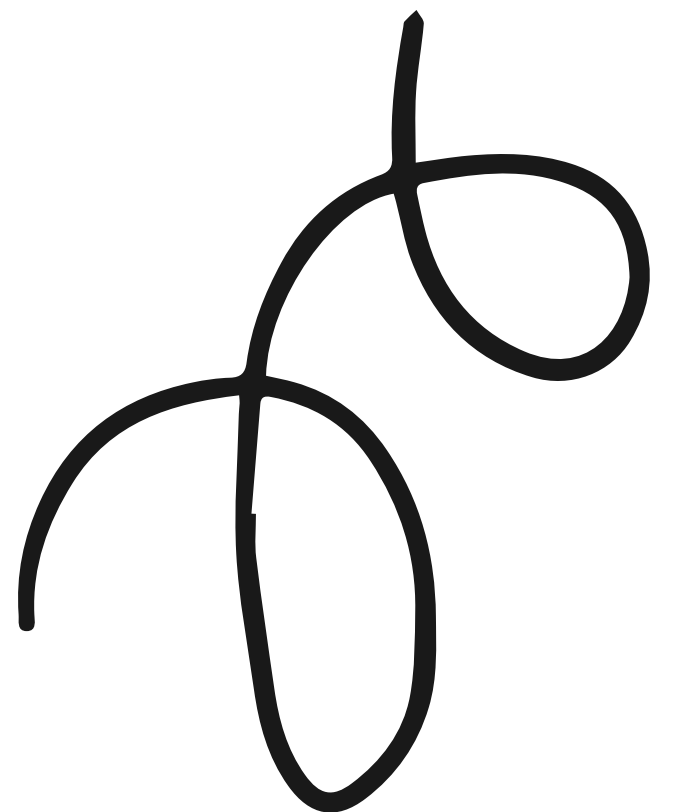




# ALL I KNOW ABOUT SONGWRITING

By Nicole Stella



Class Workbook

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# I. The Elements of a Song



- The Melody

A succession of notes perceived as a coherent musical segment.

- The Chord Progression

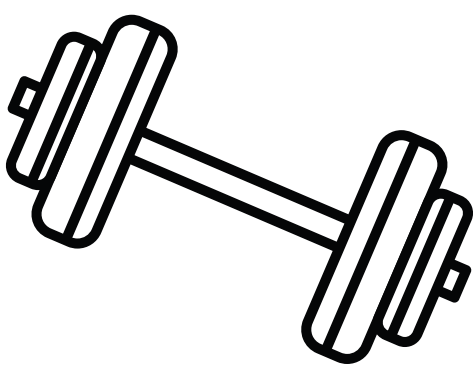
The harmonic backbone of our song, formed by one or more progression of chords.

- The Lyrics

A succession of words, usually organized into different verses, we can sing on a melody.

- The Rhythm

The rhythm is not only a basic succession of stresses (strong and weak) and pauses, the duration of notes, or the time signature of the song. It is also the general mood and feel we decide to give to our song.



## Exercise

Pick three of your favorite songs and isolate each of these elements. Which is the one that stands out the most? How do they interact with each other? Do you notice patterns or contrasts? Take note of what you hear!



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# II. The Songwriting Process



## ● Melody First

Familiarize yourself with the melody you are building. You should start perceiving the emotions and the sensations that it delivers. Is it jolly or sad? Is it triumphant or reflective? Being aware of these emotions will help you come up with a story to portray in your song.

## ● Chords First

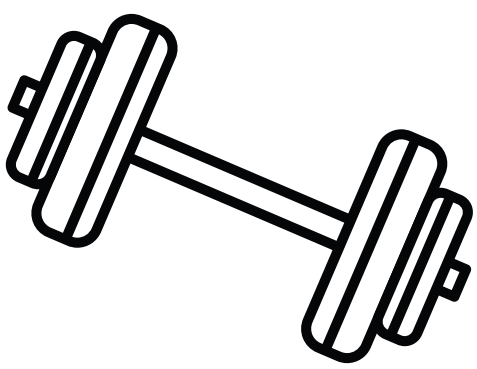
With this method, you are not looking for a melody nor a story yet. You just mess around with your instrument, playing random chords and riffs, trying to find a magical progression that delivers the emotions or the moods you want to tackle.

## ● Lyrics First

You have a very clear story to deliver. The central idea of your song is already in place, you only need to build it verse by verse. Make sure the words you find will "sit well" on a melody (pay attention to the rhythm and the stresses).

