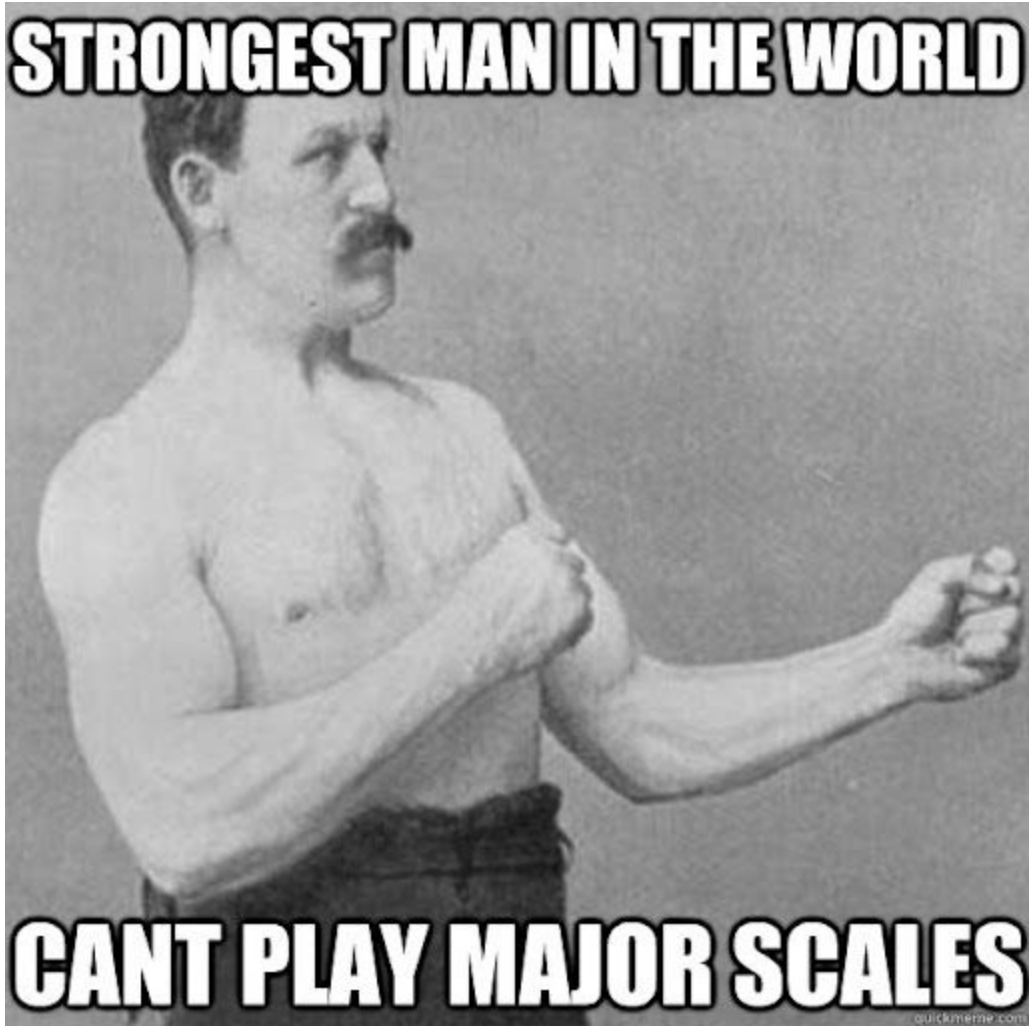
Music Theory for the Organist

November 2024

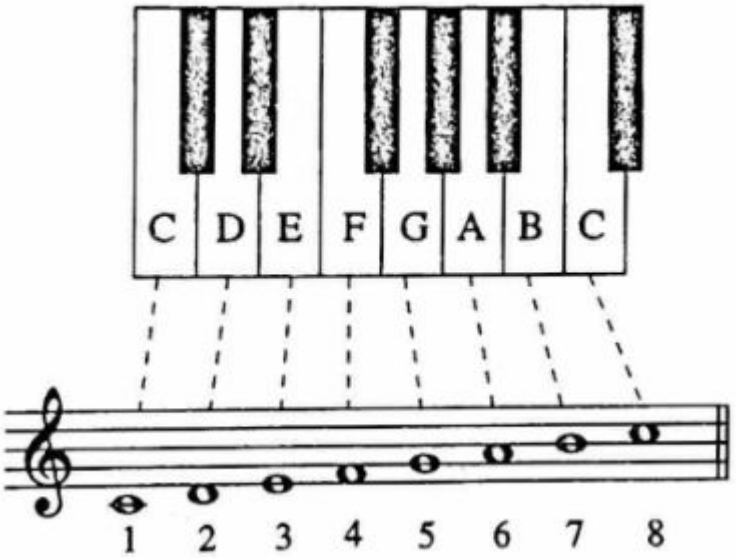
Levels 1-2

Scales


STRONGEST MAN IN THE WORLD
CANT PLAY MAJOR SCALES
quickmeme.com

The Major Scale

Where are the half steps in this set of notes?



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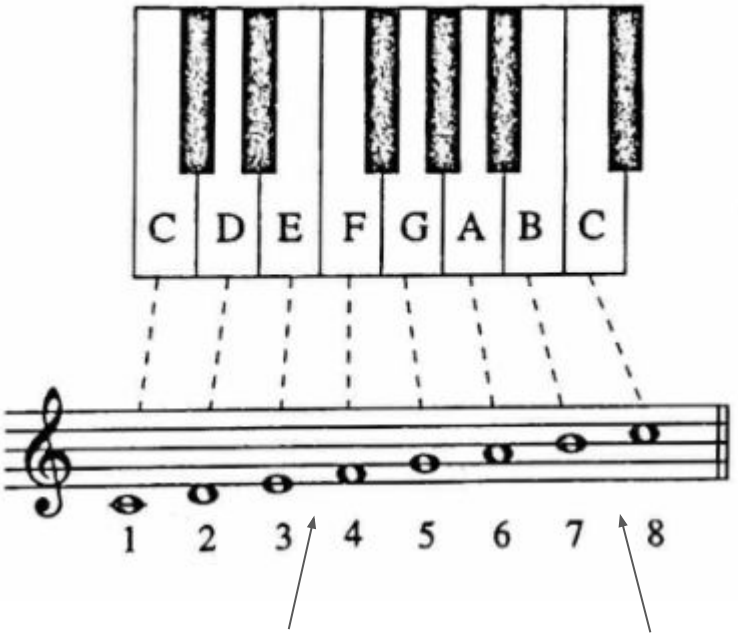
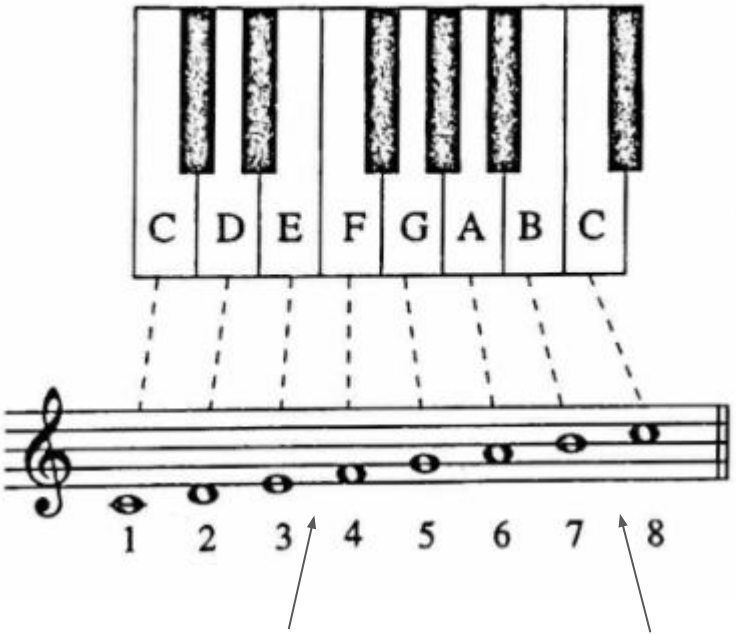


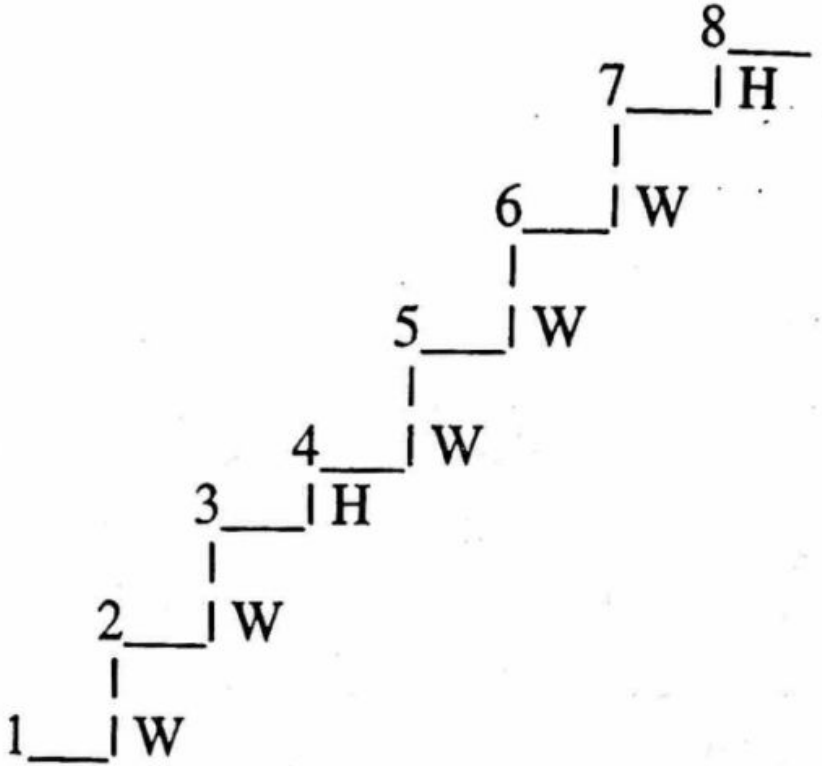
The Major Scale

In the MAJOR scale, half steps occur between the 3rd and 4th degrees, and between the 7th

