THE MAJOR SCALE AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF HARMONY

The Chromatic Scale

A A♯ B C C♯ D D♯ E F F♯ G G♯ A
B♭   D♭   E♭   G♭ A♭

A Major Scales
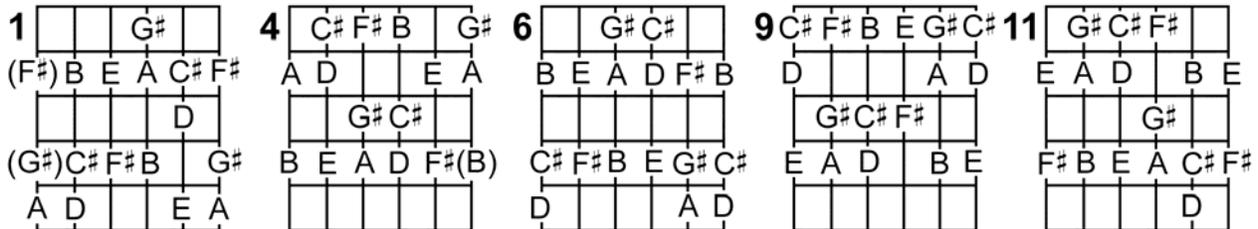
The distance between any two notes is called an interval. The main types of intervals are whole steps and half steps. Any *major* scale is built in a series of two whole steps, half step, three whole steps, and half step, starting from any note which is the name of the scale (this first note is called the root). Any two notes that are *separated* by one note in the *chromatic* scale are said to be a whole step apart. Examples: A–B, A#–C, B–C#, C–D, etc.

Any two notes that are *adjacent* in the *chromatic* scale are said to be a half step apart. Examples: A–A#, A#–B, B–C, C–C#, etc.

    Using this logic, an A major scale would be as follows (W = whole step; H = half step):

The notes are commonly assigned numbers 1 through 8 (1 and 8 are both called the root).
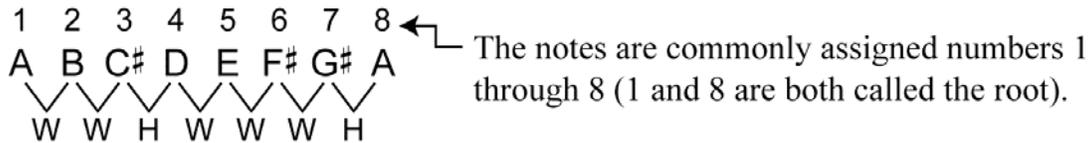
    Chords are commonly built by combining notes that are a 3rd apart in a major scale. Any two notes in a major scale that are separated by one note are said to be a 3rd apart. Examples: In the A major scale, A–C#, B–D, C#–E, D–F# are all a 3rd apart. (If the number of half steps between a 3rd interval is four, it is referred to as a major 3rd interval; if the number of half steps between a 3rd interval is three, it is referred to as a minor 3rd.)

    The first common chord built from a major scale is derived by combining the first, third, and fifth tones of the major scale. This is known as a major chord. Notice that there are two 3rd intervals: between the root and third and between the third and fifth.

    There are other common chords built from a major scale; these are usually obtained by taking the major chord and raising each note up to the next note in the major scale.

Example:
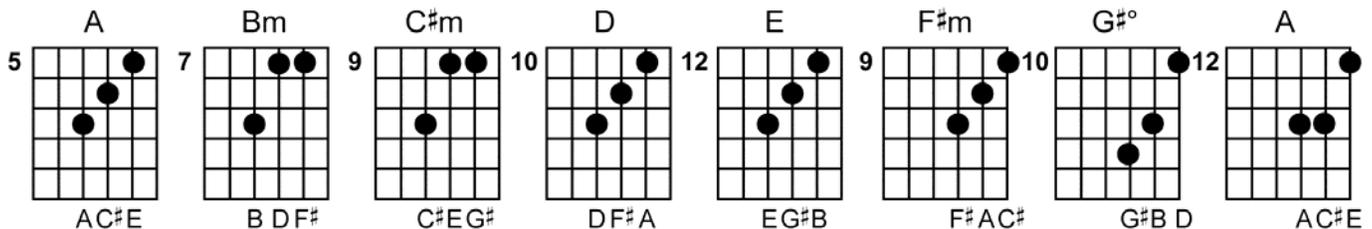
    The names of the chords are derived according to the positions of the major and minor 3rds in the chords (you need not worry about this for now but just accept that these are the chords that you get in the A major scale).