## ● Whatever the approach,...

Allow yourself to dive into the world you are creating with no distractions. Be inspired by what you have seen, heard, experienced. Keep a journal of all of these "prompts" to use at the right time. "Steal" from works of art you love.



## Exercise

Start writing three different songs using the three different approaches highlighted in this lesson.

Online resources for non-musicians:  
<https://virtualpiano.net/>  
<https://www.onemotion.com/chord-player/>

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# III.

## The Structure of a Song



### ● Verse

The verse is often the first vocal section of a song. It serves as a sort of opening scene. Through the first verse, you can start delivering your story, concept, or message.

### ● Chorus

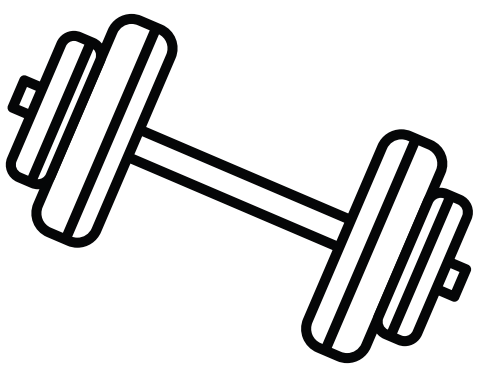
The chorus is often the strongest part of our composition. From a lyrical point of view, the chorus is the center of our story. It is where our situation is in full swing. It is often a message, a strong declaration, a statement.

### ● Bridge

The bridge is the link between the verse and the chorus. It helps in building up the right atmosphere for the climax, so it often adds something new to the verse, but without giving away too much.

### ● Middle Eight

The middle eight is an additional part we want to put in our tune just before its ending. It adds variety to our song.

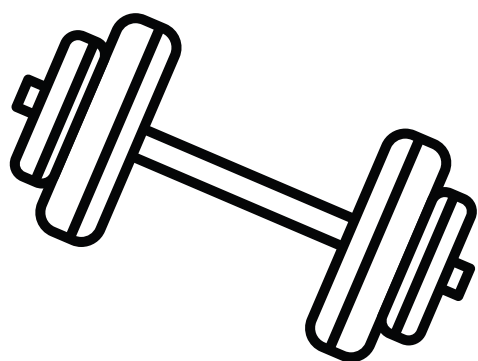


### Exercise

Listen to your favorite songs. What is their structure? Where do you spot the safest and most repetitive elements? Where do you spot the biggest changes? Do the emotions delivered change in each and every section? Take some notes in the box down here.

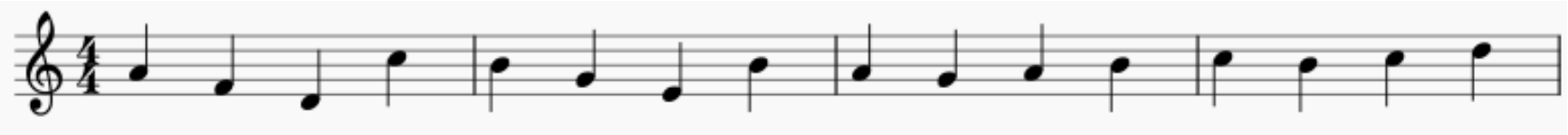
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# IV. Music Theory Basics



## Exercises

Practice your reading.

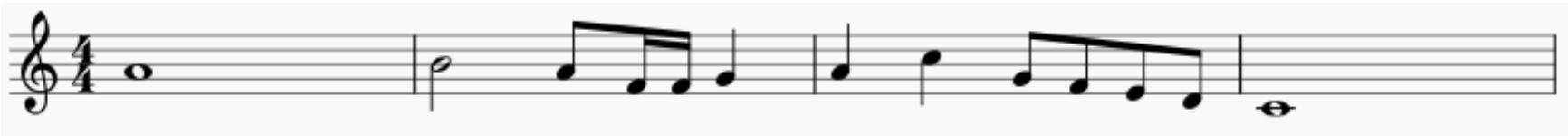


A \_\_\_\_\_



C \_\_\_\_\_

What's the note value?



whole\_\_\_\_\_

Spot the mistakes!