and 8th

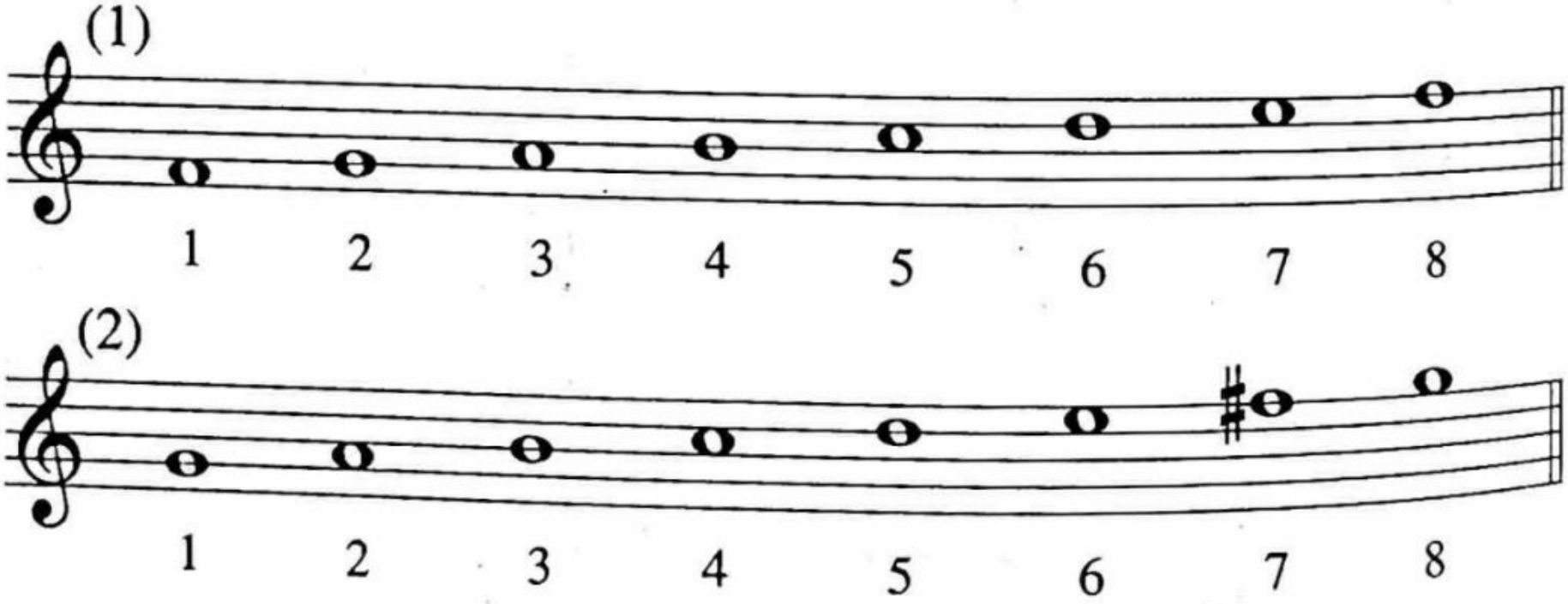


Major Scale

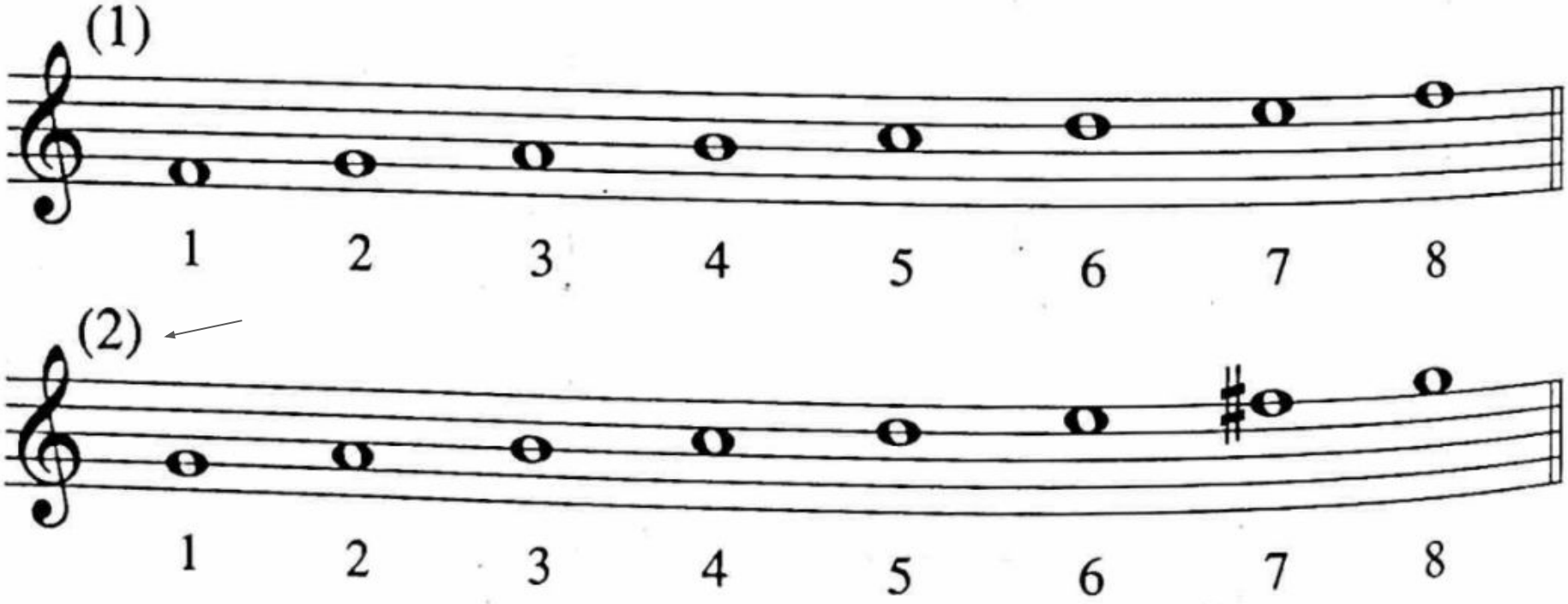


H = half step
W = whole step

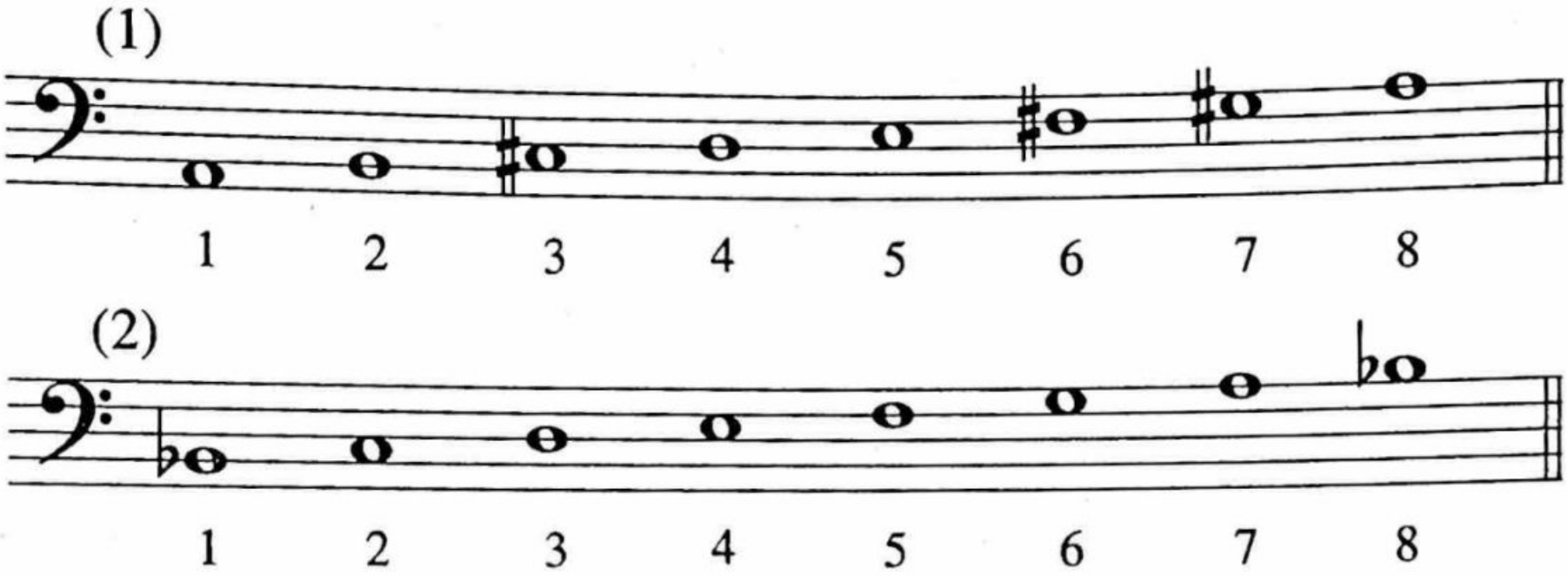
Which of these is Major?



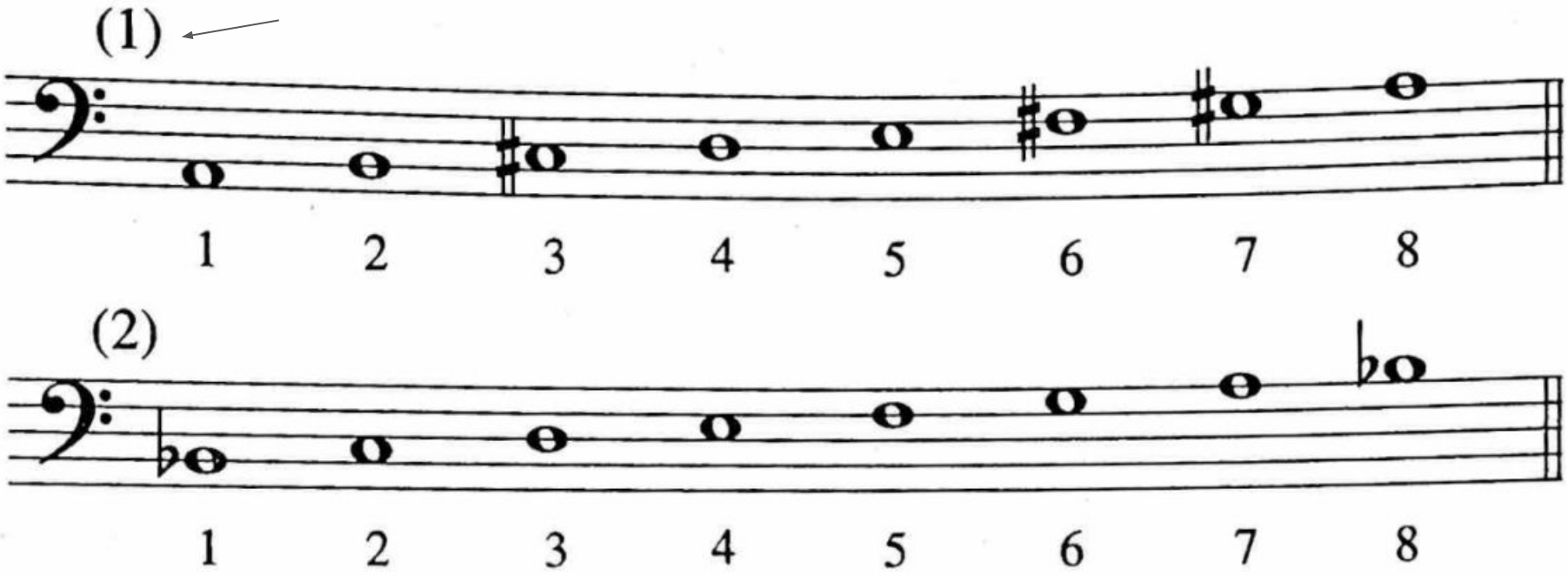
Which of these is Major? Number 2!



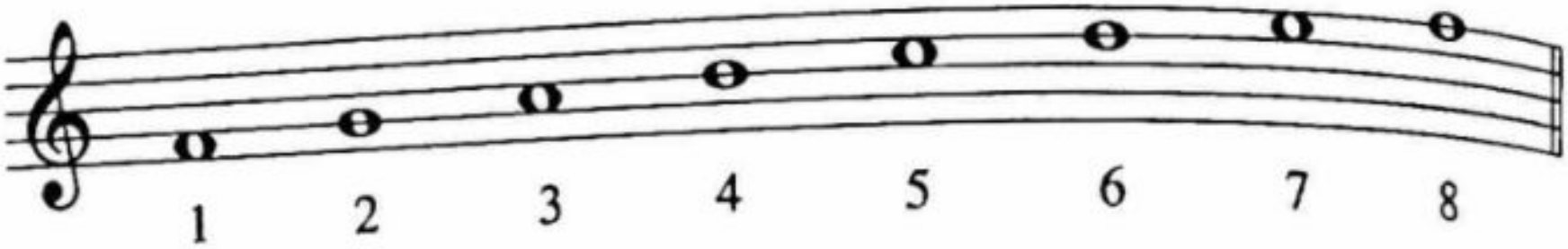
Which of these is major?



Which of these is major? Number 1!



Add accidentals to form the F major scale



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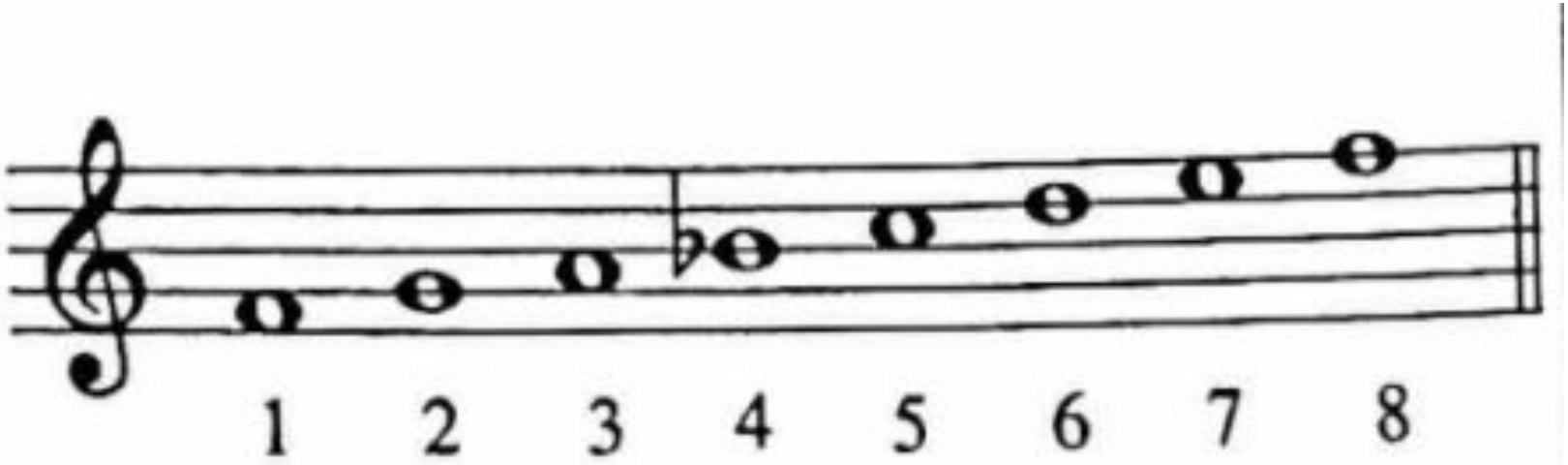
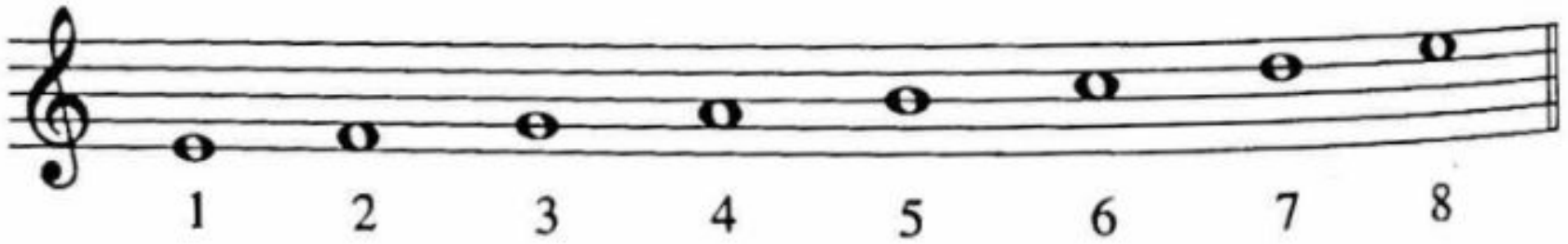
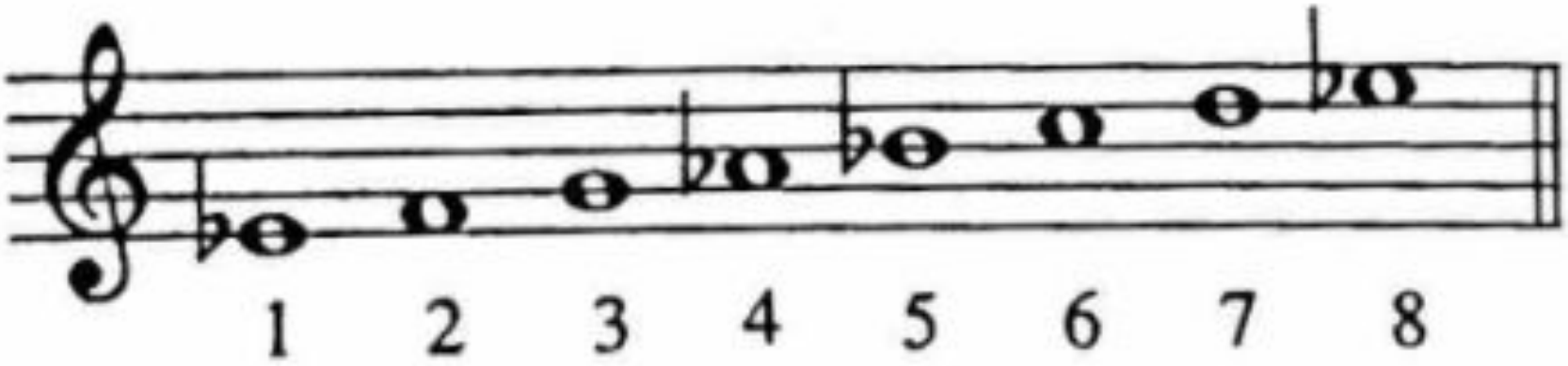


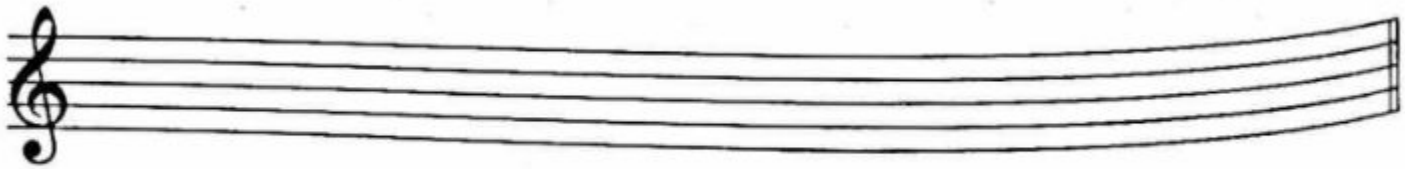
Add accidentals to form the Eb major scale:



Add accidentals to form the Eb major scale:



Write the Cb major scale:



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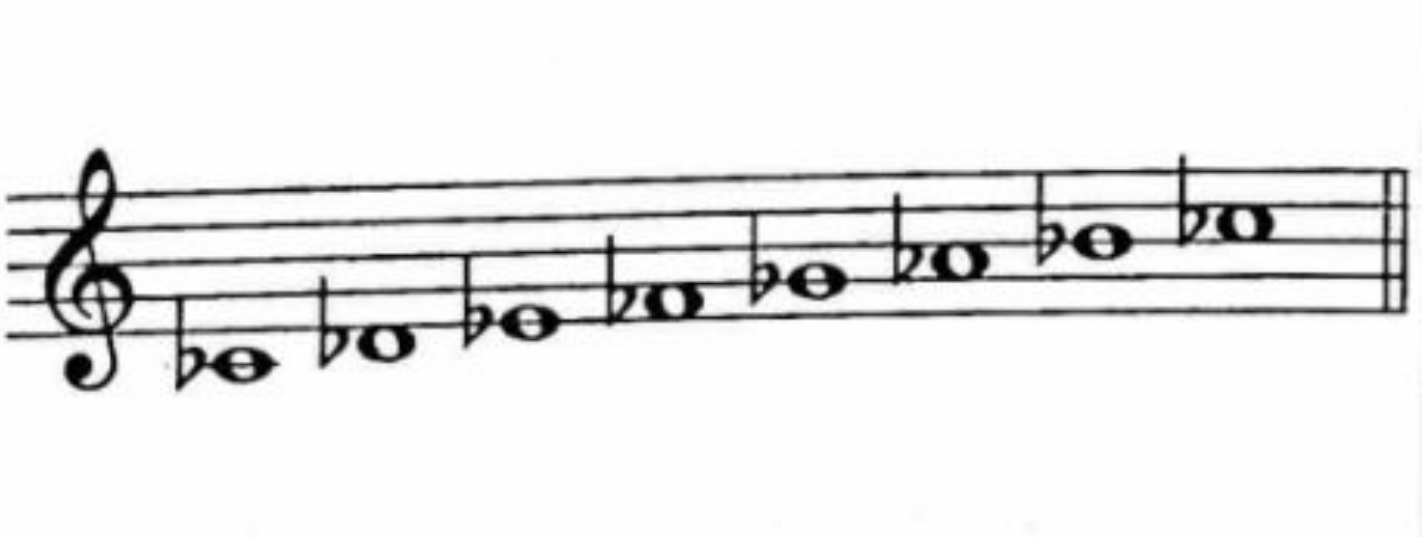

