

INTERVALS

The distance between any two pitches is called an INTERVAL. Counting the letter names between the two pitches gives us the QUANTITY. Counting the exact number of half steps between the two pitches gives us the QUALITY.

And A to E are exactly 7 half steps apart.

INTERVAL from A to E A B C D E =5 letter names 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Using QUALITY and QUANTITY, this interval is called a PERFECT FIFTH

But there is an easier way to identify INTERVALS. Using the major scale as a reference point, MAJOR and PERFECT intervals can easily be spelled or identified.

The distance between the first note of a major scale and any other note going up will either be PERFECT or MAJOR in Quality:

letter names between pitches C MAJOR SCALE

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	PERFECT UNISON	MAJOR SECOND	MAJOR THIRD	PERFECT FOURTH	PERFECT FIFTH	MAJOR SIXTH	MAJOR SEVENTH	PERFECT OCTAVE

Always use the LOWER note of an interval as the first note of a Major scale reference point.

To determine the interval between D and F#, use the D Major scale as a reference point.

D MAJOR SCALE

Since D and F# are both part of a D Major scale, and the distance from the first note to third note of any Major scale is always a MAJOR THIRD, D to F# is a MAJOR THIRD.

NOTICE that in a Major Scale, the Unison, Fourth, Fifth and Octave are PERFECT. The Second, Third, Sixth and Seventh are MAJOR.

If you make a PERFECT interval smaller by one half step, it becomes DIMINISHED.
If you make a PERFECT interval larger by one half step, it becomes AUGMENTED.

If you make a MAJOR interval smaller by one half step, it becomes MINOR.
If you make a MAJOR interval smaller by TWO half steps, it becomes DIMINISHED.
If you make a MAJOR interval larger by one half step, it becomes AUGMENTED.

Using a Major scale as reference point we can identify or spell any interval:

C to F \sharp is NOT part of the C Major scale

C to F \natural is a PERFECT FOURTH because it IS part of the C major scale.
C to F \sharp is one half step larger than a PERFECT FOURTH so it is an AUGMENTED FOURTH.

AUGMENTED FOURTH

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The first part shows the notes C and F sharp. The second part shows the full C major scale: C, D, E, F natural, G, A, B, C. A bracket underneath the scale spans from C to F natural, labeled as a perfect fourth. Another bracket underneath the scale spans from C to F sharp, labeled as an augmented fourth.

D to F \sharp is NOT part of a D Major scale

D to F \natural is a MAJOR THIRD because it IS part of the D Major scale.
D to F \sharp is one half step smaller than a MAJOR THIRD so it is a MINOR THIRD.

MINOR THIRD

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef. The first part shows the notes D and F sharp. The second part shows the full D major scale: D, E, F natural, G, A, B, C, D. A bracket underneath the scale spans from D to F natural, labeled as a major third. Another bracket underneath the scale spans from D to F sharp, labeled as a minor third.

We can abbreviate interval names in the following manner. The QUALITY always comes first and the QUANTITY second:

PERFECT = P
MAJOR = M
MINOR = m
AUGMENTED = A (or +)
DIMINISHED = d (or °)

Examples using abbreviations: P4
M3
m2
A6 (or +6)
d 5 (or ° 5)

UNISON = 1
SECOND = 2
THIRD = 3
FOURTH = 4
FIFTH = 5
SIXTH = 6
SEVENTH = 7
OCTAVE = 8

Unisons, fourths, fifths and octaves can ONLY be PERFECT, DIMINISHED or AUGMENTED. They can NEVER be MAJOR or MINOR.

Seconds, thirds, sixths and sevenths can ONLY be MAJOR, MINOR, AUGMENTED or DIMINISHED. They can NEVER be PERFECT.