SIMPLE METERS

3/4

3/8

4/2

COMPOUND METERS

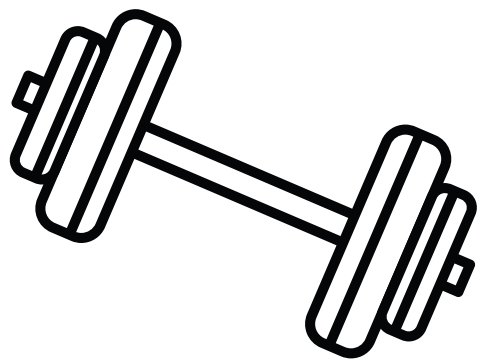
4/4

6/8

2/4

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# V. Intervals



## Exercises

Name the intervals

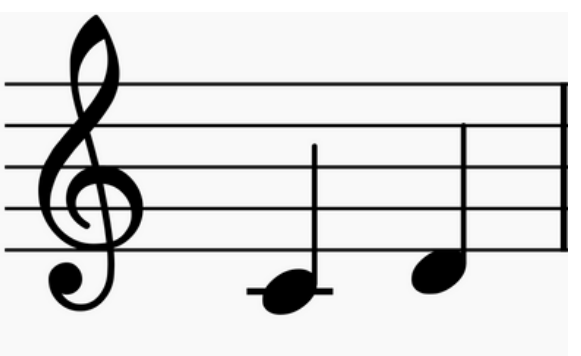
A - C      \_\_\_\_\_

G - D      \_\_\_\_\_

F - B      \_\_\_\_\_

C - A      \_\_\_\_\_

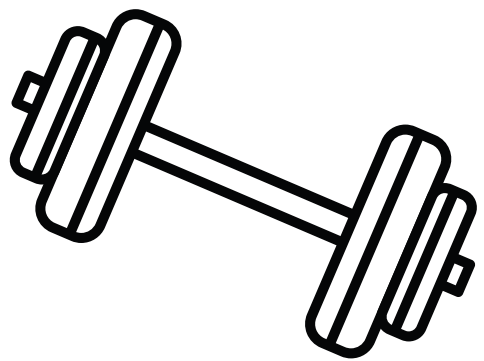
D - C      \_\_\_\_\_



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# VI. Scales I



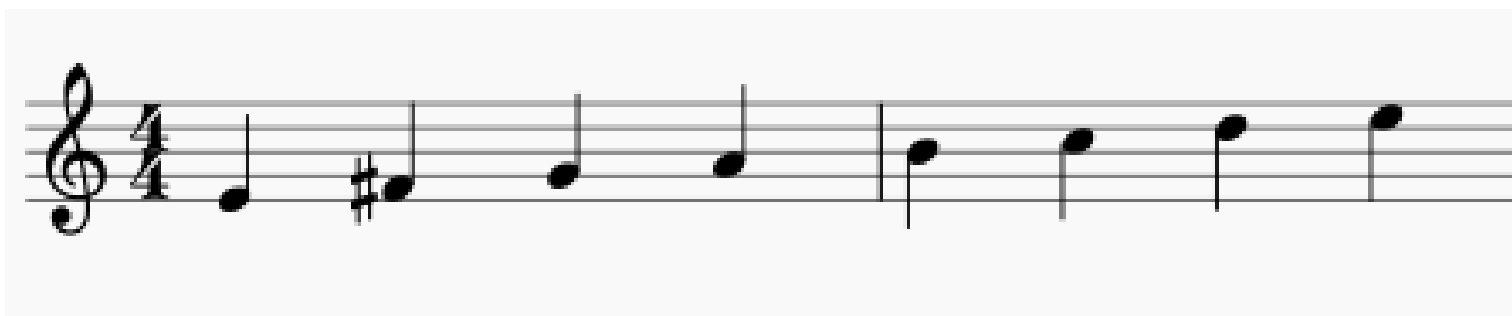
## Exercises

Major or Minor Scale? If Minor, is it Natural, Harmonic, or Melodic?



G - A - B - C - D - E - F# - G

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.



E - F# - G - A - B - C - D - E

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.

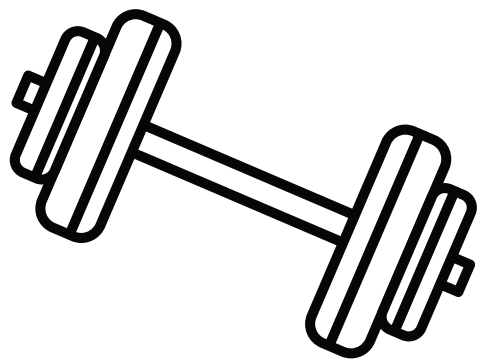


E - F# - G# - A - B - C# - D# - E

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.