Minor Scales

There are 3 types of minor scales:

- Natural minor
- Harmonic Minor
- Melodic Minor

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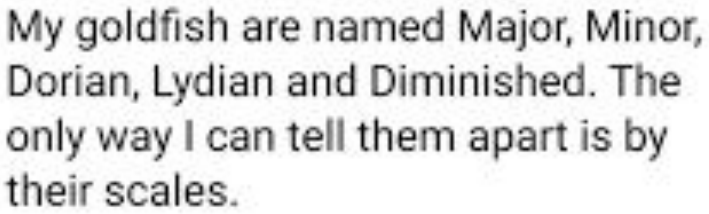
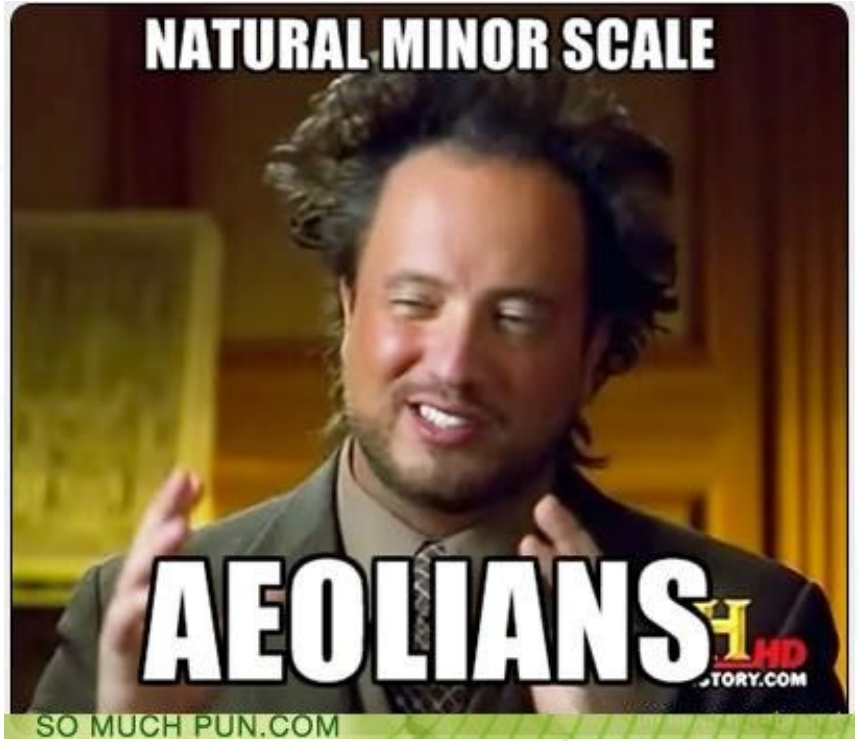
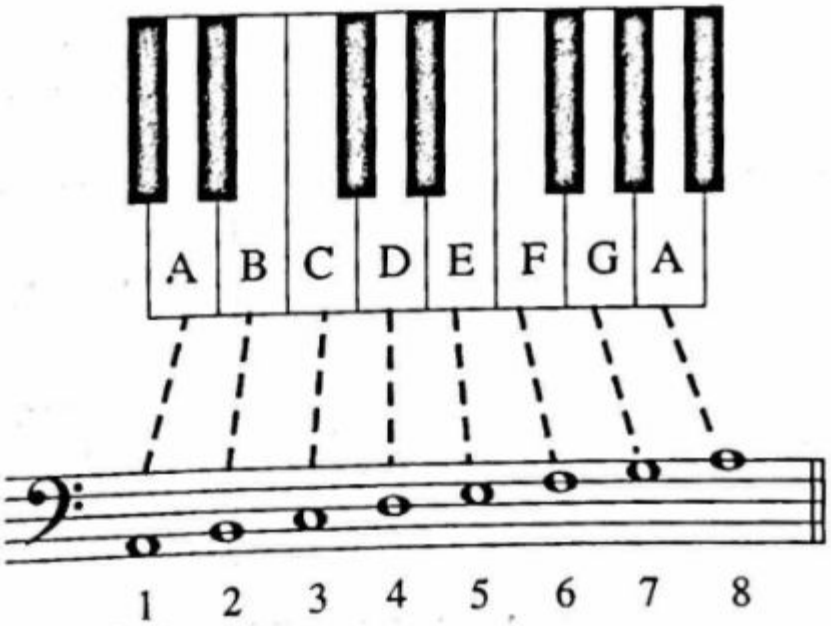


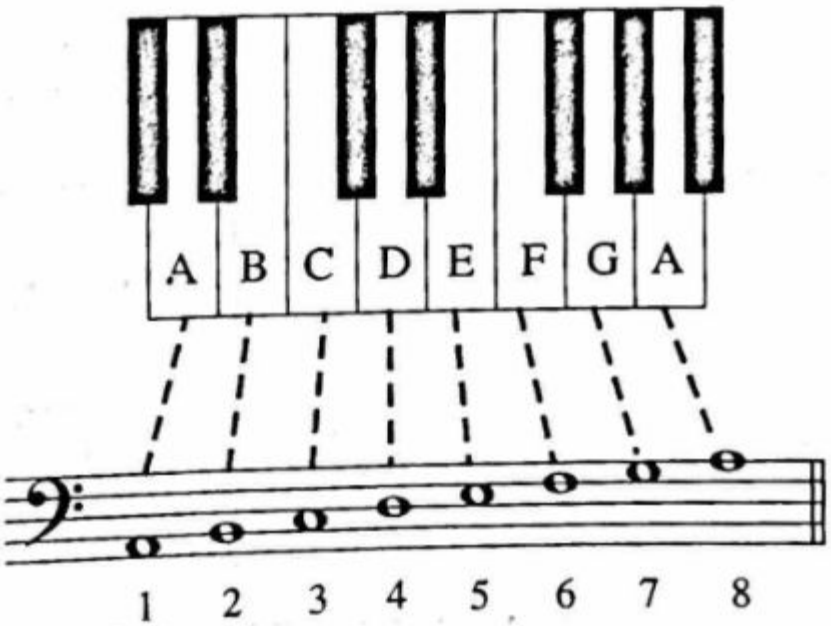
Natural Minor Scales



Natural Minor Scales



Where are the half steps in the natural minor scale?



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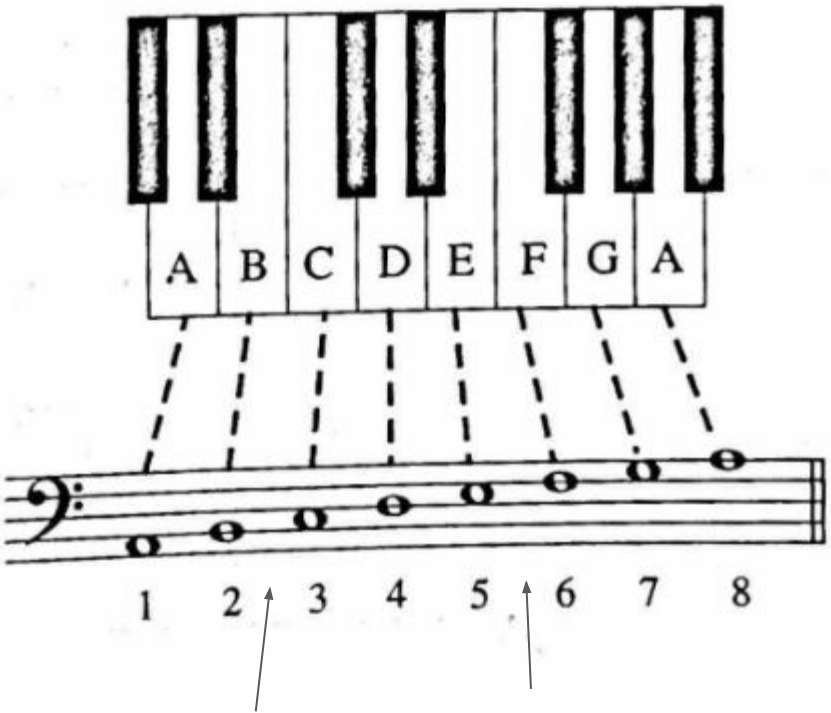
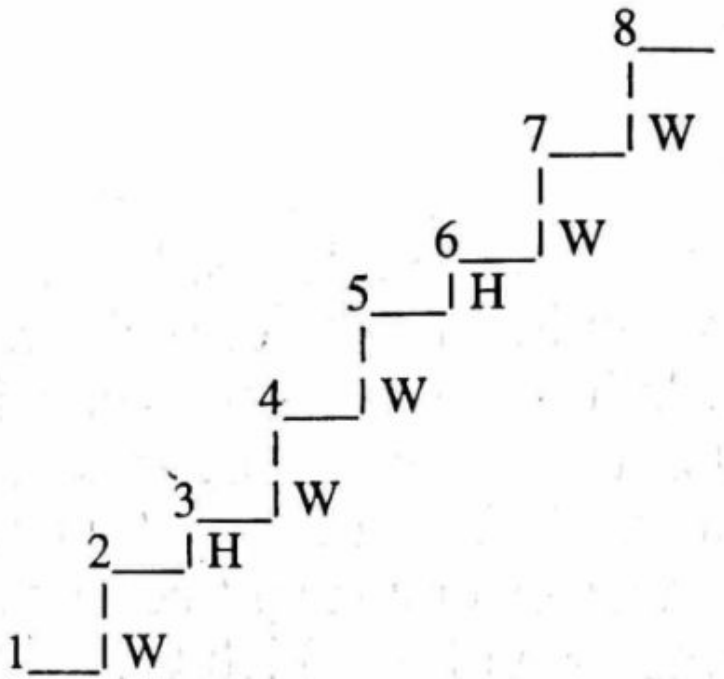
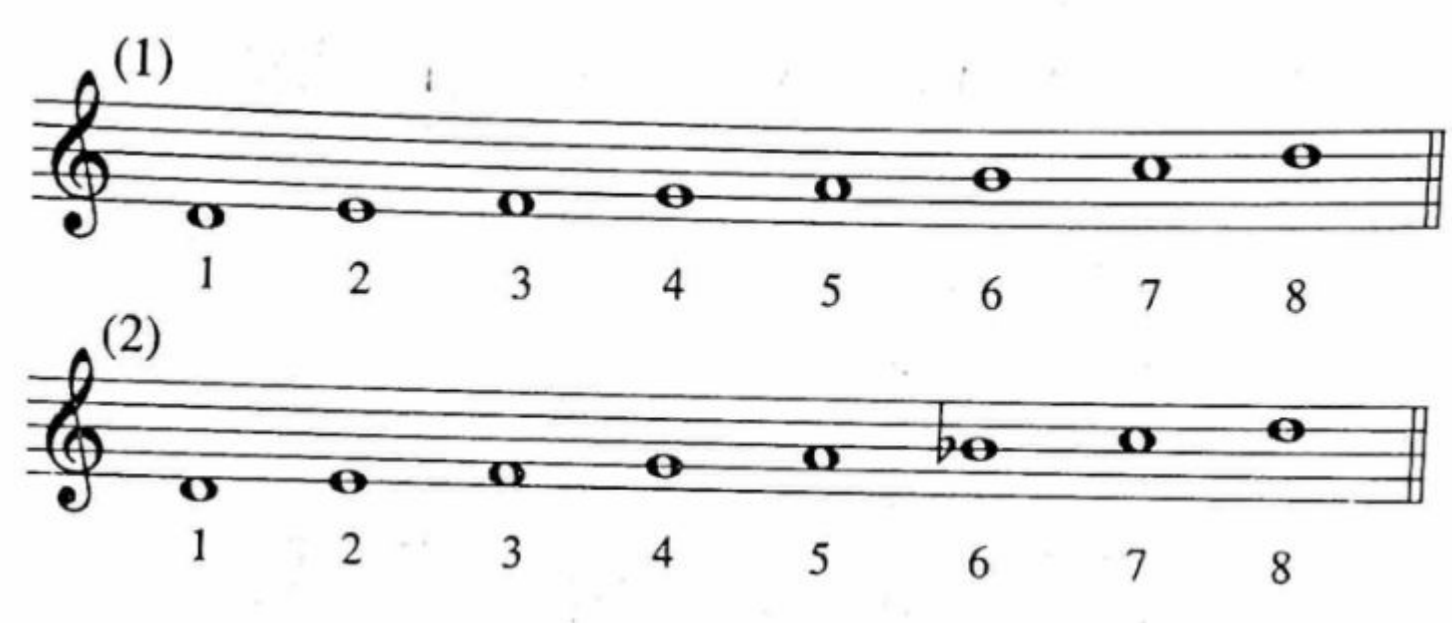


Natural Minor Scale



H = half step
W = whole step

Which of these scales is natural minor?



