

# The musical spectrum

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Here is some musical truth: if you don't know the basic notes and the way that they are structured it is difficult to get very far. Not knowing the basic musical spectrum of notes limits your ability to improvise, play with other musicians, and to write your own songs. In this article we will discuss the basic principles of notation. I will be making many references to guitar since that is my main instrument, however, the same rules will apply to any noted instrument.

The first thing that you need to learn is the overall layout of the 12 note musical spectrum and some basic rules that apply. This will help you understand things about the major and minor scales, chord structure, and chord progression structure. The spectrum is made up of 12 notes which include sharps and flats. A sharp note (#) is a note that is one note higher than the original note. A flat note (b) is a note that is one note lower than the original note. For example, "A#" is one note higher than "A" and "Ab" is one note lower than "A".

However, every note that is a sharp is also a flat and vice versa. "C#", for example is also "Db" because it rest between those two notes. It is one note lower than "D" and one note higher than "C". So it carries both names. What you call the note depends on what key that you are playing in. To go any further into key signature might be too complex. For the purpose of this article I will always refer to those notes as sharps (#).

Here is the 12 note musical spectrum:

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

I started with "C" because it is typically the center note for pitch on piano. You can start this 12 note spectrum with any of the notes, go in order, and you should always end up on the octave of the note you started with. (From one note across the musical spectrum of notes to the same note in a higher or lower pitch is called an octave.) Here are some basic rules to keep in mind when memorizing the notes of the musical spectrum.

- 1.) The notes are "A" through "G" in alphabetical order
- 2.) There is no note between "E" and "F" or "B" and "C"
- 3.) No matter what note you begin with you should always end on the same note and the number of notes should be 12.

Work on memorizing these notes, their order, and their relationship to each other. As you look at the major and minor scales your basic knowledge of notes will determine how quickly you grasp the concepts of those scales. Remember the three rules and you should have the musical spectrum memorized in no time!