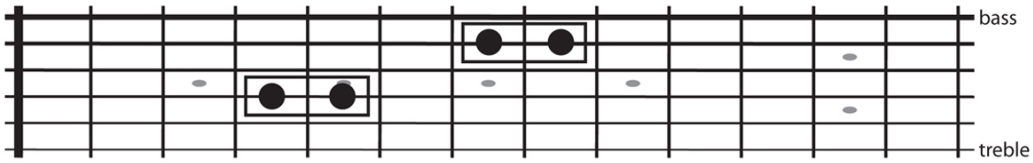
Chapter 0: The Major Scale.

What is a scale?

A scale is a series of 7 different sounds, which are located at certain distances from one another. These distances between sounds are called “intervals” and are expressed in “steps”. An interval is a distance between 2 sounds, a certain number of steps (or frets) apart.

The smallest distance/interval between 2 sounds in music-theory is called a “HALF STEP”.
This corresponds to 2 adjacent keys on a piano, or 2 adjacent frets on a guitar neck.



A “whole step” would be 2 half steps distance: you skip a fret on the guitar (2 frets distance).

A scale is a series of sounds that follow in a succession of whole and half step distances. Each scale has its unique order of whole steps and half steps. The scale you use, defines the sound of the music you will create with that scale. As an example: pop-music sounds quite different from gypsy music or from Indian music, solely because the scales used in these different cultures and genres, consist of different whole-half step configurations. These scales will be covered later in the book.

What do you use a scale for?

Answer: to communicate musical ideas… to talk with your guitar.
Music is communication. When you solo, you are talking with your instrument. When you play/write music, you are communicating with your audience and with the other musicians you play with.
Song writing is story telling.

The definition of communication: exchanging thoughts, ideas, concepts and emotions with one another through language. That language can be:

1) Regular spoken languages.
2) Non-verbal communication. (body language, facial expressions, gestures, tapping fingers on a table, etc…)
3) And of course… MUSIC.

In regular language, there is “grammar’. “Grammar” is a set of rules, a protocol, that everybody in a certain area or region (a country, state) agrees upon, as a means of communication. Grammar defines in what order to place the words into sentences, where to put commas and periods (spaces), how to conjugate verbs, and it outlines “the regulations” necessary to communicate with the vocabulary that makes up that language.

In the language of music, you deal with grammar also: the “scale” is your grammar in music.
In the western world, the most commonly used scale is:

The major scale:

The “major scale” is the name of the musical scale that we most commonly and widely use in the Western world to write music with.

Our music sounds the way it sounds, because of the structure of the scale that we use to write our music with. Middle Eastern music for example, sounds totally different from music in the Western world, simply because Middle Eastern scales consist of different whole and half step configurations. The scale used in Middle Eastern music has more half step intervals, and these half steps are in different locations in the scale than they are in the scales we use in the western world. The result is a totally different musical sound, atmosphere and texture.

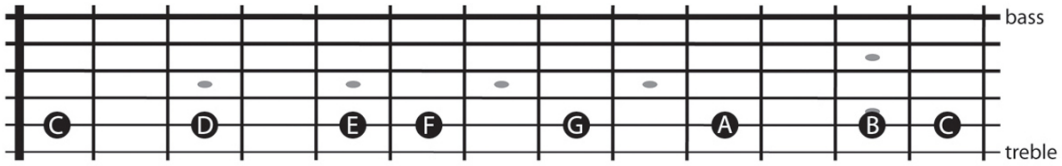
So speaking of scale structures: let’s have a look at the scale we use in our music.

Structure of the major scale.

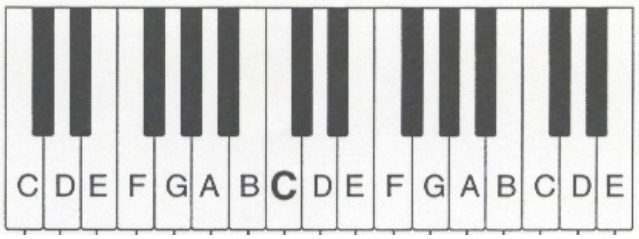
There are 2 ways to explain/define the structure and organization of **the major scale**.