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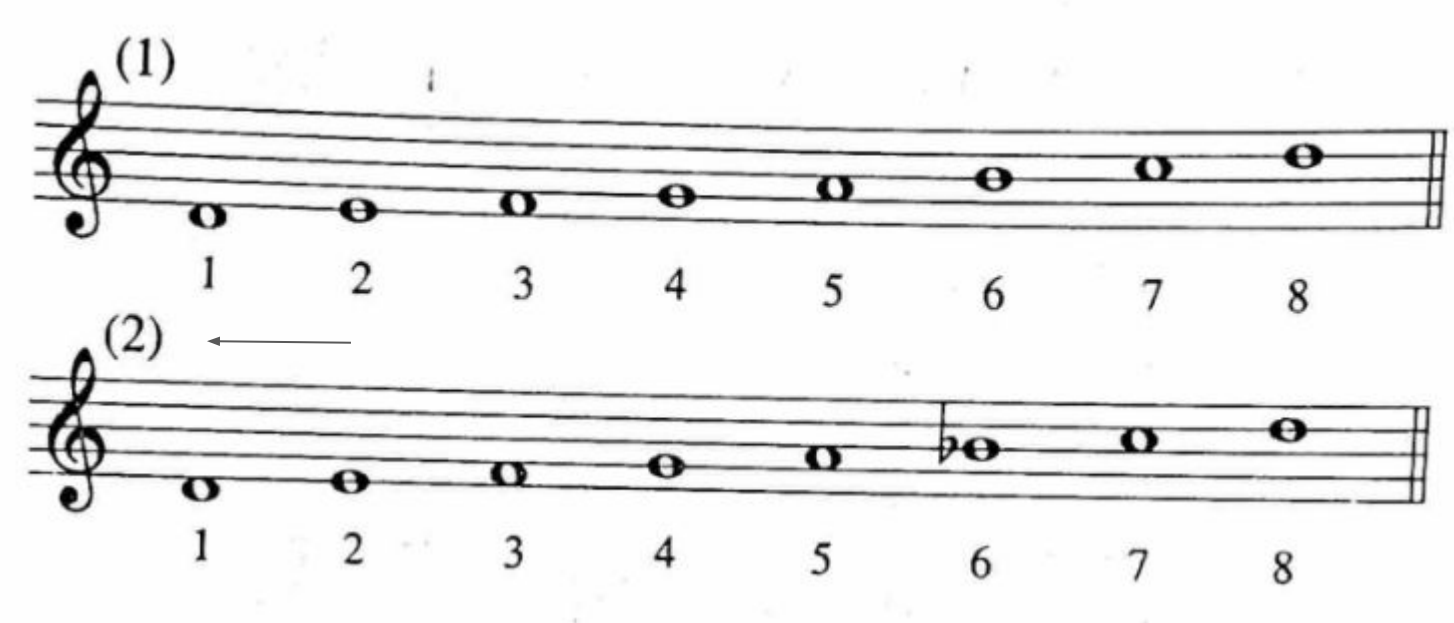
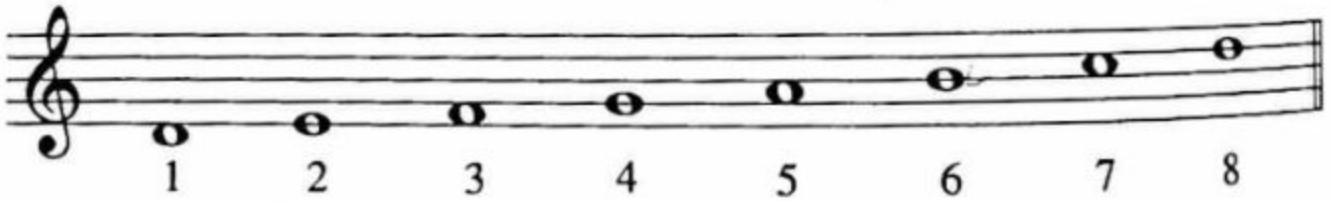


Add accidentals to make the d natural minor scale:



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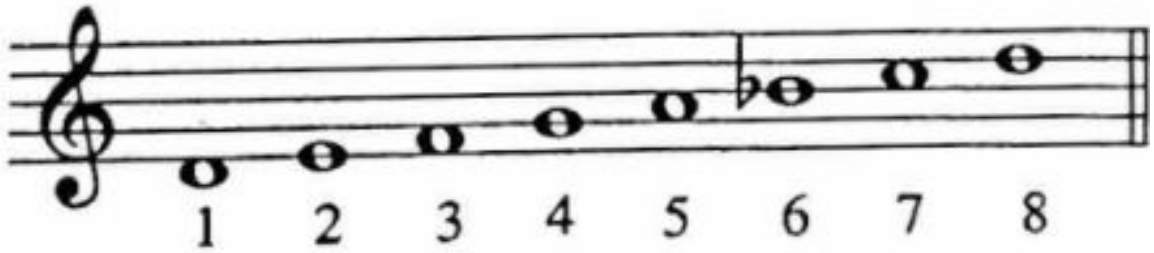


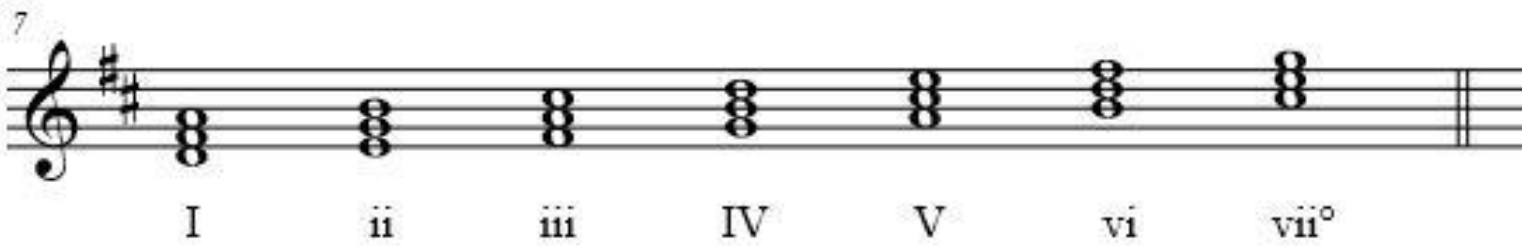
Levels 3-4

Part 1: What is Tonality?

- Music composed between 1600-1900
- Based on major and minor scales.
- The “keynote” predominates over all other tones.
- The keynote is the same as the first note of the scale

Tonal Harmony *in handout

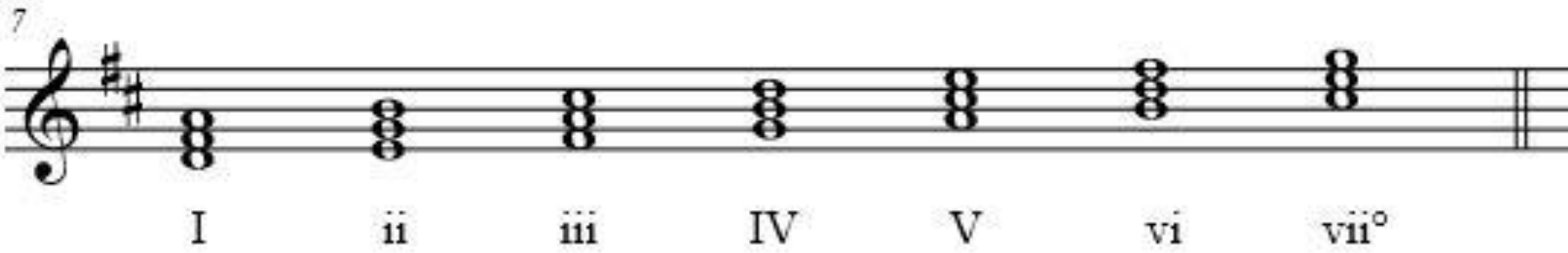
- Based on major and minor scales



- These are diatonic triads, since they only use notes contained in the major or minor.

Roman Numerals *in handout

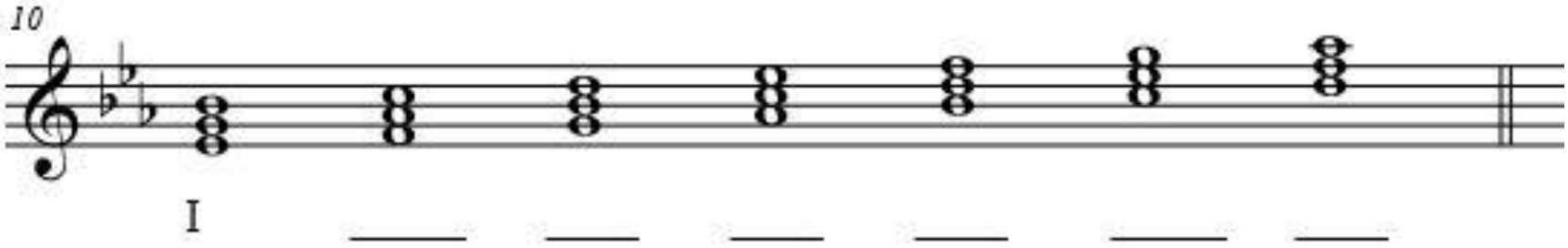
We use Roman numerals to identify the chords built off pitches of the major scale.



Roman numerals cont.

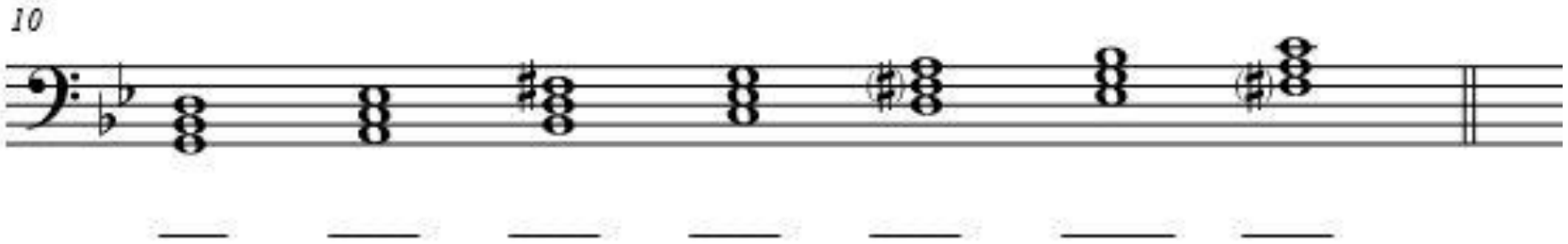
- Major chords are written as upper case Roman numerals, e.g. I, IV, V
- Minor chords are written as lower-case Roman numerals, e.g. ii, iii, vi
- Diminished chords are written as lower-case Roman numerals with a diminished symbol, e.g. vii°

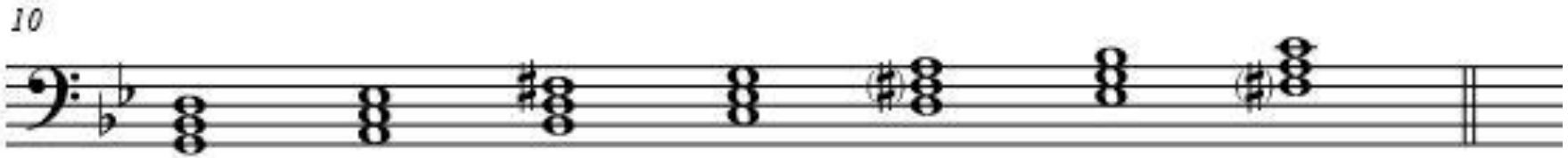
What are the Roman numerals here? (upper case or lower case)



Cont.

What key is this, and what are the roman numerals?





G minor: i ii° III+ iv V VI vii°

The pattern is consistent throughout all major and minor scales

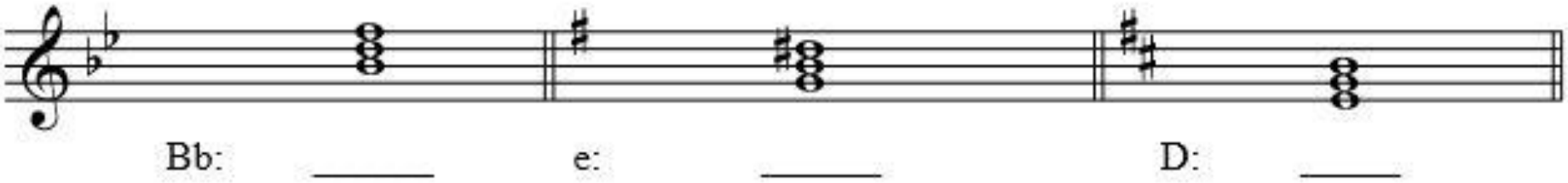
In major:

- 1st scale degree triad is: Major
- 2nd scale degree triad is: minor
- 3rd scale degree triad is: minor
- 4th scale degree triad is: Major
- 5th scale degree triad is: Major
- 6th scale degree triad is: minor
- 7th scale degree triad is: diminished

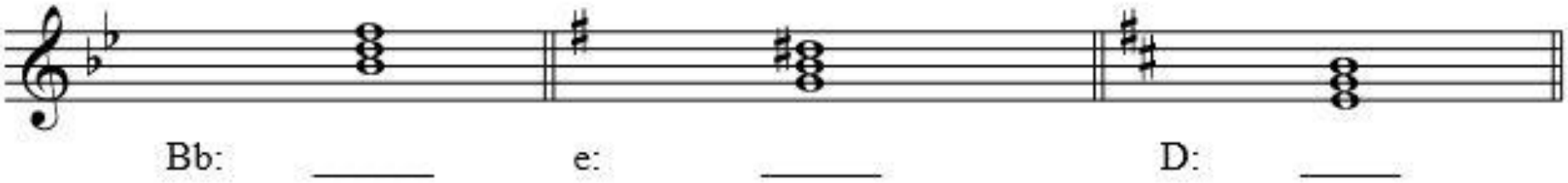
In harmonic minor

- 1st scale degree triad is: minor
- 2nd scale degree triad is: diminished
- 3rd scale degree triad is: Augmented
- 4th scale degree triad is: minor
- 5th scale degree triad is: Major
- 6th scale degree triad is: Major
- 7th scale degree triad is: diminished

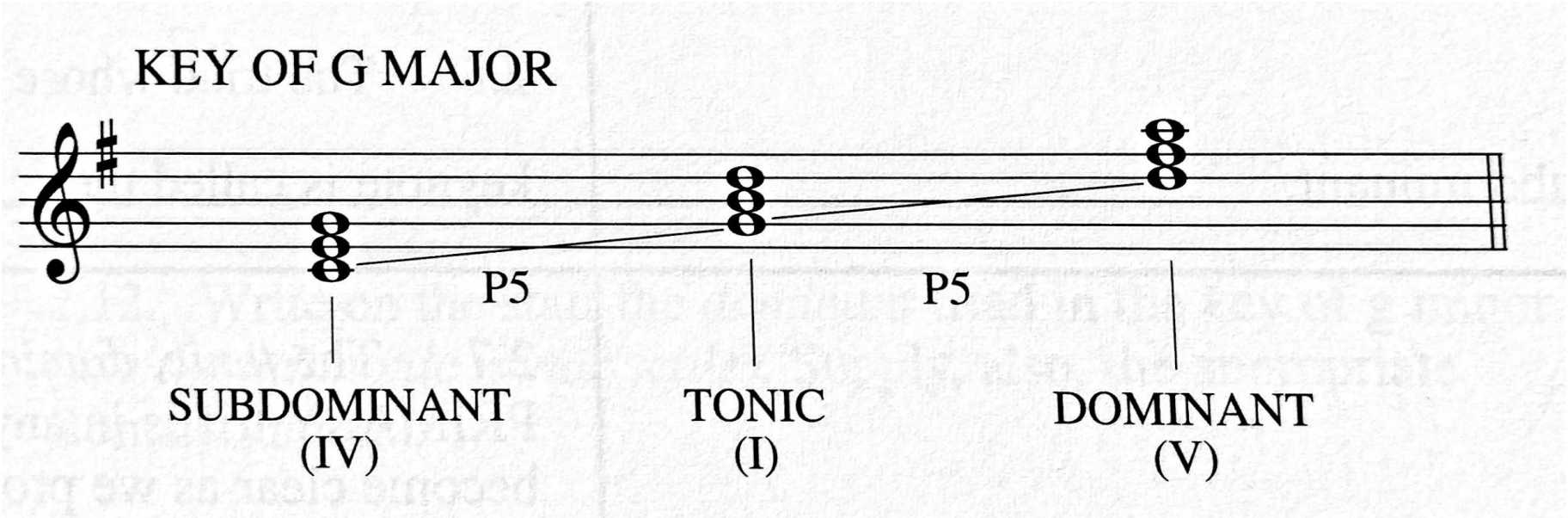
Examples:

