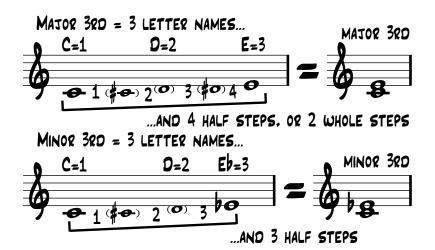
Section 4.1.2 THIRDS AND MAJOR TRIADS

Prerequisites

This text assumes you understand treble clef, bass clef, staves, note names, enharmonic notes, rhythmic values, time signatures, major and minor scales, half steps, and whole steps. For enharmonic notes, see **Appendix 1** in this volume. You can review (or learn) the other topics for free at **LearnMusicTheory.net** or in **Volume 1: Music Theory Fundamentals**.

Major thirds Minor thirds An **interval** is the pitch distance (high-low distance) between two notes. The core intervals for jazz are **whole steps**, **half steps**, **major thirds**, and **minor thirds**. For half steps and whole steps, see **Appendix 1**. A **major third** spans three letter names and four half steps. A **minor third** spans three letter names and three half steps.



Visualizing thirds on the keyboard

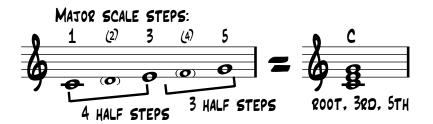
On the keyboard, **major thirds** are four half steps, or two whole steps. **Minor thirds** are three half steps, or a whole step plus a half step. Always count the starting note as zero when counting half steps for intervals.

C to E = major 3rd			G♭ to B♭ = major 3rd			C to Eb = minor 3rd			F# to A = min. 3rd			
-	1 3	2			2 4	1		3		0 2	2	
0	2	4		1	3	0	2			1	3	

Triads Major triad

Root, third, fifth

Triads are three-note chords built with a stack of two thirds. A **major triad** uses a major third on the bottom and a minor third on top. Scale steps 1, 3, and 5 in a major scale form a major triad. The bottom note in the stack of thirds is the **root**, the middle note the **third**, and the top note the **fifth**.



All major triads

Play the twelve major triads shown below. The major triads must be memorized. Learning them in groups makes this much easier:

- 1. <u>Feed Cows Grass</u>: F, C, and G major are all white keys (natural notes). Feed Cows Grass, because cows are very natural.
- 2. **BEAD** raise third: Major triads on **B**, **E**, **A**, or **D** (natural or flat) always have a "raised" accidental on the third of the chord. Flats are "raised" to naturals for B flat, E flat, A flat, or D flat chords, and naturals are "raised" to sharps for B, E, A, or D. For B chords, see the next group.
- 3. **B Bumps Both**: Major triads on **B** or **B flat** have "raised" accidentals for **both** the third and the fifth.
- 4. **F sharp=black keys**: **F sharp** is the only major triad with all black keys.

