

Important Musical Terms

Pitch

Semitone - the distance in pitch from one fret to the next.

Octave - 12 semitones (= the distance in pitch between two notes of the same name).

Tone - 1) 2 semitones 2) the characteristic sound of a voice or instrument.

Sharp (#) - one semitone higher; **Sharpen** - raise the pitch by one semitone.

Flat (b) - one semitone lower; **Flatten** - lower the pitch by one semitone.

B sharp and E sharp do not exist! Look at a piano keyboard to see this for yourself.

Scales

Scale - an alphabetic sequence of notes.

Major Scale - an alphabetic sequence of notes spaced as follows:-

TTS TTTS. (S = semitone; T = tone).

Practise playing this on one string and remember how it sounds.

Minor Scale - similar to a major scale but with the 3rd note flattened.

(there are several different types of minor scale but they all have the flattened 3rd).

Pentatonic Scale - a scale made from just 5 different notes. Useful for improvising.

Chromatic Scale - a scale in which the distance in pitch between each note is just one semitone.

Chords

Chord - 3 or more notes played together.

Arpeggio - the notes of a chord played individually.

Triad - the most basic type of chord, made from 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of the scale

Major Chord - a chord made from just the 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of a major scale.

Minor Chord - a chord made from the 1st, flattened 3rd and 5th notes of a major scale.

7th Chord - a major chord with the flattened 7th (eg: C7 contains a Bb).

Key

Key. The sense of certain notes belonging together; a musical family.

Music in a given key uses the notes from the appropriate scale.

Key signature - the sharp or flat signs (or the absence of them) at the start of each stave.

Tonic - the 1st note (or chord) of the scale of the given key (eg: D in the key of D).

Dominant - the 5th note (or chord) of the scale of the given key (eg: A in the key of D).

Subdominant - the 4th note (or chord) of the scale of the given key (eg: G in the key of D).

Relative minor - the key (or chord) named from the 6th note of the given key (eg: B minor in key of D).

Transpose - to put into a different key.