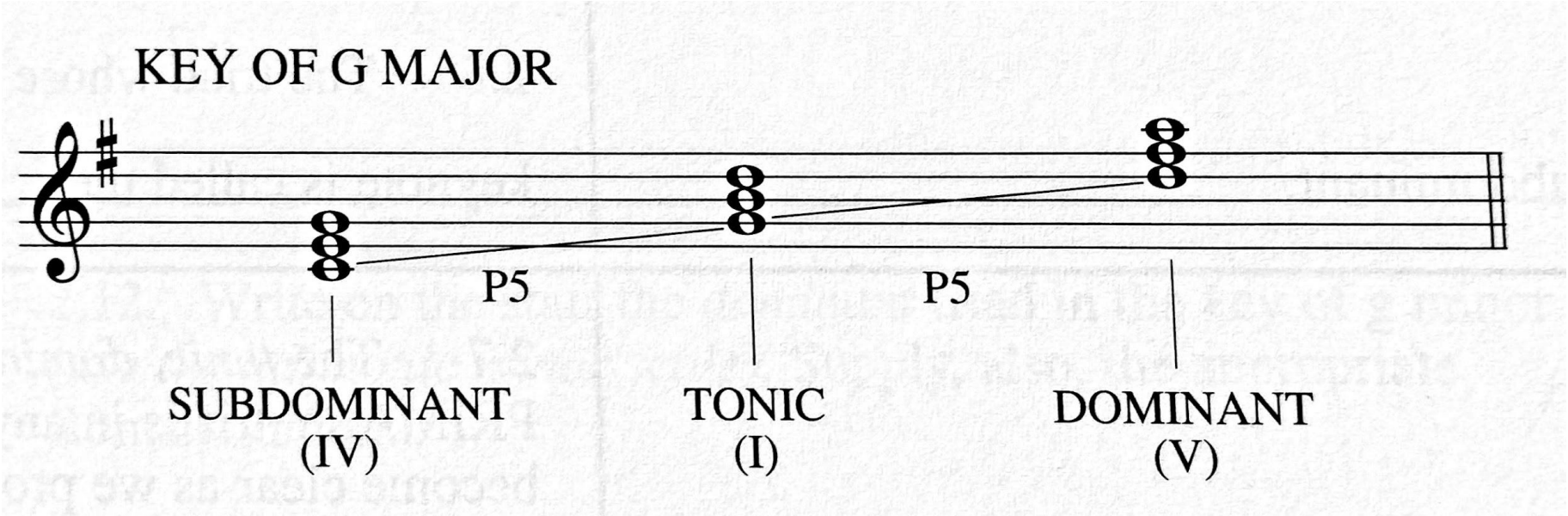


Bb: I, e: III+: D: ii

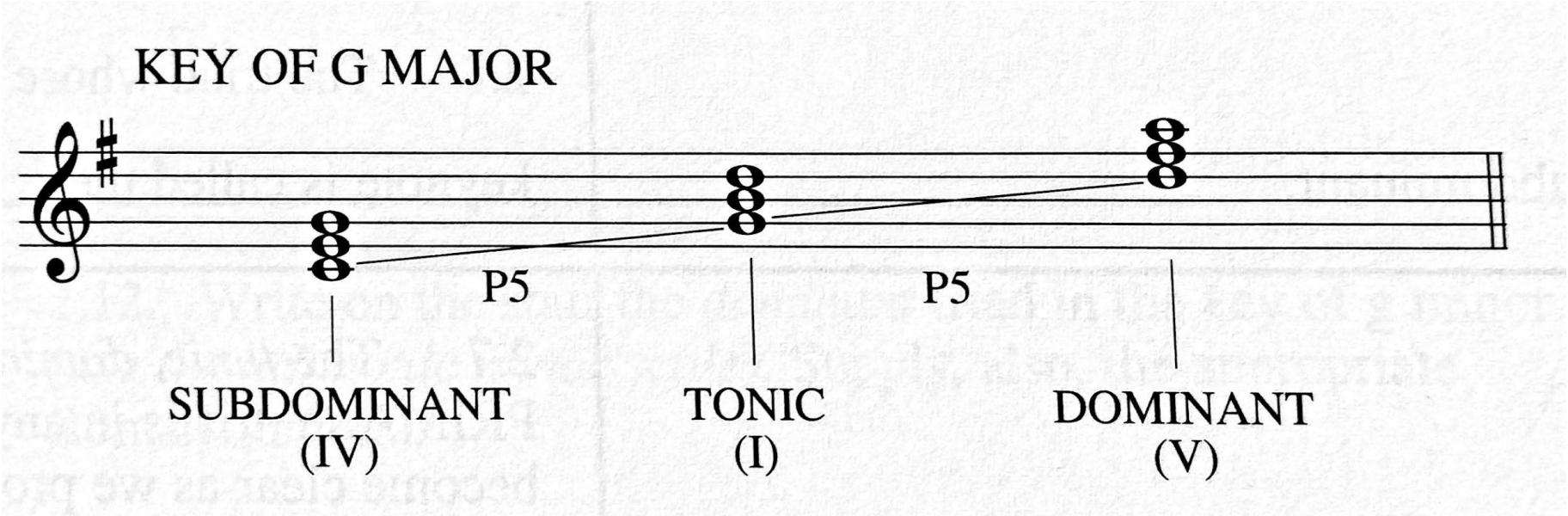


The Structure of Tonality

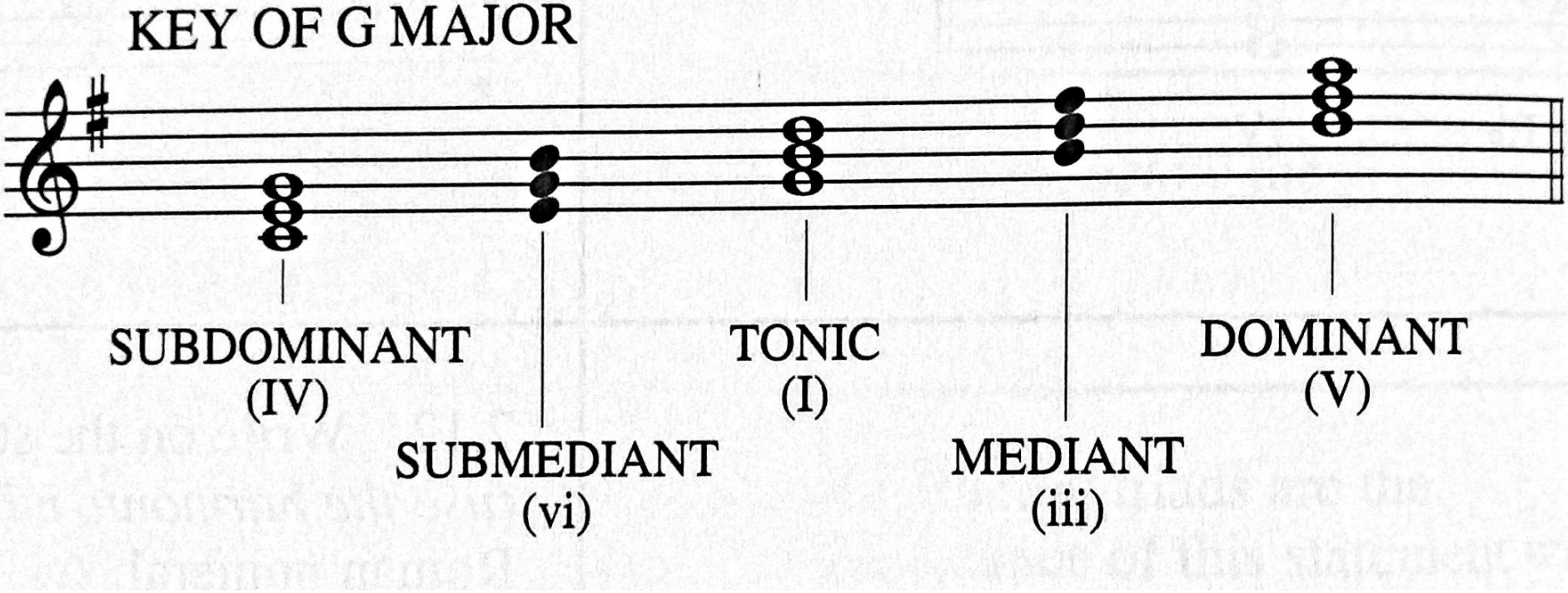




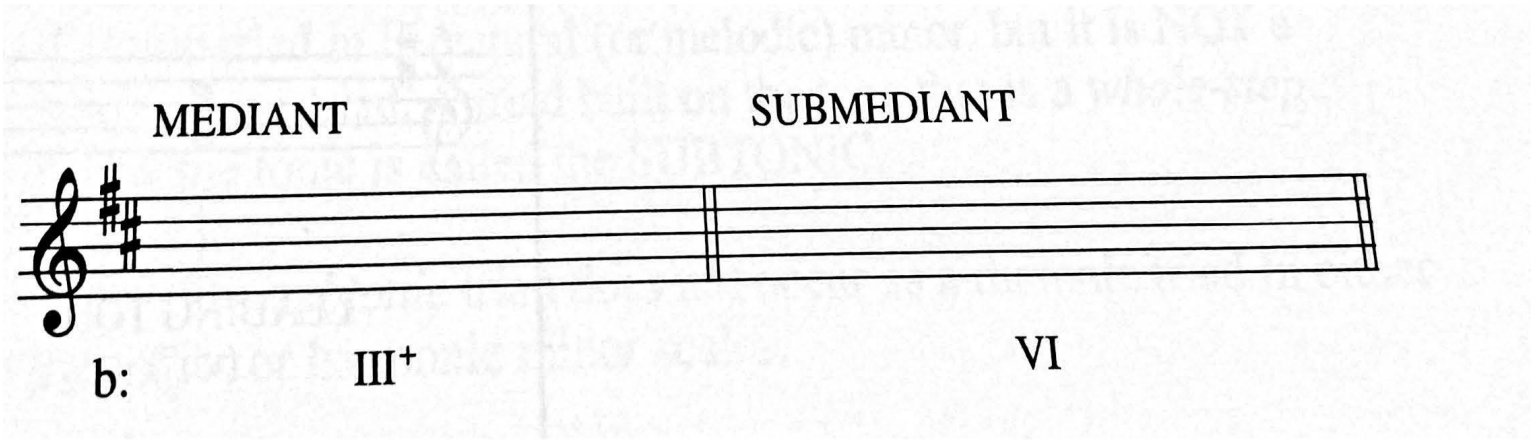
- The word tonic comes from “tone” which represents our tonal center
- Subdominant is a 5th below (or a 4th above)
- Dominant is a 5th above

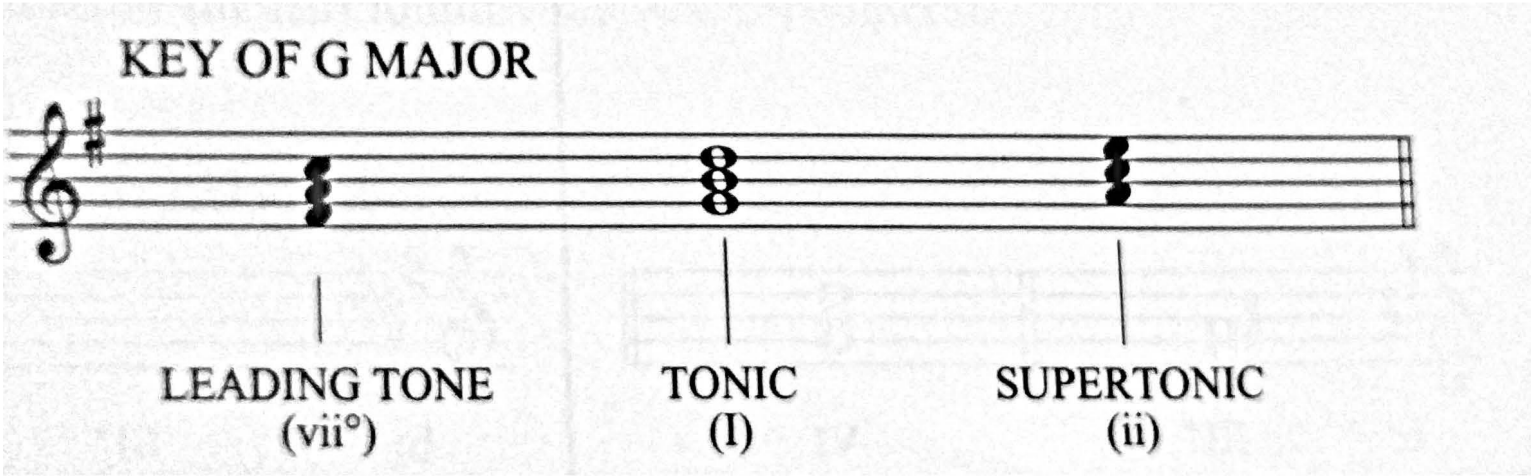


- These three chords are the PRIMARY TRIADS in any key (I, IV, V)
- Their function is to progress the music toward the tonic.
- They are all related by a Perfect 5th (either up to V, or down to IV)

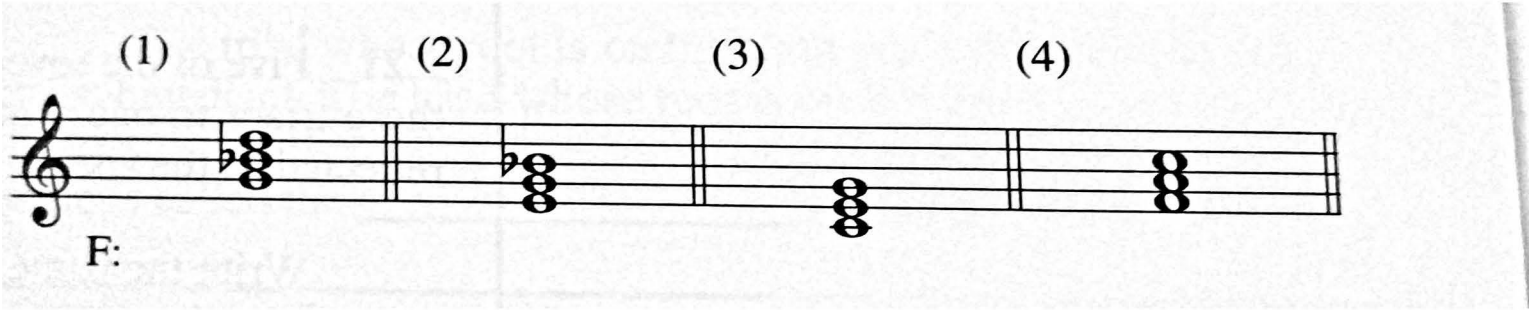

KEY OF G MAJOR
SUBDOMINANT
(IV)
SUBMEDIANT
(vi)
TONIC
(I)
MEDIANT
(iii)
DOMINANT
(V)

Write the mediant and submediant triads in the key of b minor (use the harmonic minor scale)

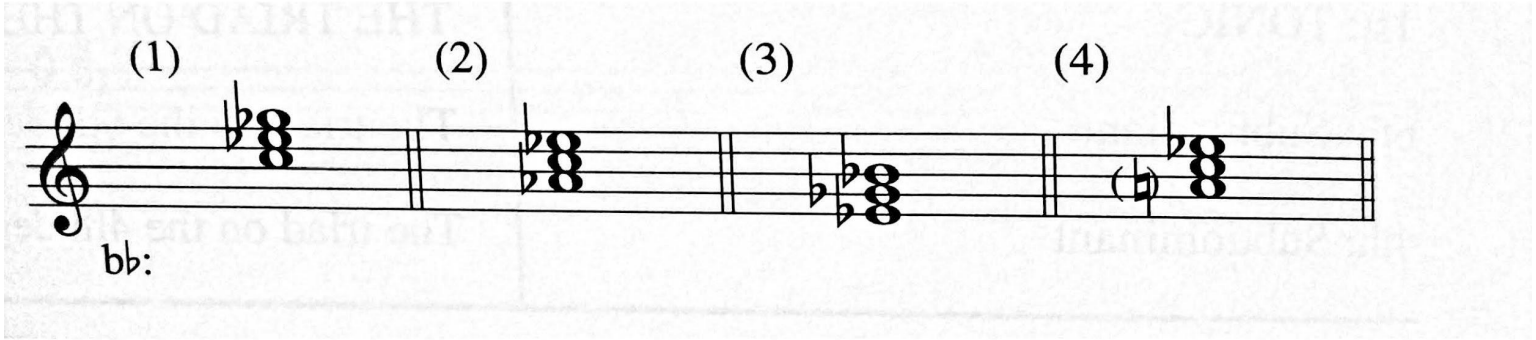



KEY OF G MAJOR
LEADING TONE
(vii°)
TONIC
(I)
SUPERTONIC
(ii)

