

Tones and Semitones: major scales

Most music in the western world is played in **Equal Temperament** and in **Standard Tuning** where the A above middle C (the open A string on a violin) has a frequency of 440Hz. This is what pianos are tuned to, so it's also what we normally tune other instruments too! Each note is exactly one semitone higher or lower than the next closest note, so a **semitone** is the smallest step we can take. A **tone** is exactly two semitones.

Tunes we recognise sound the way they do because of the exact number of tones and semitones between each note. Get one wrong and it won't sound at all right!

Major scales are a really good example of tones and semitones, because there's an easy pattern to remember: *Tone Tone Semitone Tone Tone Tone Semitone* (TTS TTTS).

Watch out! There's a semitone between E and F, and a semitone between B and C, but all the other 'natural' notes are a tone apart.

For example C major:



Draw a bracket between the notes of the scale that are a semitone apart, and write the name of the scale next to it. Some of these scales are written with accidentals, and some are written with key signatures.

For example:



D major