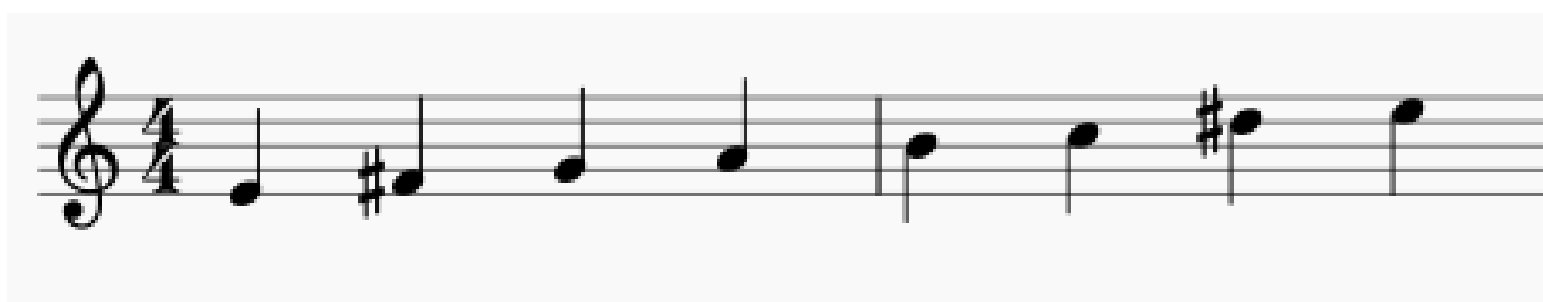
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# VI. Scales I



## Exercises

Major or Minor Scale? If Minor, is it Natural, Harmonic, or Melodic?



E - F# - G - A - B - C - D# - E

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.



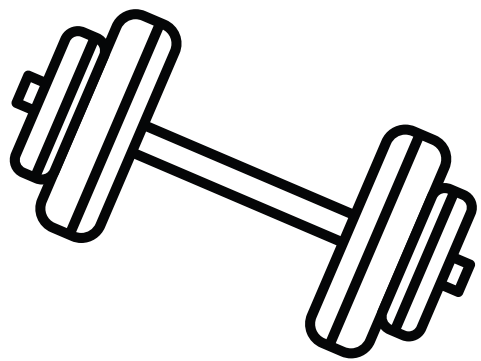
E - F# - G - A - B - C# - D# - E

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.

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# VII. Intervals II



## Exercises

Name the intervals (including their quality!)

A - C      \_\_\_\_\_

G - D      \_\_\_\_\_

F - B      \_\_\_\_\_

C - A      \_\_\_\_\_

D - C      \_\_\_\_\_



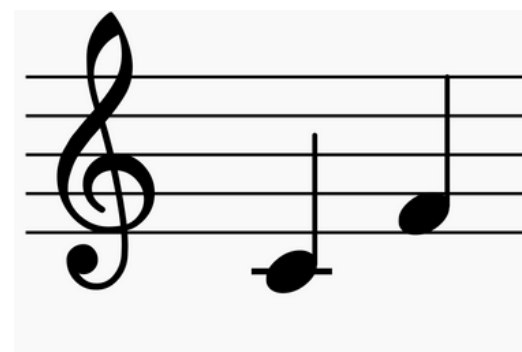
\_\_\_\_\_



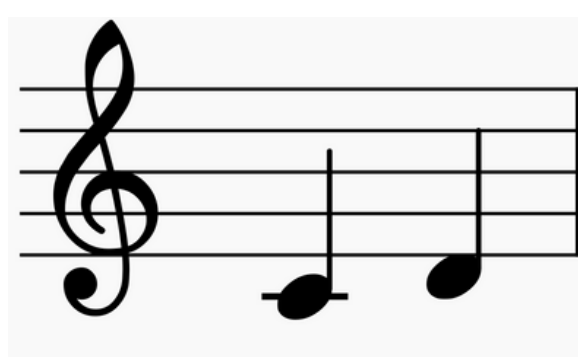
\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