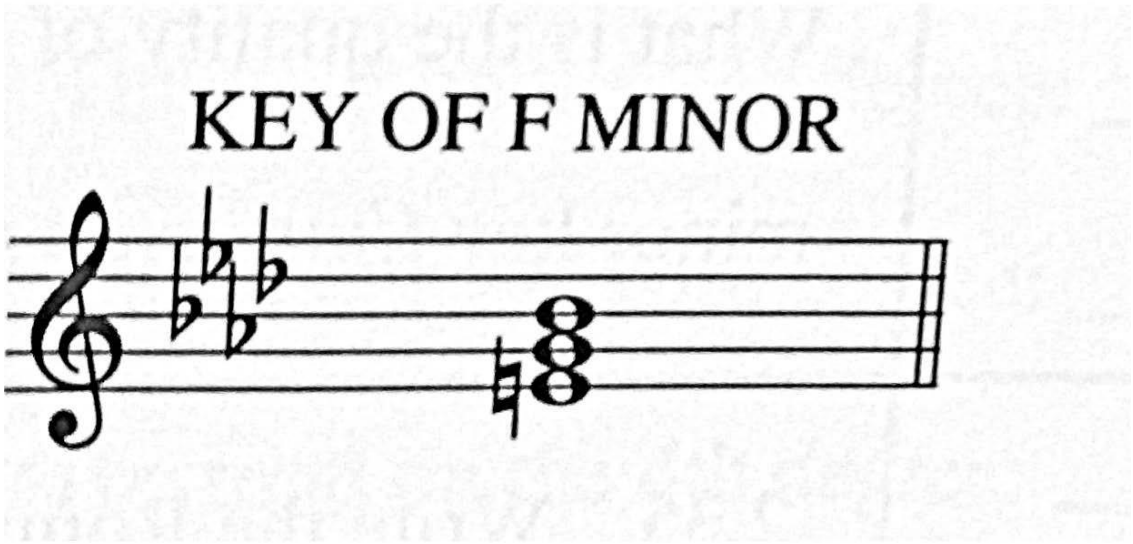
Which of these chords is the leading tone of F major?



Which of these triads is the leading tone in the key of bb minor?



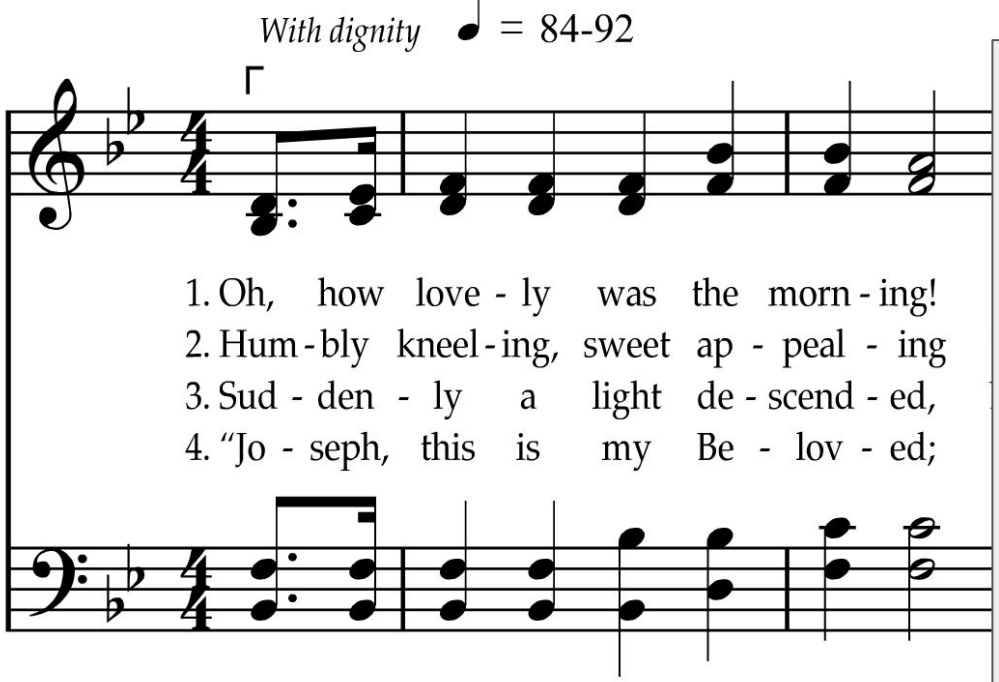
What term is appropriate for this chord?



Harmonic Activity

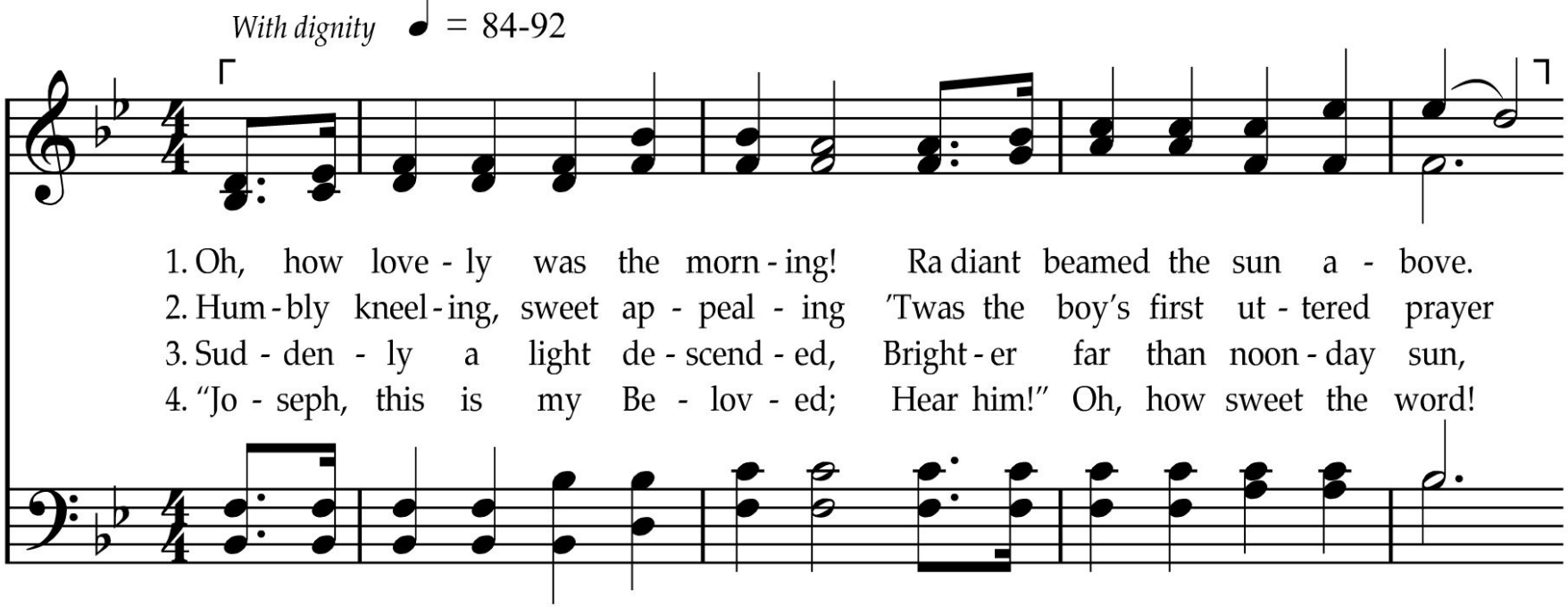
Tonic: The Tonic is a relatively neutral chord. Most compositions begin and end with this harmony and it has a sense of relative repose.

Joseph Smith's First Prayer



Most active chord is the dominant on at measure 2, which demands a resolution to the tonic. The harmony is tonic - dominant Dominant chord sounds incomplete.

Joseph Smith's First Prayer

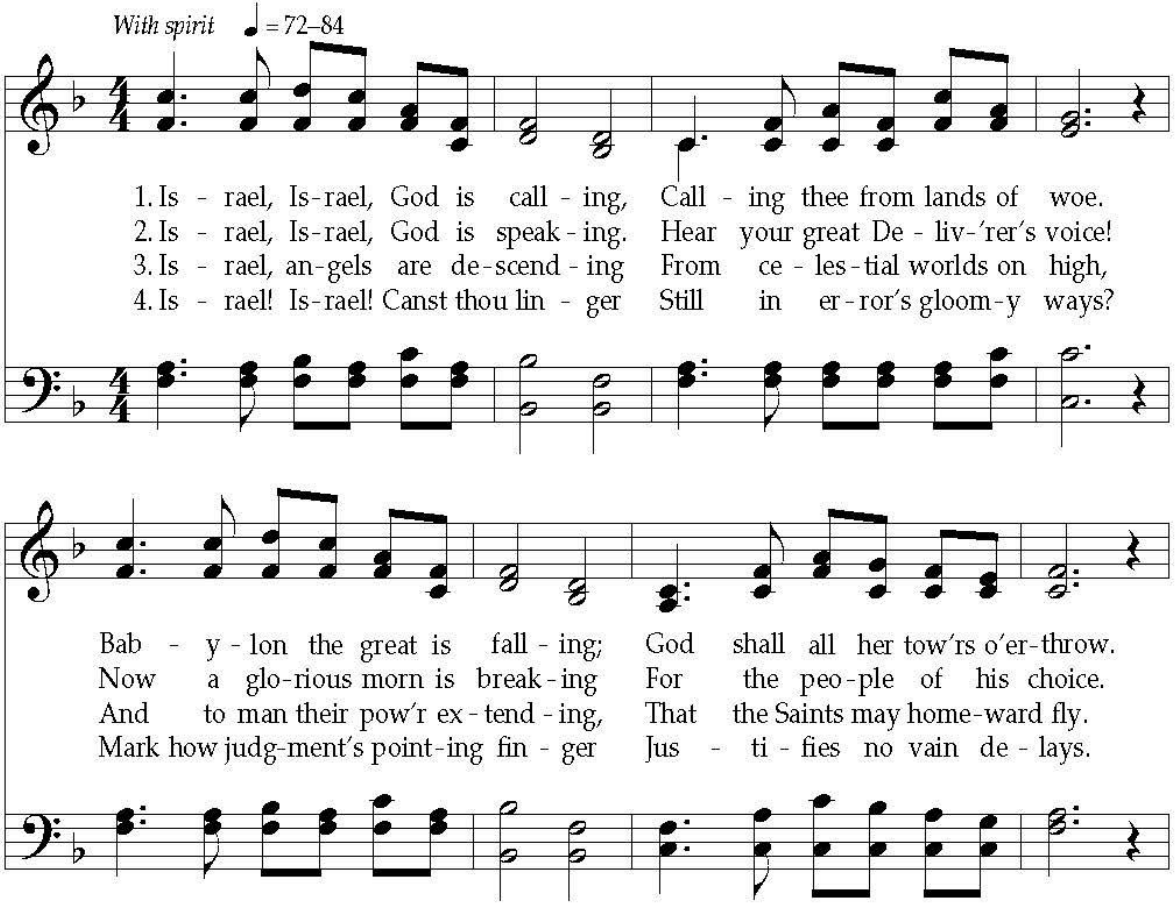


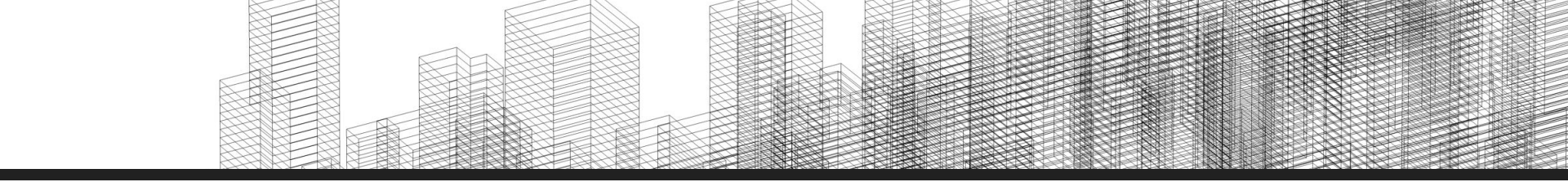
The dominant chord progresses the line back to the tonic.

What is the harmonic movement here?

Does it end with a sense of finality?

7 Israel, Israel, God Is Calling

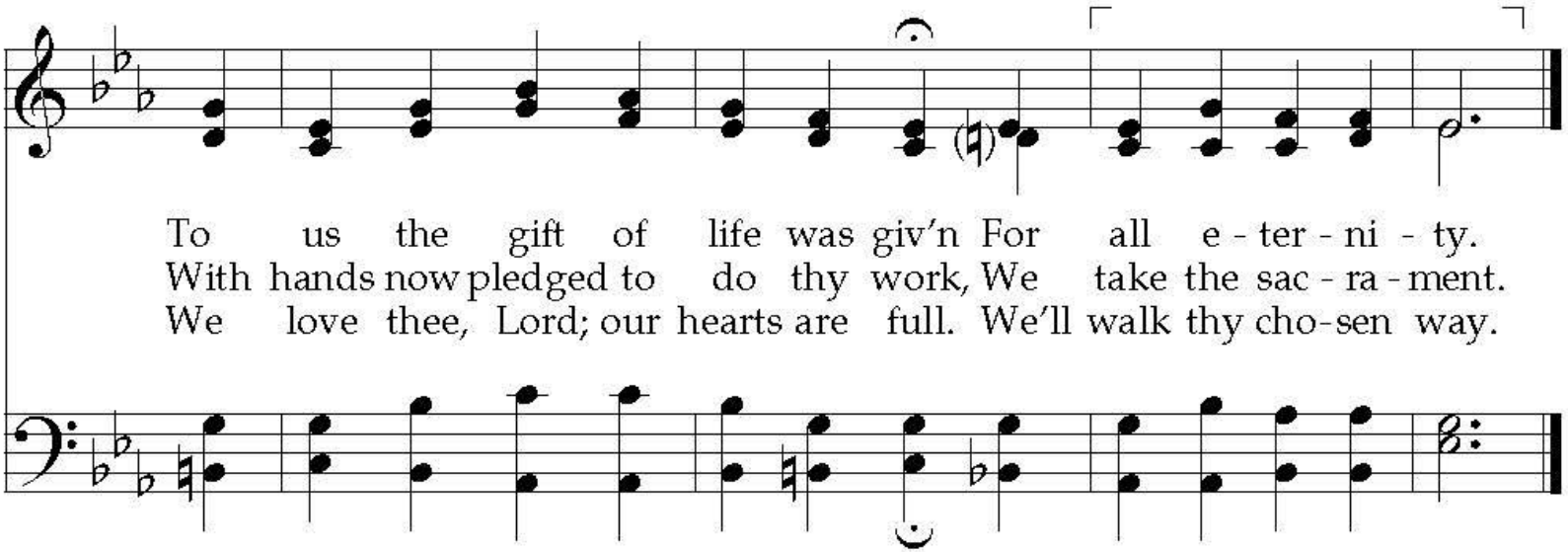




Harmonic motion

A commonly seen pattern is harmonic motion from IV - V - I. For example:

169 As Now We Take the Sacrament



What chords are the primary chords in G major?

