

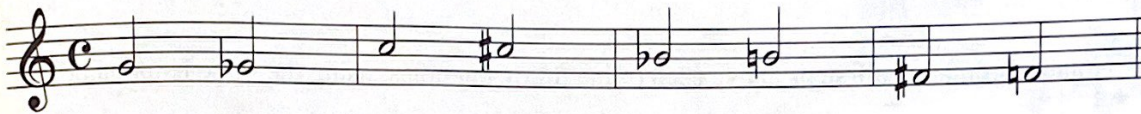
## LESSON 4

### DIATONIC AND CHROMATIC HALF STEPS

Music is **DIATONIC** when it is based on the Major scale or any form of minor scale.

Music is **CHROMATIC** when it is based on the chromatic scale.

Any half-step that is formed by two notes with the same letter name is a **CHROMATIC HALF-STEP**.



#### CHROMATIC HALF-STEPS

There are two schools of thought regarding half-steps that are formed by two different letter names.

#### **Definition 1:**

A **DIATONIC HALF-STEP** is one that occurs naturally within the scale.

A **CHROMATIC HALF-STEP** is one that does not occur naturally within the scale.

Example in the key of D Major:

F# to G and C# to D occur naturally within the D Major scale. These are diatonic half-steps.

All other half-steps are chromatic, whether notated using two different letter names or using the same letter name.



#### **Definition 2:**

A **DIATONIC HALF-STEP** is any half-step which is formed by notes with two different letter names.

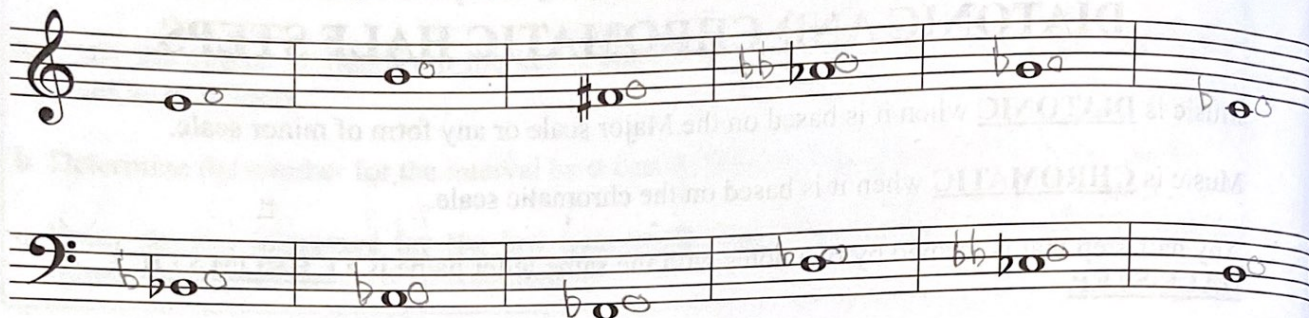
A **CHROMATIC HALF-STEP** is any half-step that is formed by notes of the same letter name.



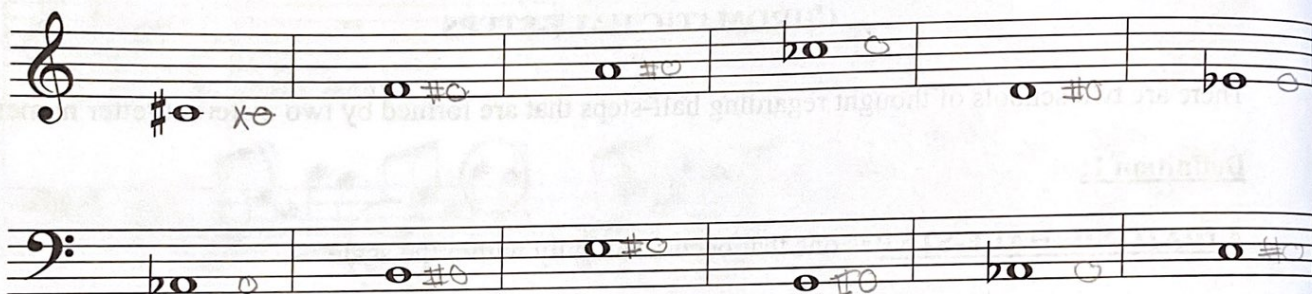
Certificate of Merit® requirements no longer include diatonic and chromatic half-steps.