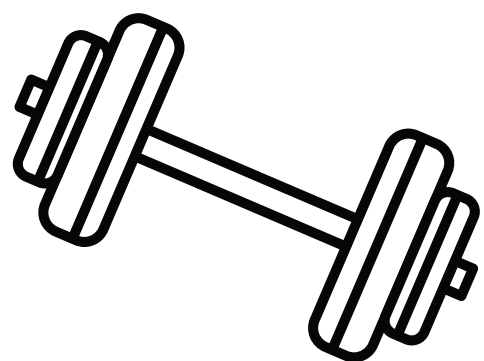
\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

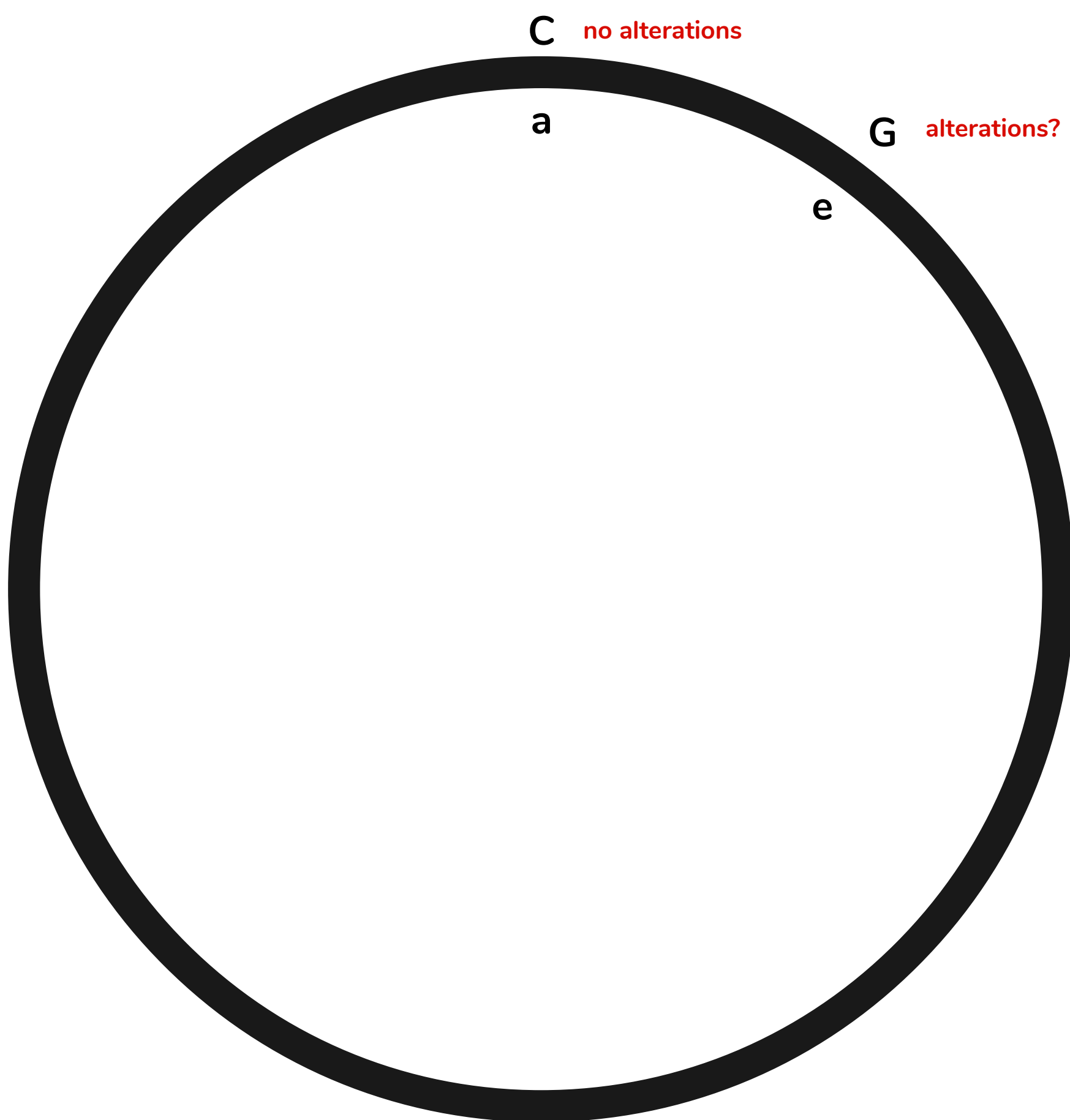
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# VIII. Keys



## Exercises

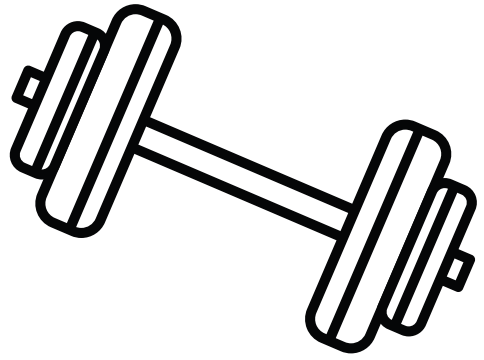
Try to reproduce the circle of fifths...without looking at the slide! Add the alterations and the relative minors too.