I: _____

IV: _____

V: _____

What chords are the primary chords in G major?

I: G

IV: C

V: D

What chords are the secondary chords in G major?

ii: _____

iii: _____

vi: _____

vii°: _____

What chords are the secondary chords in G major?

ii: a

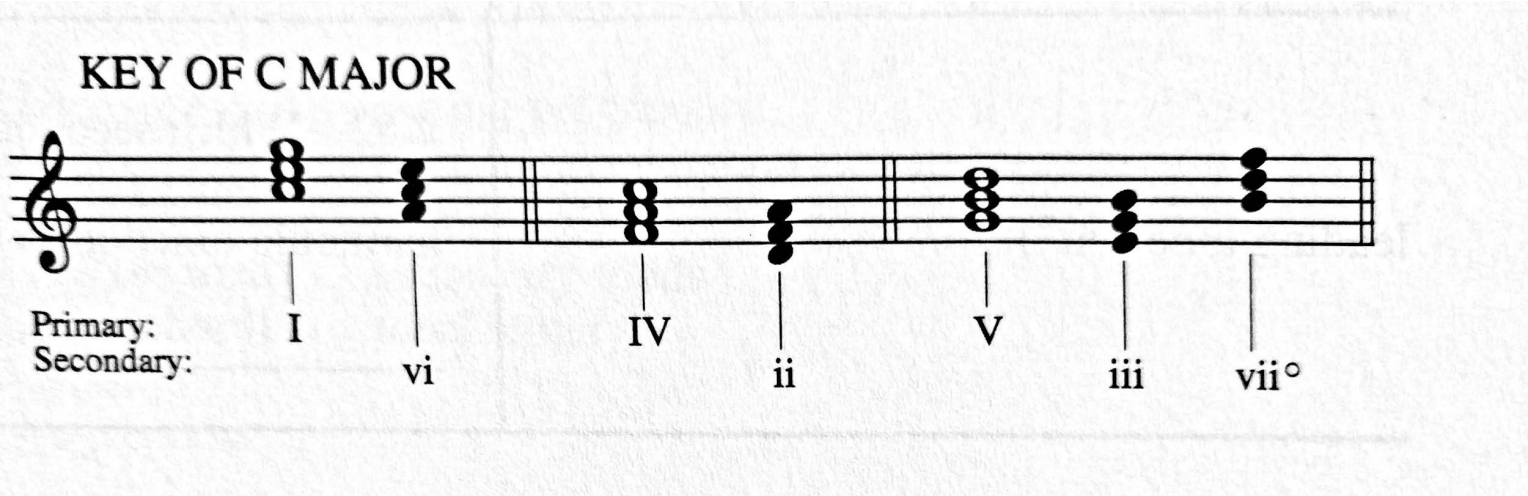
iii: b

vi: e

vii°: f#°

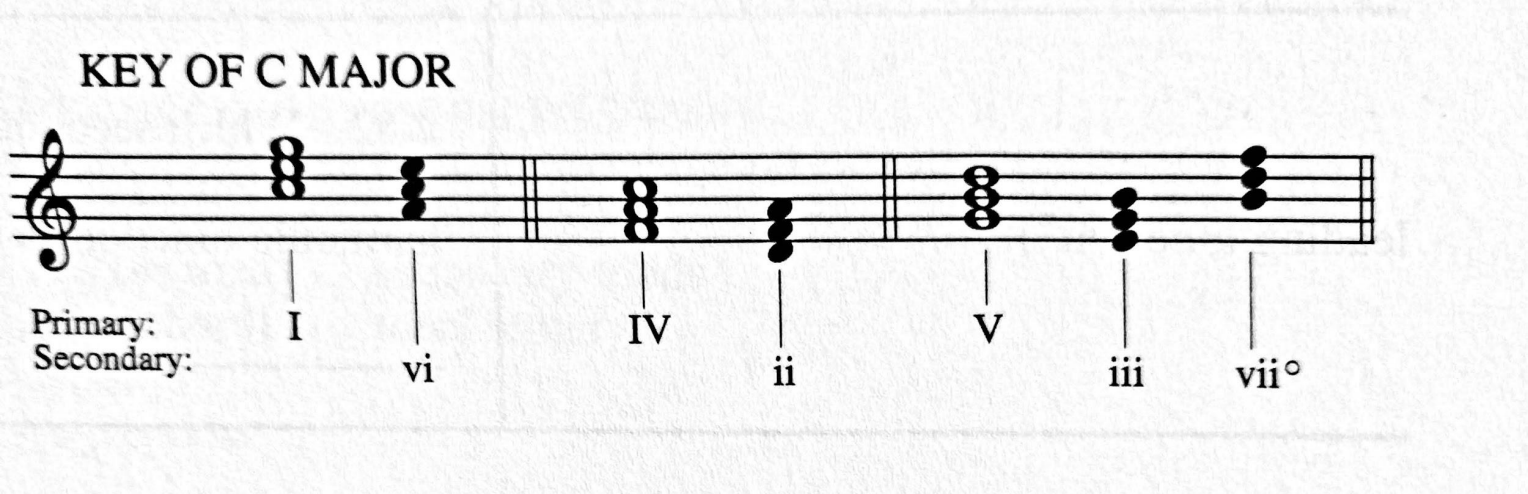
Secondary chords

Secondary triads are closely related to the primary triads. Note the “common tones”



Secondary chords

This means that you can use these secondary triads as substitutes for primary triads.



PRIMARY TRIADS		SECONDARY TRIADS
I	–	_____
IV	–	_____
V	–	_____

*The leading tone triad is often considered to be a dominant seventh chord with the root omitted.

Levels 5-6

Transposition

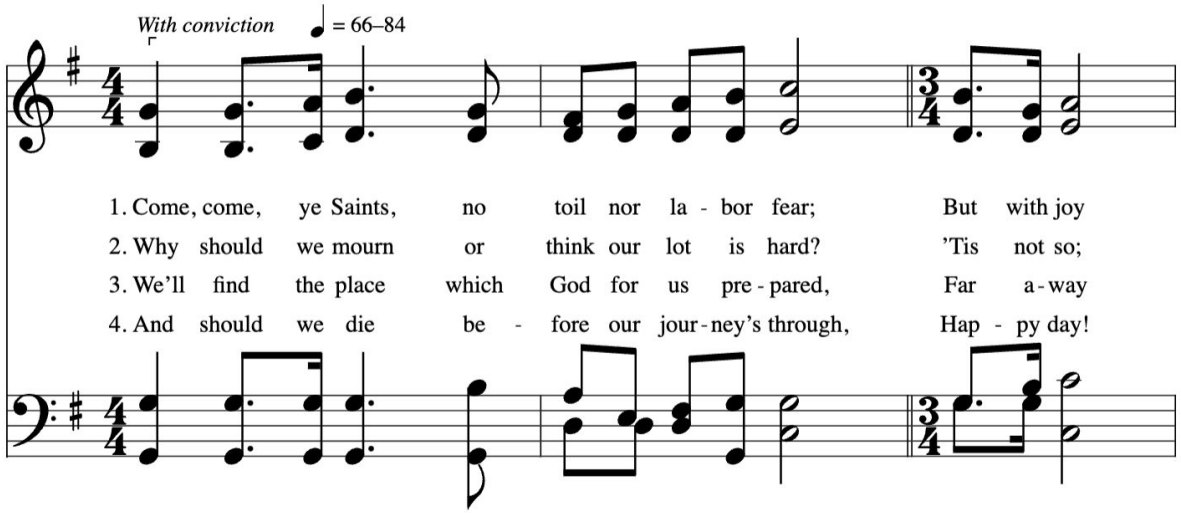
- It may occasionally be necessary to transpose up or down. This is active music theory in real-time!
- There are several transpositions that are easier to do. Beyond those, several theory tips will help.
- If all else fails, it never hurts to write the transposed music out on manuscript paper

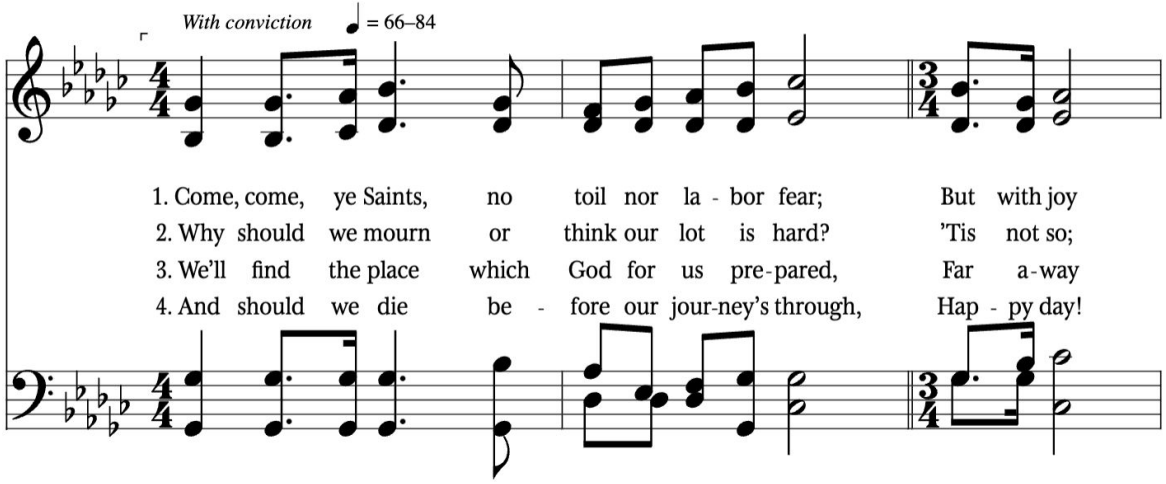
Mental Techniques

- Imagine a different key signature
  - This only works when the key note is the same letter, e.g. Eb - E, C#-C, etc
  - Watch out for accidentals! In flat keys, naturals become sharps, flats become naturals, and sharps become double sharps
  - In sharp keys naturals become flats, flats become double flats and sharps become naturals
- Use the bass clef trick
  - Read the treble clef as if it was written in the bass clef. This will transpose the piece up a minor third. Make sure to adjust the key signature in your mind. The left hand will need to transposed to harmonize with the right hand.

Other transposition techniques

- Assign every note a number based on scale degree, 1-7 (e.g. in C major, C is 1, D is 2, E is 3, etc) Think of each scale degree as you transpose to the new key
- Think of the distance moved for each pitch. If transposing up a major second, think about moving each pitch up a major second before transposing. E.g. in D major, D would move to E, E would move to F#, etc.


With conviction
= 66–84
1. Come, come, ye Saints, no toil nor la - bor fear; But with joy
2. Why should we mourn or think our lot is hard? 'Tis not so;
3. We'll find the place which God for us pre - pared, Far a - way
4. And should we die be - fore our jour - ney's through, Hap - py day!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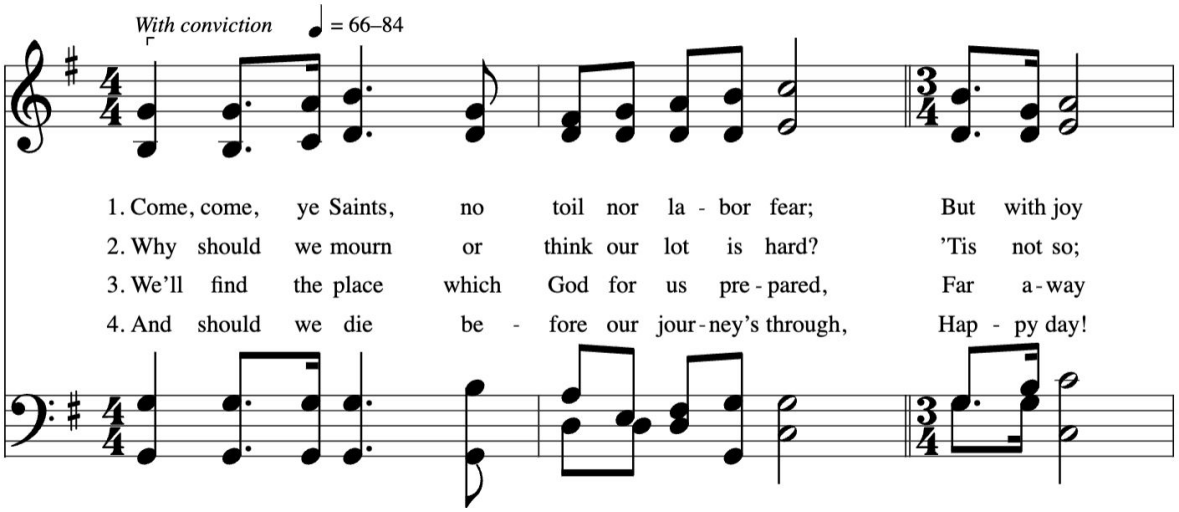
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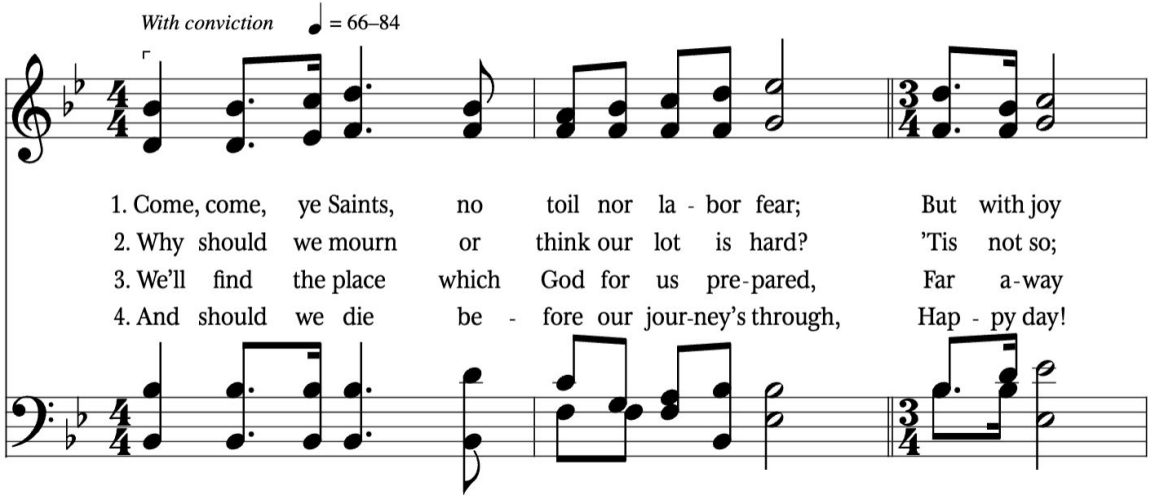
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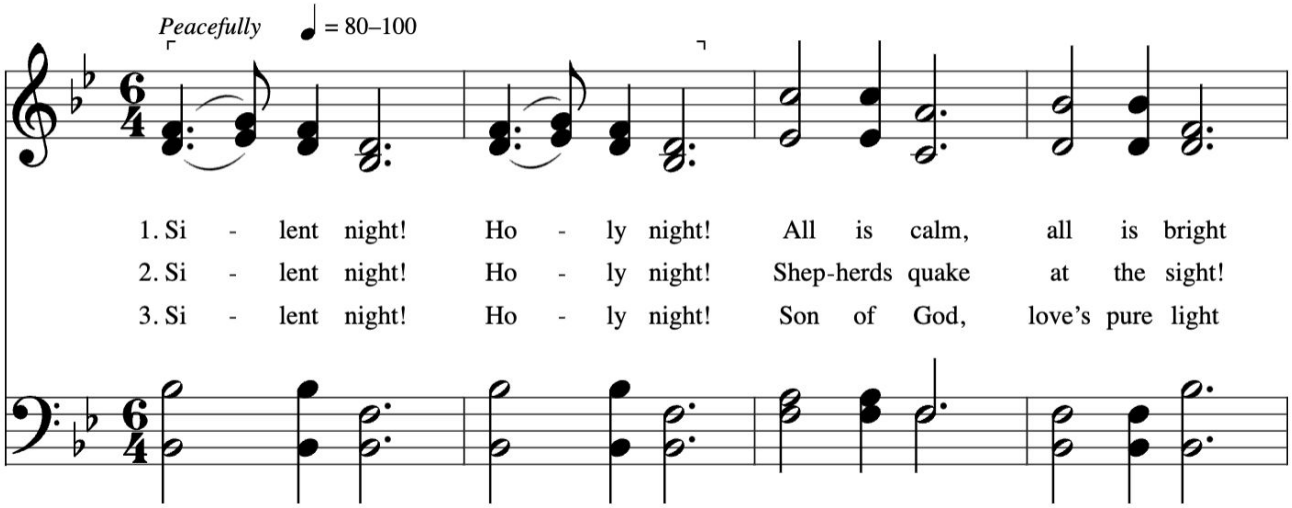
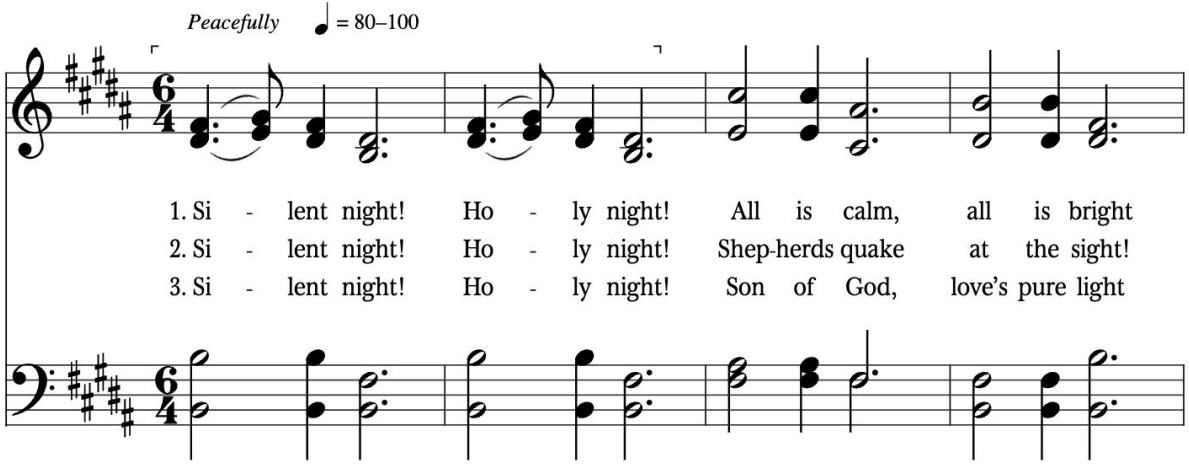

