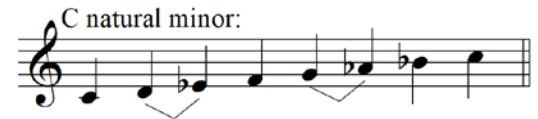


## Scales: Major and minor

Scales are named based on their starting note (tonic) and their quality. The quality of a scale comes from the intervals it contains – where the half steps fall in the scale. No matter what note a Major scale starts on (for example, C Major vs. E Major), the half steps will always be in the same place within the scale – that is what makes the scale “Major.” You should know where the half steps are in the Major and natural minor scales (shown by brackets):

- In the **Major** scale, the half steps are between notes 3-4 and notes 7-8 (WWH-WWWH);
- The minor scale has three forms:
  - In the **natural minor** scale, the half steps are between notes 2-3 and notes 5-6 (WHW-WHWW);
  - In the **harmonic minor** scale, the half steps are between notes 2-3, notes 5-6, and notes 7-8; additionally, there is an Augmented 2<sup>nd</sup> (A2) between notes 6-7 (WHW-WHAH);
  - In the **melodic minor** scale, the half steps are between notes 2-3 and notes 7-8 when the scale is ascending (WHW-WWWH); when the scale is descending it is played as natural minor.



The best way to learn the harmonic and melodic minor scales is to think of them as alterations to the natural minor scale. I also like to use solfege syllables to help show the differences between scales. The natural minor scale uses only the notes of that minor key signature. Harmonic and melodic minor start with the minor key signature, and add accidentals to the scale as shown below:

- Harmonic minor has a raised 7<sup>th</sup> note, like the Major scale does (**Ti** instead of **Te**).
- Melodic minor has a raised 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> note on the way up the scale (**La** and **Ti** instead of **Le** and **Te**), but when the scale is going down the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> are lowered again (back to **Te** and **Le**), so the descending scale is just natural minor.