1. Notate diatonic half steps above each of the following notes, using two different letter names.



2. Notate chromatic half-steps above each of the following notes, using the same letter name.



To determine whether a half-step that is formed by two different letter names is diatonic or chromatic using definition 1:

1. Determine the key of the composition, and which notes receive sharps or flats.
2. If the half-step is part of the major or minor scale upon which the music is based, including half-steps that occur in the harmonic or melodic forms of minor, it is diatonic.
3. If the half-step is not within the key, it is chromatic.

Example:

1. Key of g minor.
2. Half-step **A**, F# to G, is in the g harmonic minor scale. The half-step is diatonic.
3. Half-step **B**, G# to A, is not in any form of the g minor scale. The half-step is chromatic.



Beethoven: Sonata, Op. 49, No. 1

Definition 2: Diatonic half-steps are formed by notes with two different letter names. (Using this definition, half-steps **A** and **B** are diatonic.)

Both definitions: Chromatic half-steps are formed by notes with the same letter name.



3. Name the key for each of the following phrases. Mark whether each circled half step is diatonic or chromatic, using both definitions.

a. From *Sinfonia No. 9* by J.S. Bach. Key of: f minor



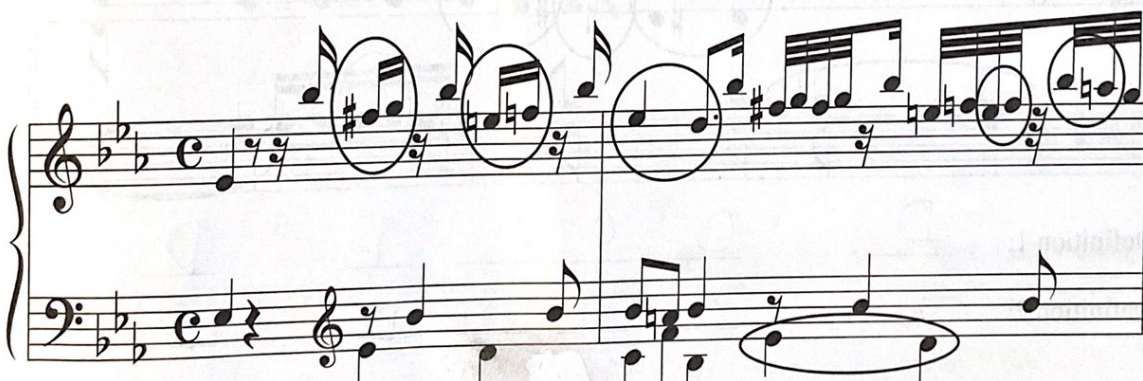
Definition 1:

D A C C D D C D C

Definition 2:

D C D C D D D D D

b. From *Sonata (Erstveröffentlichung)*, by Haydn. Key of: E<sup>b</sup> Major



Definition 1:

C C D D C C

Definition 2:

D D D D D D



c. From *French Suite No. 1: Menuet*, by J.S. Bach. Key of: F Major

Definition 1:

$\frac{C}{D} \quad \frac{C}{D}$

Definition 2:

$\frac{C}{D} \quad \frac{C}{D}$

d. From *Sonata, XVI:40*, by Haydn. Key of: G Major

Definition 1:

$\frac{D}{D} \quad \frac{C}{C} \quad \frac{C}{D} \quad \frac{D}{D} \quad \frac{D}{D}$

Definition 2:

$\frac{D}{D} \quad \frac{C}{C} \quad \frac{D}{D} \quad \frac{D}{D} \quad \frac{D}{D}$