1) ***By the intervallic distances from note to note:***

   whole step / whole step / *half step* / whole step / whole step / whole step / *half step*



   This is how it looks like on a piano keyboard:



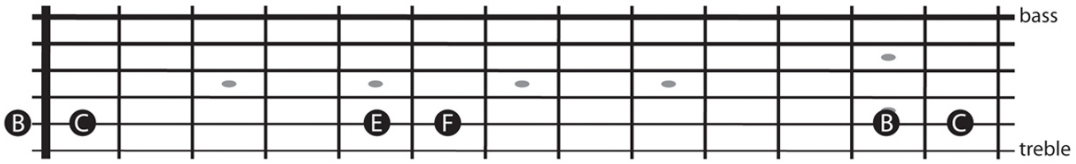
   Each step from 1 key to the adjacent key on the piano is called a “half step” in music theory. The “half step” is the smallest interval we have in our music. The adjacent keys on a piano correspond to adjacent frets on a guitar. The spaces in between the notes on the above guitar fret board correspond to the black keys on a piano.

   Notice how there is no black key between E-F and B-C on the piano keyboard, and correspondingly, there is also no fret space in between those notes on the guitar neck.

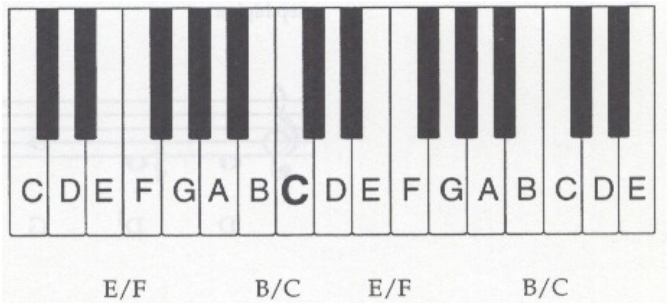
2) ***By the half step locations:***

   The half steps are in between 3-4 and 7-8
   (which means that half steps are between the 3rd and the 4th and between the 7th and the 8th note.)

   Above guitar neck picture shows these notes to be: E-F and B-C.
   The picture below shows the notes E-F and B-C without the other scale notes on the 2nd string.



Following piano keyboard shows how E-F and B-C are also adjacent keys on a keyboard.
2 adjacent frets on a guitar neck = 2 adjacent keys on a keyboard.



When you start this particular structure that is called a “major scale” on the note C, you happen to play all “naturals”, which means:

- White keys of the piano, or in other words
- Alphabet note names only, or in other words
- No “sharps” (#) or “flats” (b).

This scale is called the C major scale.
The C major scale is the only major scale that consists of white keys only (meaning: that does not have any sharps of flats).

Sharps and Flats.

Black keys on the piano are called “sharp” (#) or “flat” (b). These are the notes IN BETWEEN the white keys. Since in a C major scale you don’t see any alphabet note name followed by the sign # or b, that is an indication that this scale does not contain black keys.
Because of that, this scale is typically the first scale students learn in music schools all over the world. The sharp and flat symbols are called “accidentals”, and we will cover these in the chapter on key signatures.

In the next couple of pages, you will see all the notes of the C major scale mapped out on all strings. You will be learning all these notes on the guitar.

We covered some theory in this chapter, which now needs to be practiced to make sense. Being creative with new material is the most efficient and most fun way to get that information down. You will not be practicing scales under this system: right of the bat you will be soloing and playing music with the new scales you learn. But before we get into all the action, let me first introduce you to the unique approach you will be using to master the fret board efficiently and thoroughly: “***Linear” or “single-string playing”.***