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# IX.

## Scales II & Modes



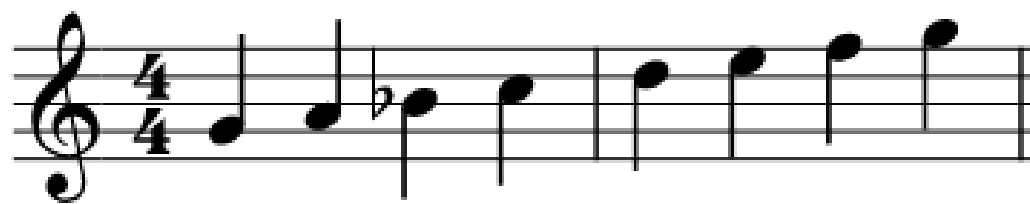
### Exercises

What scales are these?



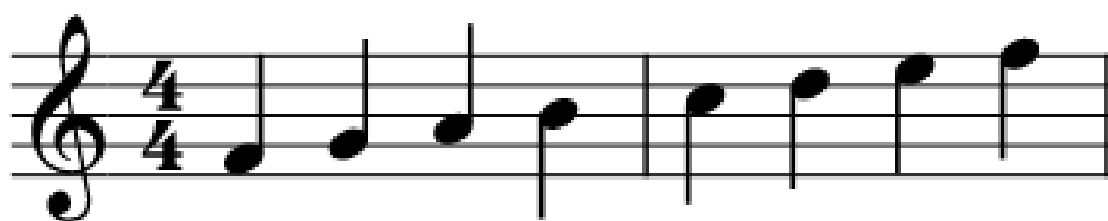
G - A - B - D - E - G - E - D - B - A - G

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.



G - A - Bb - C - D - E - F - G

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.



F - G - A - B - C - D - E - F

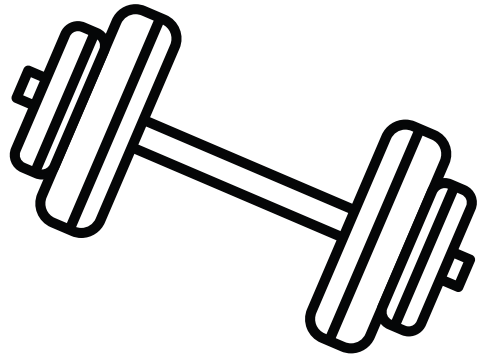
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# IX.

## Scales II & Modes



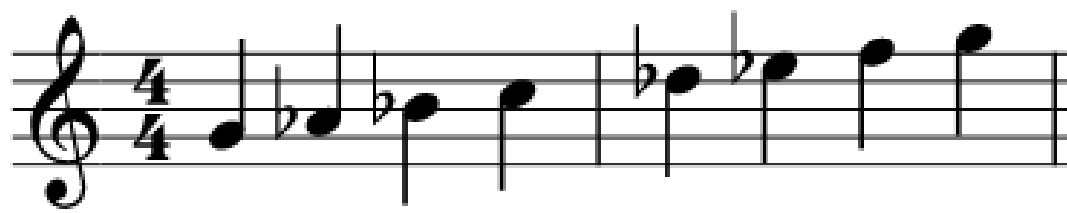
### Exercises

What scales are these?



C - D - Eb - E - G - A

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.



G - Ab - Bb - C - Db - Eb - F

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.

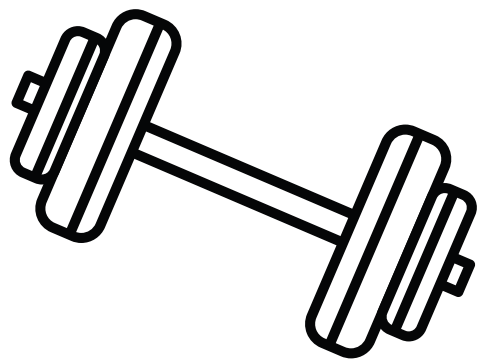


E - F# - G# - A - B - C# - D# - E

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ scale.

