



Task 2: Using scales as a basis for your compositions

In this task, you will learn how to use scales as a starting point for your composition.

You will come up with your own scale and then write a short piece for the keyboard using the notes you picked. But first, we need to look at how scales work:

Scales are simply a selection of at least five different notes. Traditionally, we are taught the **major** and **minor scales**. However, there are around 4000 other scales.

I will use intervals to explain the steps in the scale:

- **ST** means **semi-tone**, also called a **minor second**, the smallest possible step between two notes (C to C#, A# to B, etc).
- **T** means **tone**, also called a **major second**, two **semi-tones** up or down (Eb to F, A to B, F# to G#, etc).
- **m3** means **minor third**, three semi-tones up or down (the distance between G and Bb or A and C).

A normal **major scale** uses the intervals T T ST T T T ST





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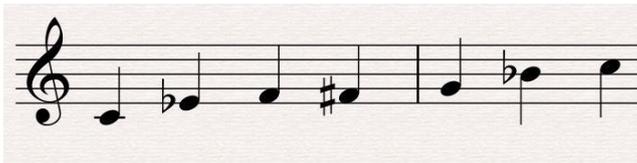
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Now let's try these common scales:

The **pentatonic major scale**: A five-note scale ("Penta" means five in Greek):
T T m3 T m3. This scale is used as the basis for many types of music, such as
rock, pop and Chinese music.



Minor blues scale: m3 T ST ST m3 T

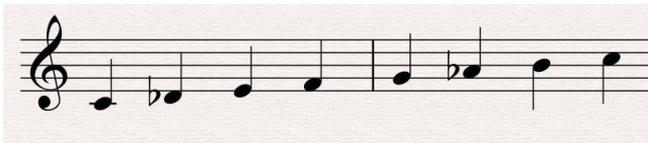


Whole-tone scale: Yes, it's: T T T T T T



Or why not use one of the many Indian scales? This one is called Bhairava:

ST m3 ST T ST m3 ST





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The task:

Step 1. Play through all of these scales. Up and down and in random order! Make this more than a theoretical experience: get the knowledge into your fingers and really listen to the “feel” that the scales produce.

Step 2. Make up your own scale. Base it on what you like and what sounds good to you. Start with one note, add another note that works with the first one and so on. Use the step-by-step approach we used in task 1. Write down your scale and learn to play it fluently. Remember that your scale must have 5–12 notes.

Step 3. Make up a tune using your scale. Make sure you use both hands for at least a part of your song. Composers often start with either the melody or the left-hand pattern. Experiment and then write down your piece. It’s fine to only use note-heads; we will get to rhythms later. It is useful to know that in melodies composers do not use all the notes in the scale at once, but usually start with a few and then add further harmonic material.

Create a minimum of two lines of music.