

Back to Basics

- Getting Ready for Improvisation -

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Major Scales and Chords

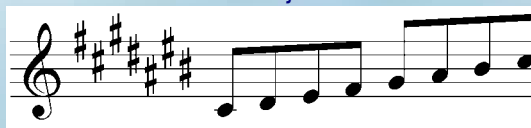
To improvise, you'll need to know your major scales and arpeggios so you can turn them into flexible scales and arpeggios. Here are the 12 major scales plus enharmonic scales (Db & Gb)

C Major



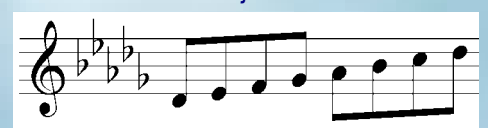
C D E F G A B C
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

C# Major



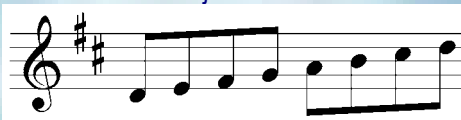
C# D# E# F# G# A# B# C#
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Db Major



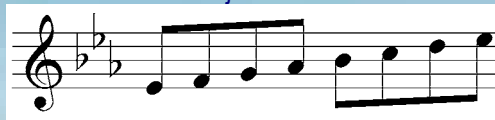
Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C Db
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

D Major



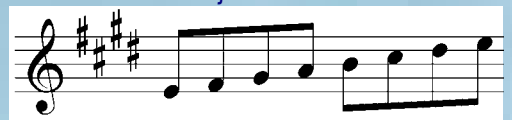
D E F# G A B C# D
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Eb Major



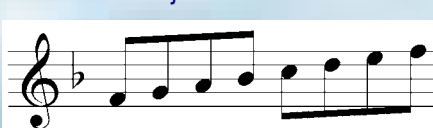
Eb F G Ab Bb C D Eb
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

E Major



E F# G# A B C# D# E
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

F Major



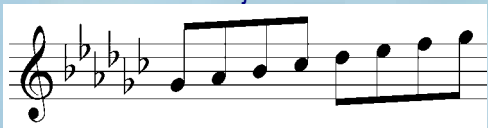
F G A Bb C D E F
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

F# Major



F# G# A# B C# D# E# F#
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Gb Major



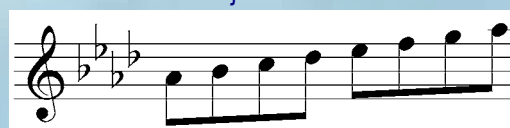
Gb Ab Bb Cb Db Eb F Gb
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

G Major



G A B C D E F# G
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Ab Major



Ab Bb C Db Eb F G Ab
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

A Major



A B C# D E F# G# A
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Bb Major



Bb C D Eb F G A Bb
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

B Major



B C# D# E F# G# A# B
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

To produce a major arpeggio, select the 1, 3, and 5 (and 8 if desired) of any major scale:



C Major – 1 3 5 8

Time Signatures

The most common time signatures you'll see in printed music for jazz are 4/4 and 3/4.



4/4 Time Signature



3/4 Time Signature

The number on the top tells how many beats per bar; the number on the bottom is the bottom part of a fraction that tells what kind of note gets one beat – in this case, the quarter-note (1/4). The object is to fill up the measure with notes and rests (silences) to equal the total number of beats (usually 4 or 3) in the bar. A bar is the distance between bar lines (vertical lines on the staff).

Basic Rhythms

Here are some basic rhythms for improvisation. Each note is half the length of the one before it.

Whole note



4 beats

Half-note



2 beats

Quarter-note



1 beat

Eighth-note



1/2 beat

To add half the value to a note, you put a dot after it.

Dotted half



3 beats

Dotted quarter



1 1/2 beats

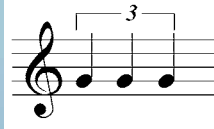
Triplets divide a basic value like half-notes or quarter-notes into three equal parts:

Half-note triplets



1 1/3 beats each

Quarter-note triplets



2/3 beat each

Eighth-note triplets



1/3 beat each