to learn. In the following diagram, the outer circle is for the major modes, and the inner circle is for the minor modes (the lower case “m” represents minor). Again, we shall study the circle of fifths more in-depth later.



On the following pages, there is a pentachord scale chart for every key possible. The tonic is written below the first rectangle of each chart. The other four rectangles represent the other four notes of the scale. When you are finished with these charts, they can serve as a “cheat sheet” for when you play pentachord scales. Fill out the charts by doing the following:

- Figure out which notes will be played by following the pattern of whole and half steps used for the respective modes.
- Color in any rectangles that represent black keys. This will give you a visual representation of the scale and make it easier to master.
- Write the names of the notes below each key. The note names must be in alphabetical order, without skipping or repeating any letters.

Then, your challenge is to learn to play all of these scales fluently. Start by playing them hands separately. Then play them hands together. Use a metronome to keep yourself on the beat, and see if you can increase your speed the more you practice.