Peacefully
= 80–100
1. Si - lent night! Ho - ly night! All is calm, all is bright
2. Si - lent night! Ho - ly night! Shep-herds quake at the sight!
3. Si - lent night! Ho - ly night! Son of God, love's pure light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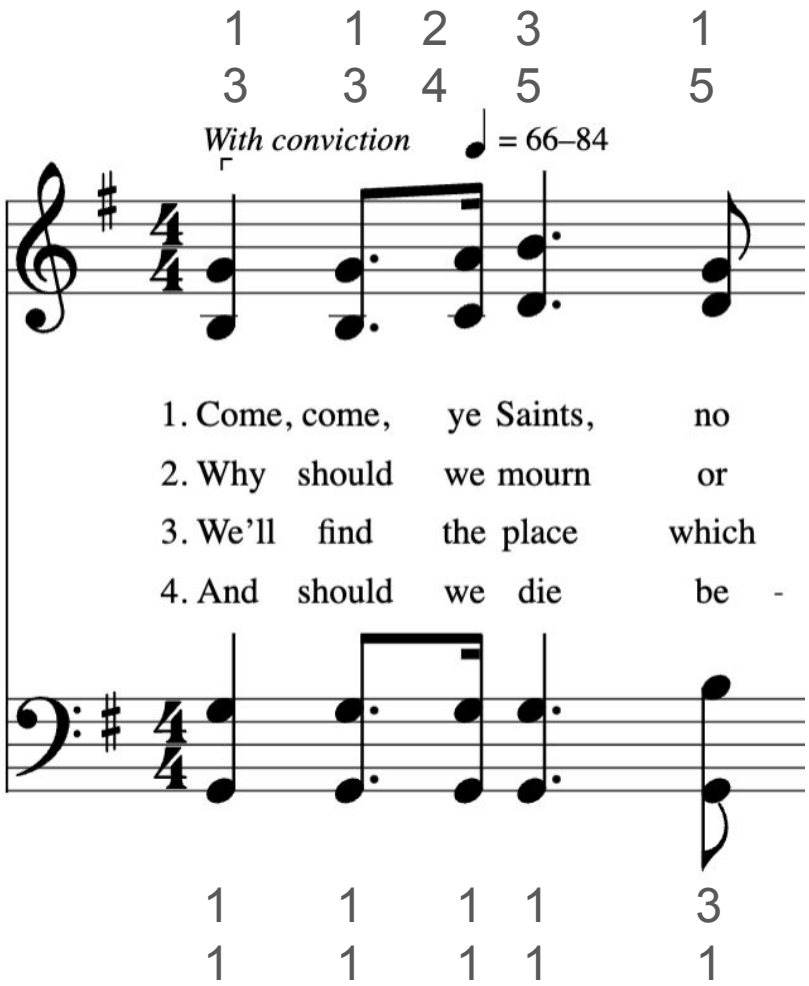
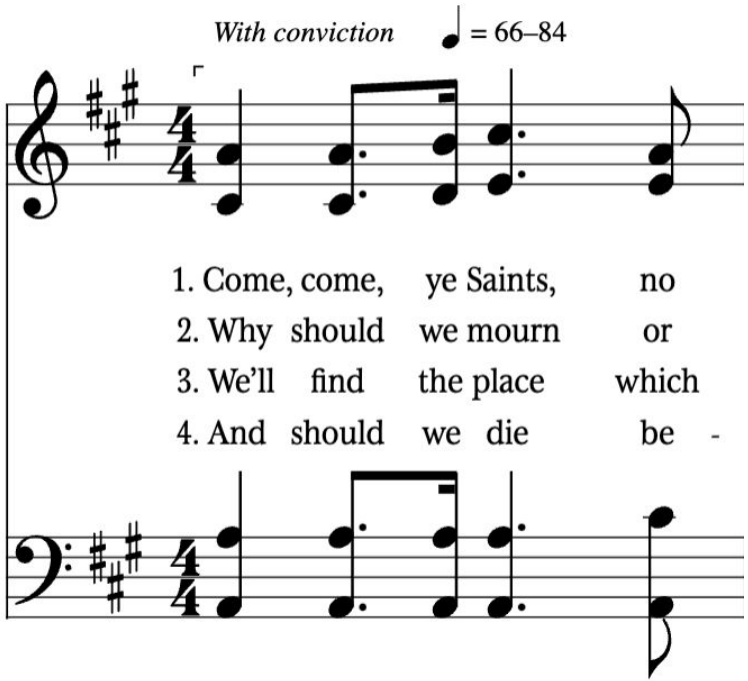
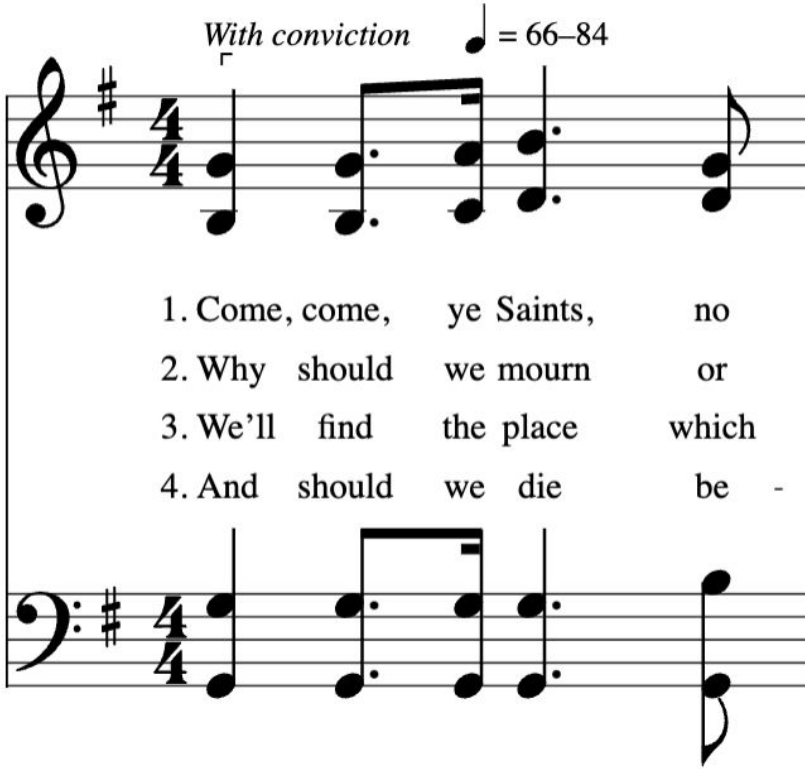


Let's transpose to A major

1 1 2 3 1
3 3 4 5 5

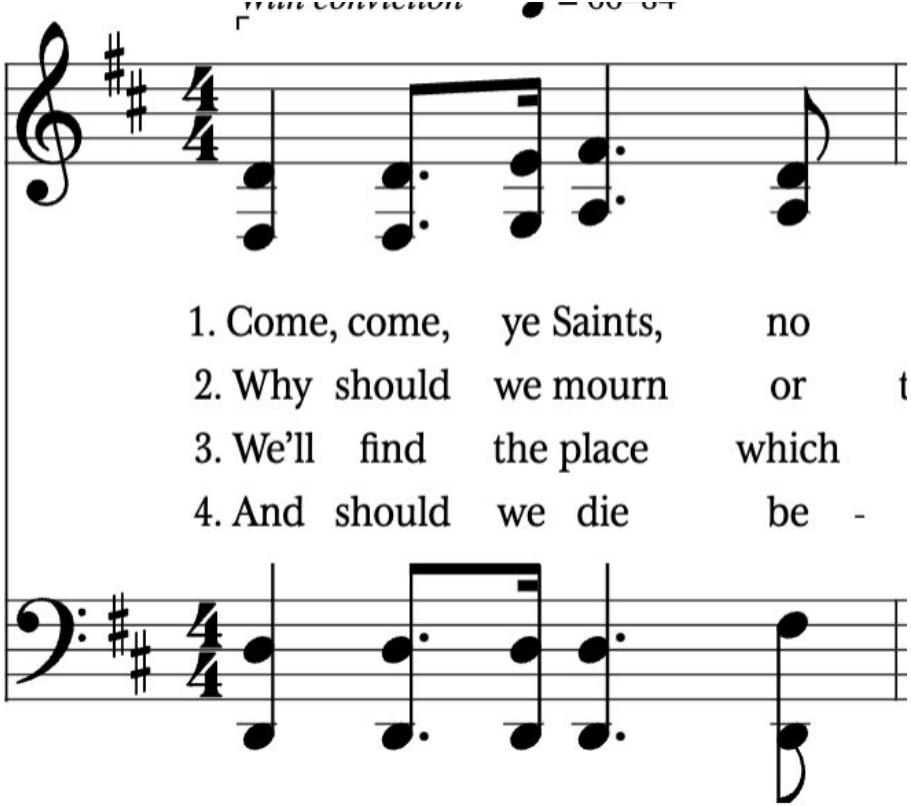


1 1 1 1 3
1 1 1 1 1

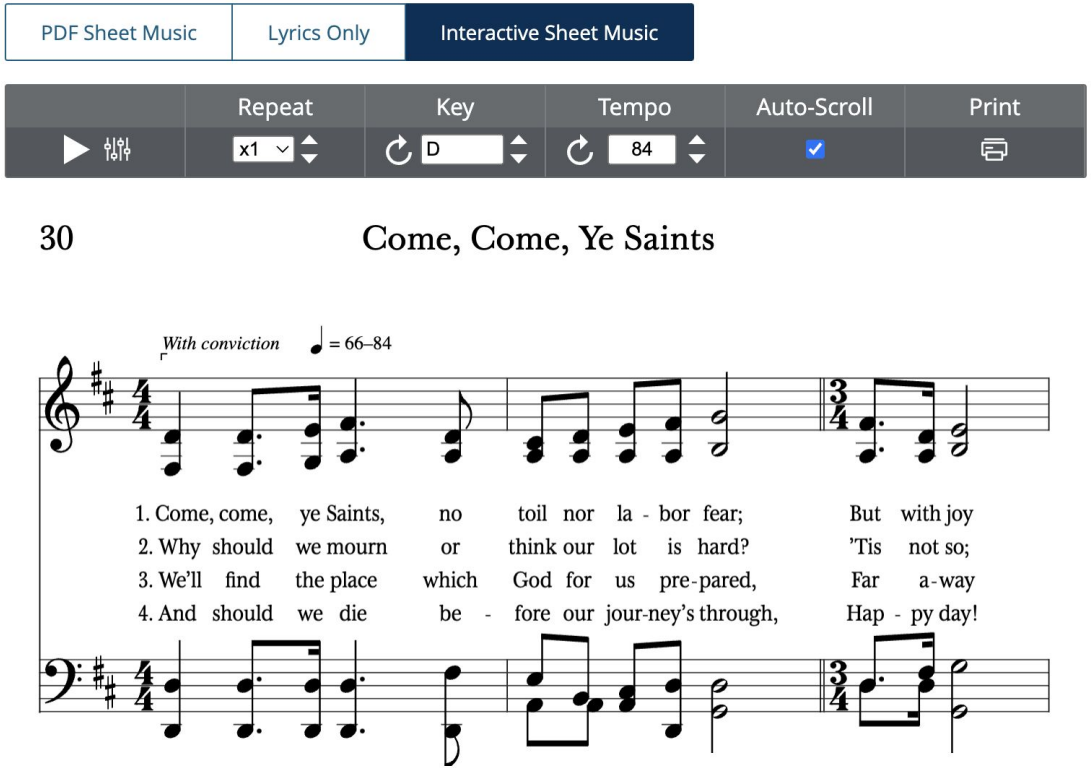


Think intervals, up a perfect 5th (or down a 4th)

Soprano: G-D, A-E, B-F#
Alto: B-F#, C-G, D-A
Tenor: G-D, B-F#
Bass: G-D



Think intervals, up a perfect 5th (or down a 4th)

Soprano: G-D, A-E, B-F#
Alto: B-F#, C-G, D-A
Tenor: G-D, B-F#
Bass: G-D

If all else fails, write it out or use the interactive hymn tool