    These chords are referred to as the diatonic (major scale) triads. You should practice building the diatonic triads starting from all of the triads indicated with the asterisk on the "Five Areas Page" in order to get a firm foundation in harmony.

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A MAJOR SCALES: | CHROMATIC SCALE: A A# B C C# D D# E F F# G G# A
                                                             Bb   Db   Eb   Gb Ab
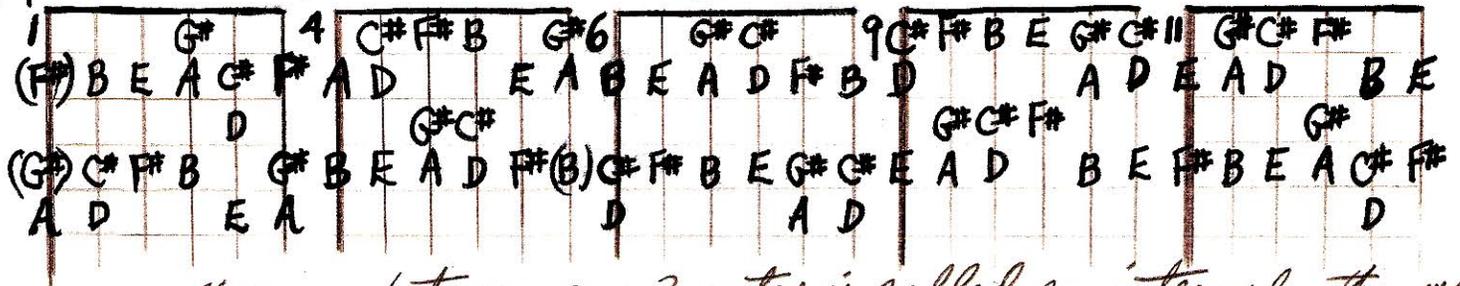
The distance between any 2 notes is called an interval. The main types of intervals are whole steps and ½ steps. Any major scale is built in a series of 2 whole steps, ½ step, 3 whole steps and ½ step, starting from any note which is the name of the scale (this 1st note is called the root). Any 2 notes which are separated by one note in the chromatic scale are said to be a whole step apart. Examples: A & B, A# & C, B & C#, C & D etc. Any 2 notes that are adjacent in the chromatic scale are said to be a ½ step apart. Examples: A & A#, A# & B, B & C, C & C# etc.

Using this logic an A major scale would be as follows:

A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A   The notes are commonly assigned numbers 1 thru 8 (1 & 8 are both called the root).
whole whole ½ wh wh wh ½

Chords are commonly built by combining notes which are a 3rd apart in a major scale. Any 2 notes in a major scale which are separated by one note are said to be a 3rd apart. Examples: A & C#, B & D, C# & E, D & F# are all a 3rd apart. In the A major scale, (if the number of ½ steps between a 3rd interval is 4, it is referred to as a major 3rd interval, if the number of ½ steps between a 3rd interval is 3, it is referred to as a minor 3rd).

The 1st common chord built from a major scale is derived by combining the 1st, 3rd & 5th tones of the major scale. This is known as a major chord. Notice that there are two 3rd intervals - between the root and 3rd, and between the 3rd and 5th.

There are other common chords built from a major scale. These are usually obtained by taking the major chord and raising each note up to the next note in the major scale. Example - see diagrams at left. The names of the chords are derived according to the positions of the major and minor thirds in the chords (you need not worry about this for now but just accept that these are the chords that you get in the A major scale).
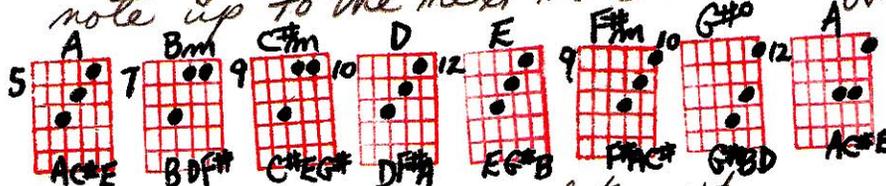
These chords are referred to as the diatonic (major scale) triads. You should practice building the diatonic triads starting from all of the triads indicated with the asterisk on the "5 areas page" in order to get a firm foundation in harmony.