The Chromatic Wheel

Definitions

Chord - A combination of three or more notes played at the same time.

Chord Tone - A note that’s part of the current chord.

Chromatic Scale - A scale consisting of every note.

Diatonic - A note that’s part of the current scale/key.

Downbeat - The first beat in a measure.

Flat - Lowers the note a half step.

Half Step - Move one notch on the wheel, or one fret on a bass/guitar. Also called a semitone.

Key - Reference to what scale of notes a song is based on.

Root - The note in which a chord is based on. ex: C is the root of a Cm7.

Scale - Subset of notes in order, usually consisting of whole and half steps over the course of an octave.

Sharp - Raises the note a half step.

Whole Step - Two notches on the wheel. Also called a Tone.

1-4-5 - Since the 3 major chords diatonic to a major key are 1, 4, and 5 of a song. It’s very common to use those 3 chords in a song. Songs, or parts of songs, that only use those three chords are called “One Four Five”.

Times

Quarter Note - The standard beat of a song. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Eighth Note - The off beat of a song. “+” pronounced “and”.

Sixteenth Note - Divisions in between eighth notes. “e” and “a” (pronounced “uh”).

One Measure - 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a

Intervals (in relation to steps on chromatic wheel)

0 - Unison. Same note. 1.
3 - Minor Third. m3.
4 - Major Third. 3.
5 - Fourth. Perfect Fourth. 4.
6 - Minor Fifth. Tritone. Diminished Fifth. m5.
7 - Fifth. Perfect Fifth. 5.
8 - Minor Sixth. m6.
9 - Major Sixth. 6.
10 - Minor Seventh. Dominant Seventh. m7.
12 - Eighth. Octave. 8.
13 - Flat Ninth. m9.
14 - Ninth. 9.
15 - Sharp Nine. #9.

Scales (with samples in G)

Each note in a scale is represented by its position, 1-8.

Major Scale - Whole-Whole-Half-Whole-Whole-Whole-Half.

(G A B C D E F# G)

Minor Scale - Whole-Whole-Half-Whole-Half-Whole-Whole.

(G A B C D Eb F G)

Chords (with samples in G)

Major - 1-3-5. G-B-D. “G”
Minor - 1-3-5-7. G-Bb-D. “Gm”
Seven - 1-3-5-m7. G-B-D-F. “G7”
Major Seven - 1-3-5-M7. G-B-D-F#. “Gmaj7”
Minor Seven - 1-3-5-7-m7. G-Bb-D-F. “Gm7”
Nine - 1-3-5-m7-9. G-B-D-F-A. “G9”
Diminished - 1-3-5-m7. G-Bb-D. “Gdim”
Augmented - 1-3-m6. G-Bb-D. “Gaug”
Suspected “Sus” - 1-4-5. G-C-D. “Gsus” or “Gsus4”
Sus2 - 1-2-5. G-A-D. “Gsus2”
add9 - 1-3-5-9. G-B-D-A. “Gadd9”
Five - 1-5. G-D. “G5”
Six - 1-3-5-6. G-B-D-E. “G6”

/- When writing a chord that has a note other than the root to be played by the bass, it’s marked with a “/”.

For example “G7/G” is a G7 chord with the bass playing a C.

Pronounced “G Seven Over C”.

For music theory lessons, piano/keyboard, beginner guitar or bass lessons, contact Dan Goodspeed at: editor@rkstar.com