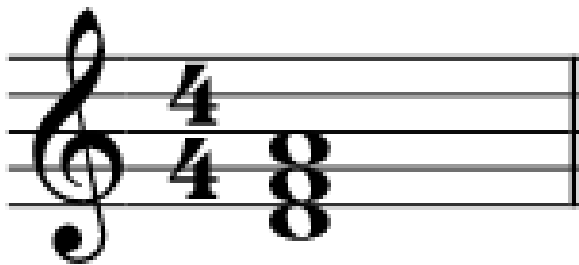
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# X. Chords



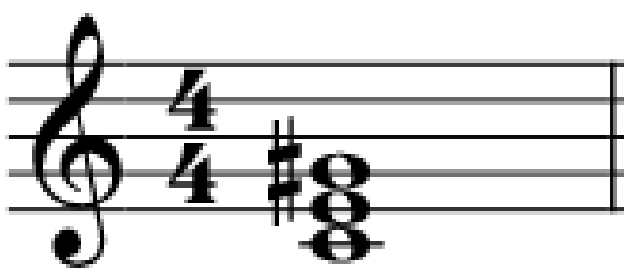
## Exercises

What chords are these?



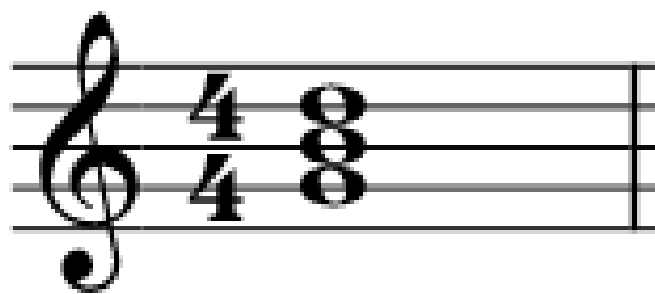
D - F - A

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ chord.



C - E - G#

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

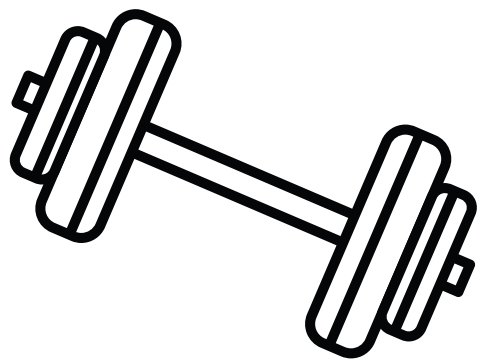


G - B - D

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

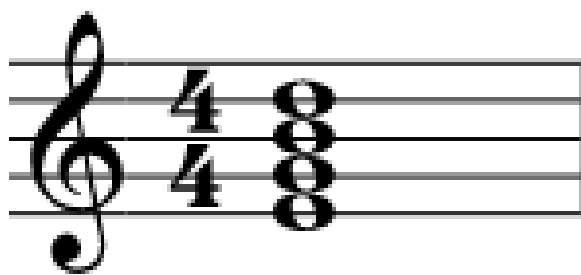
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# X. Chords



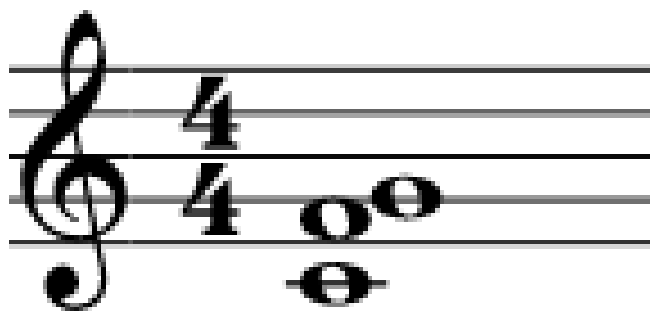
## Exercises

What chords are these?



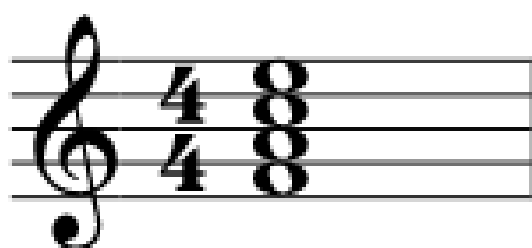
E - G - B - D

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ chord.



