

Harmonic Minor Scales

In music, the half step or semitone is one of the most important intervals. Half steps create more tension than their fellow interval the whole step. As such they have the effect of leading the ear towards a harmonic goal. For this reason, a note that is a half step away from another target note is called a *leading tone*.

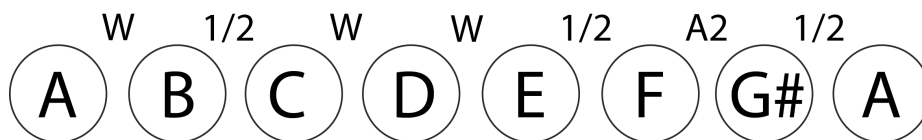
For example, if you play a C major scale B considered the leading tone. Your ears can easily recognize this because if you play the scale and stop on the B, it creates an unpleasant feeling. This feeling is suddenly replaced with relief when we complete the scale by playing C. This tension and release phenomena is critical for creating the harmonic drive that moves a piece forward.

The relative minor of C major is A minor. The notes of the A natural minor scale would be:
A B C D E F G A

However, classical composers were not satisfied with the way the last note resolves to A. G to A is a whole step which is not a very strong sounding interval. As such, by making the G a G# now the final interval is a half step creating the *leading tone* that we discussed earlier. The notes of the A harmonic minor scale therefore are:

A B C D E F G# A

Note that the interval from F to G which was formerly a whole step expands in size and becomes an *Augmented Second*. The intervals between all the notes of the scale are as follows:



In the following exercise, identify all the triads in the key of A minor. Remember that the four types of triads are:

- Major 1 3 5
- Minor 1 b3 5
- Diminished 1 b3 b5
- Augmented 1 3 #5

R	3	5	Name