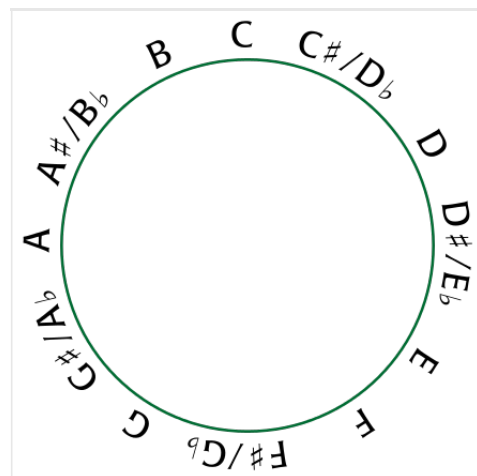


Chromatic scale

short song that uses the chromatic scale in the beginning as well as in the distorted part at 0:35

The **chromatic scale** is a **musical scale** with twelve **itches**, each a **semitone** above or below another. On a modern piano or other **equal-tempered** instrument, all the semitones are the same **size** (100 **cents**). In other words, the notes of an equal-tempered chromatic scale are equally spaced. An equal-tempered chromatic scale is a **nondiatonic scale** having no **tonic** because of the **symmetry** of its equally spaced notes.^[1]



Chromatic scale drawn as a **circle**: each note is equidistant from its neighbors, separated by a semitone of the same size.

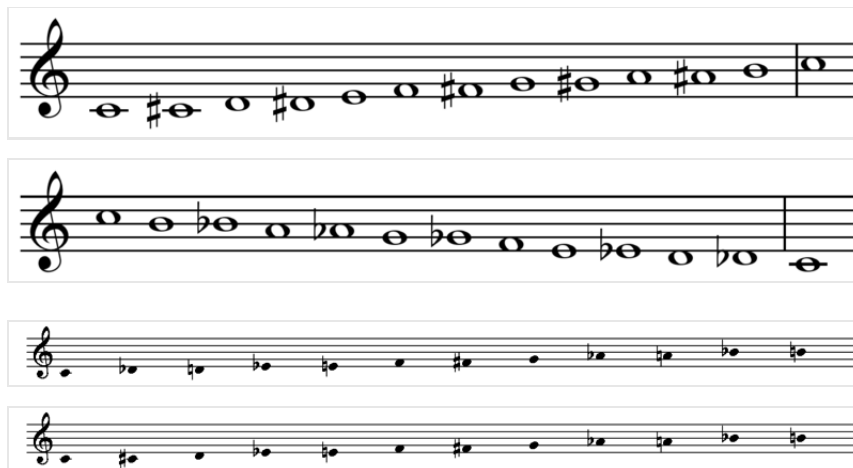
The most common conception of the chromatic scale before the 13th century was the **Pythagorean chromatic scale**. Due to a different tuning technique, the twelve semitones in this scale have two slightly different sizes. Thus, the scale is not perfectly symmetric. Many other **tuning systems**, developed in the ensuing centuries, share a similar asymmetry. Equally spaced pitches are provided only by **equal temperament** tuning systems, which are widely used in contemporary music.

The term *chromatic* derives from the Greek word *chroma*, meaning *color*. Chromatic notes are traditionally understood as harmonically inessential embellishments, shadings, or inflections of **diatonic** notes.

Notation

The chromatic scale may be notated in a variety of ways.

Ascending and descending:^[1]



The chromatic scale has no set spelling agreed upon by all. Its spelling is, however, often dependent upon [major or minor](#) key signatures and whether the scale is ascending or descending. The images above, therefore, are only examples of chromatic scale notations. As an abstract theoretical entity (that is, outside a particular musical context), the chromatic scale is usually notated such that no scale degree is used more than twice in succession (for instance G flat - G natural - G sharp).

Non-Western cultures

- The ancient [Chinese](#) chromatic scale is called *Shí-èr-lǚ*. However, "it should not be imagined that this [gamut](#) ever functioned as a [scale](#), and it is erroneous to refer to the 'Chinese chromatic scale', as some Western writers have done. The series of twelve notes known as the twelve *lǚ* were simply a series of [fundamental notes](#) from which scales could be constructed."^[2]
- The [Indian solfège](#), i.e. [sargam](#), makes up the twelve notes of the chromatic scale with respective sharps and flats.

Total chromatic

The *total chromatic* (or *aggregate*^[3]) is the [set](#) of all twelve [pitch classes](#). An *array* is a succession of aggregates.^[3] See also: [Tone row](#).

See also

- [Chromaticism](#)
- [Atonality](#)
- [Twelve-tone technique](#)
- [20th century music - Classical](#)
- ["All Through the Night \(Cole Porter song\)"](#)
- ["Hicaz Hümâyun Saz Semâisi"](#) - Turkish song, highlighting differences from the twelve-semitone scale

Sources

External links

- [The Chromatic Scale arranged for guitar in several fingerings. \(Formatted for easy printing\)](#)
- [The 12 golden notes of music](#)

Recommended Reading

- Hewitt, Michael. 2013. *Musical Scales of the World*. The Note Tree. ISBN 978-0957547001.