

SCALE INTERVALS

In basic music theory, an **interval** is simply the word we use to describe the difference between two pitches. A **scale** is a particular pattern for sequencing these differences, describing the movement from one pitch to next in linear (or “horizontal,” or “melodic”) terms. movement from one pitch to the next – usually in terms of how many semi-tones it takes to get there (also known as half-steps or, for guitarists, frets). Similarly, a chord might be thought of as a vertical or harmonic description of stacked intervals – but more on that later.

Below, I’ve charted out a few common scale pattern, giving both sequential intervals (i.e., each note’s distance from the note before it) and absolute intervals (i.e., each note’s difference from the starting note).

Major Scale (aka Ionian among music geeks)

Steps	R	W	W	H	W	W	W	H
Interval	P1	M2	M3	P4	P5	M6	M7	P8
Simple	1/R	2	3	4	5	6	♯7	Oct.

Major Pentatonic

Steps	R	W	W	–	♭3	W	–	♭3
Interval	P1	M2	M3	–	P5	M6	–	P8
Simple	1	2	3	–	5	6	–	Oct.

Dorian Minor (aka “modal” among old time players)

Steps	R	W	H	W	W	W	H	W
Interval	P1	M2	m3	P4	P5	M6	m7	P8
Simple	1	2	♭3	4	5	6	♭7	Oct.

Blues Scale

Played without the ♭5 step, this is the minor pentatonic scale.

Steps	R	–	♭3	W	H	H	♭3	W
Interval	P1	–	m3	P4	A4/d5	P5	m7	P8
Simple	1	–	♭3	4	♭5	5	♭7	Oct.

Freygish

AKA the “Byzantine,” “Arabic,” “Jewish,” and “double harmonic” scale. Melodies in this mode often are played using the ♯7 when going up, and the ♭7 when going down.

Steps	R	H	♭3	H	W	H	♭3/H	H
Interval	P1	m2	M3	P4	P5	m6	M7/m7	P8
Simple	1	♭2	3	4	5	♭6	♯7/♭7	Oct.

KEY

SEQUENTIAL INTERVALS

Abbr.	Interval	½ steps
R	Root note	0
H	Half step	1
W	Whole step	2
♭3	Minor third	3

ABSOLUTE INTERVALS

Abbr.	Interval	½ steps
P1	Perfect unison	0
m2	Minor second	1
M2	Major second	2
m3	Minor third	3
M3	Major third	4
P4	Perfect fourth	5
A4	Augmented fourth	6
d5	Diminished fifth	6
P5	Perfect fifth	7
m6	Minor sixth	8
M6	Major sixth	9
m7	Minor seventh	10
M7	Major seventh	11
P8	Perfect octave	12