

Focus on Intervals

The drills in this section will help you develop a quick recognition of the major 2nd, major 3rd, and perfect 5th as they appear on the keyboard and on the staff. Once you thoroughly master these intervals, they can be used as building blocks in the formation of other intervals.

The Major 2nd

Keyboard Drill: Playing Major 2nds

The **major 2nd** (whole step) spans two half steps.

It is spelled as a 2nd—two consecutive alphabet letters must be used.

For example, $A\flat - B\flat$ is a major 2nd; $A\flat - A\sharp$ is not the correct spelling, even though the same keys are used.

Ascending 2nds

1. Start on middle C.

Play middle C, then play the key a major 2nd higher, D.

Say aloud the names of both notes as you play them.



Now start on $C\sharp$, then play the key a major 2nd higher, $D\sharp$. Say aloud the names.



Repeat this sequence on D and continue this pattern – each starting key should be a half step higher than the previous starting key.



Repeat this exercise, starting on any note, until it becomes easy. You should be able to name the note names as you play. **Always spell the interval as a 2nd.**

Descending 2nds

2. This exercise is similar to exercise 1, but with **descending 2nds**.

Start on middle C. Play C, then play the key a major 2nd *lower*, $B\flat$.

Now start on B, then play the key a major 2nd lower, A.

Continue this pattern of descending 2nds – each starting key should be a half step lower than the previous starting key. Always, say aloud the note names.

The Major 3rd

Keyboard Drill: Playing Major 3rds

The **major 3rd** (whole step) spans four half steps.

It is spelled as a 3rd (skip).

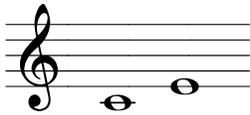
For example, $G\flat - B\flat$ is a major 3rd; $G\flat - A\sharp$ is not the correct spelling, even though the same keys are used.

Ascending 3rds

3. Start on middle C.

Play middle C, then play the key a major 3rd higher, E.

Say aloud the names of both notes as you play them.



Now start on $D\flat$, then play the key a major 3rd higher, F. Say aloud the names.



Repeat this sequence on D and continue this pattern – each starting key should be a half step higher than the previous starting key.



Repeat this exercise, starting on any note, until it becomes easy. You should be able to name the note names as you play. **Always spell the interval as a 3rd (skip).**

Descending 3rds

4. This exercise is similar to 3, but with **descending 3rds**.

Start on middle C. Play C, then play the key a major 3rd *lower*, $A\flat$.

Now start on B, then play the key a major 3rd lower, G.

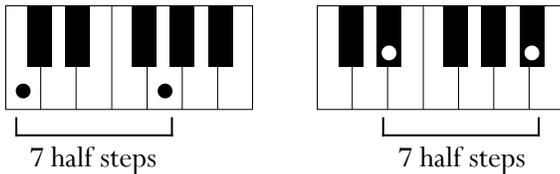
Continue this pattern of descending 3rds – each starting key should be a half step lower than the previous starting key. As always, say aloud the note names.

The Perfect 5th

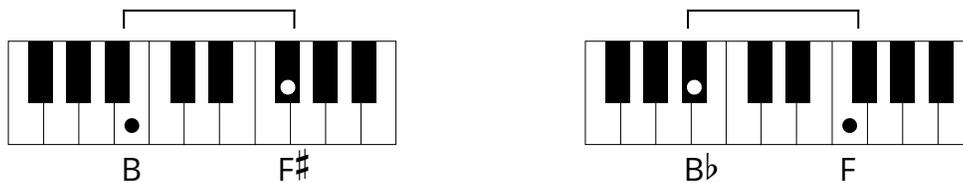
The **perfect 5th** spans a total of seven half steps.

It should be spelled as a fifth. For example, B – F# is a perfect 5th; B – G \flat is not the correct spelling, even though the same keys are used.

A perfect 5th is easy to form on the keyboard. It is made up of two black keys or two white keys.



The exception to this is the perfect 5th formed with B or B \flat as the bottom pitch.

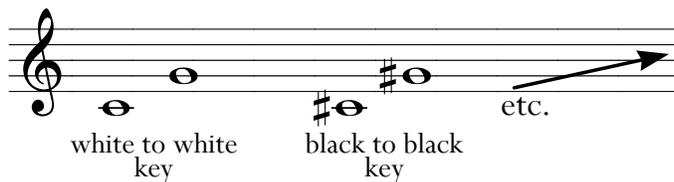


Keyboard Drill: Playing Perfect 5ths

With the right or left hand, play the following exercises in the same manner as drills 1 through 4.

Ascending 5ths

- Play middle C, then play the key a perfect 5th higher, G.
Now start on C#, then play the key a perfect 5th higher (G#).
Now start on D, and continue the pattern of ascending perfect 5ths.



As you play this exercise, say aloud the letters as you play. Notice that the two keys of a perfect 5th are white-to-white or black-to-black **except for 5ths starting on B and B \flat** .

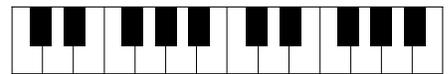
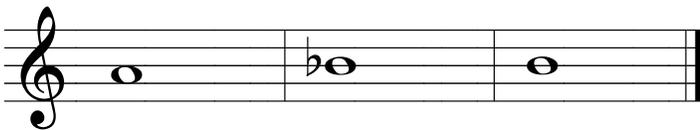
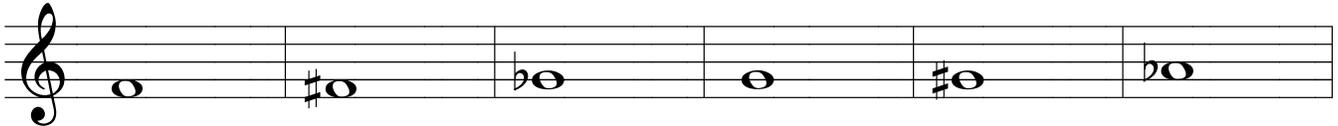
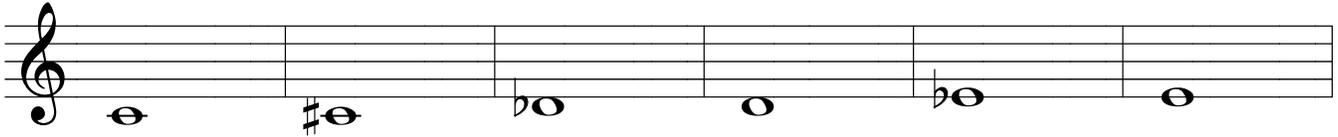
Descending 5ths

- This exercise is similar to 5, but with **descending 5ths**.
Start on middle C. Play C, then play the key a perfect 5th *lower*, F.
Now start on B, then play the key a perfect 5th lower, E.
Continue this pattern – each starting key should be a half step lower than the previous starting key. As always, say aloud the note names.

Writing exercises 1 through 6 as notes on the staff:

The following exercises can be used to practice notating the major 2nd, major 3rd, and perfect 5th on the staff.

7. On the staff, write the interval **UP** from each given note.



8. On the staff, write the interval **DOWN** from each given note.

