Section 3.1

Introduction to Intervals

An interval is the pitch distance (high-low distance) between two notes. Interval names have two parts:
1. The general category of the interval, based on counting the number of letter names using the starting letter name as number one; and
2. The quality of the interval, related to how many half steps are between the notes.

Major and perfect intervals

Major and perfect quality intervals match the notes of a major scale, starting from the first note of the scale up. Seconds, thirds, sixths, and sevenths can be major in quality, but never perfect. Unisons, fourths, fifths, and octaves (“8ves”) can be perfect in quality, but never major.

Minor intervals

Minor intervals are one half step smaller than major intervals, keeping the same letter names. Only intervals that can be major are able to become minor: seconds, thirds, sixths, and sevenths only.
Diminished intervals are one half step smaller than minor or perfect intervals, keeping the same letter names. Augmented intervals are one half step larger than major or perfect intervals, keeping the same letter names.

**Thirds** (seconds, sixths, and sevenths are similar):

![Diminished third](image1) ← Minor third ← Major third → Augmented third

**Fourths** (unisons, fifths, and octaves are similar):

![Diminished fourth](image2) ← Perfect fourth → Augmented fourth

Consonant intervals are intervals that sound more stable because of the closer relationship between the physical vibration patterns of the notes. The closest relationships (and therefore the most stable intervals) are the **perfect consonances**: perfect unison, perfect fifth, and perfect octave. The **imperfect consonances** are major and minor thirds and sixths. They are not as stable as perfect consonances, but more stable than dissonances.

Dissonant intervals are seconds and sevenths as well as all diminished and augmented intervals. The notes in dissonant intervals have physical vibration patterns that are relatively unrelated to one another and are therefore unstable when compared to consonances. The **perfect fourth** is sometimes considered a consonance and sometimes a dissonance, depending on style and musical context.

Simple intervals are an octave or smaller. Compound intervals are larger than an octave. Compound intervals use the same quality names as their simple counterparts (major, perfect, etc.). To convert from simple to compound, add 7. Example: 2nd + 8ve = 9th since 2 + 7 = 9.