C - F - G

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ chord.



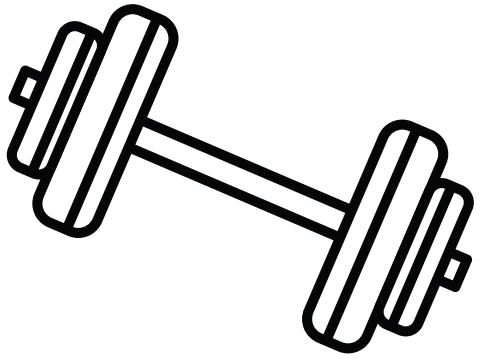
F - A - C - E

This is a \_\_\_\_\_ chord.

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# XI. Chord Progressions



## Exercises

Reply to the questions.

1) What is an authentic cadence?

2) What is a plagal cadence?

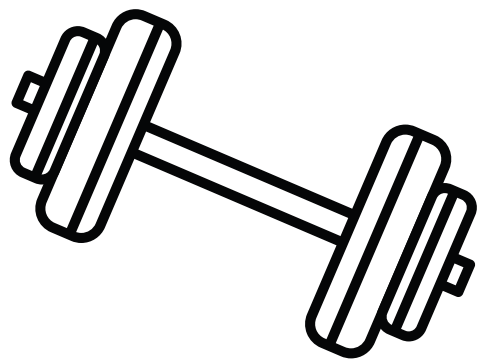
3) How can we employ the submediant (VI) in a progression based on a major key?

4) How can songwriters employ the mediant (III) in their compositions?

5) How do we employ the leading tone chord and the subtonic chord in our songs?

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# XII. Modulation



## Exercises

Reply to the questions.

1) What are the three easiest ways to modulate?

2) How can we modulate between close keys?

3) How can we modulate between distant keys?

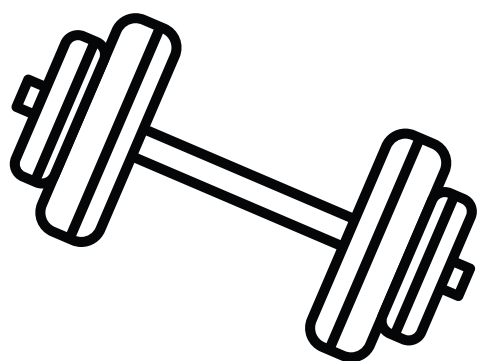
4) What is a chain modulation?

5) How can we modulate through a diminished seventh chord?

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# XIII.

# Getting real about songwriting



## Exercises

Write three different melodies using the three techniques explained in the class (vocal improvisation, instrumental improvisation, chord-progression-first on your instrument).

Listen to at least two of your favorite songs and try to identify:

- 1) what motifs and phrases constitute the main theme,
- 2) what is the structure of the melody,
- 3) what is the structure of the lyrics,
- 4) what figures of speech are used in the lyrics,
- 5) what is the rhyming scheme used in the lyrics (if any).

Write the melody for a verse using the structure **motif A + motif A + motif B + motif C**.

Write the lyrics for a chorus using 4 different lines and a fixed number of syllables (of your choice). Include at least one figure of speech.

Write the chord progression and the melody for a break-up song with the following structure:

- Verse
- Verse
- Bridge
- Chorus
- Verse
- Verse
- Outro

Write the chord progression and the melody for a feel-good song with the following structure:

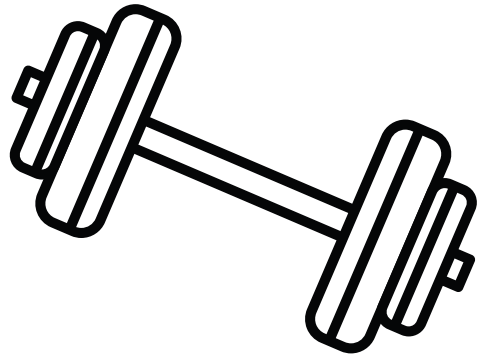
- Verse
- Verse
- Chorus
- Verse
- Verse
- Middle Eight
- Verse
- Outro

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# XIII.

## Getting real about songwriting



### Songwriting Prompts

The last time you traveled.

A broken friendship.

Your favorite book, movie, or  
TV series.

Your house.

A mended relationship.

A moment of pure bliss.

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