

Intervals

Uli Widmaier

- Intervals describe distances between two notes. Intervals have names and qualities.
- The names are: Prime, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Octave, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, and so on.
- The qualities are: perfect, major, minor, augmented, and diminished. Doubly augmented or diminished intervals are also possible.
- The names are nouns, and the qualities are adjectives. Ex's: a major Third, a minor Sixth, an augmented Fourth, a perfect Fifth.
- **The number of letters (note names) involved gives the interval's name.** Ex's: A-B is a Second; A-C is a Third; A-D is a Fourth.
- Accidentals and number of half steps affect an interval's quality, not its name. Ex.: A-B, A#-Bb, and Ab-B# are all Seconds.
- Primes, Fourths, Fifths, and Octaves can be perfect, diminished, and augmented. They cannot be major or minor.
- Seconds, Thirds, Sixths, Sevenths, Ninths, and Tenth can be major, minor, diminished, and augmented. They cannot be perfect.
- "Perfect" is often omitted. The other qualities are always stated. The augmented Fourth and diminished Fifth are also known as "Tritone."
- Names and qualities can be abbreviated with letters and numbers:
"1" = Prime; "2" = Second; "3" = Third; and so on. "P" = perfect; "m" = minor; "M" = major; "d" = diminished; "A" = augmented.
- **The quality of an interval is given by the number of half steps between the two notes.**
- Here are all the perfect, major, minor, diminished, and augmented intervals and their half steps, up to the minor Ninth:
0 HS = P1 and d2; **1 HS** = A1 and m2; **2 HS** = M2 and d3; **3 HS** = A2 and m3; **4 HS** = M3 and d4; **5 HS** = A3 and P4;
6 HS = A4 and d5; **7 HS** = P5 and d6; **8 HS** = A5 and m6; **9 HS** = M6 and d7; **10 HS** = A6 and m7;
11 HS = M7 and d8; **12 HS** = A7, P8, and d9; **13 HS** = A8 and m9.

1. Major, Minor, and Perfect Intervals

(perfect) Prime minor Second major Second minor Third

major Third (perfect) Fourth (perfect) Fifth minor Sixth

major Sixth minor Seventh major Seventh (perfect) Octave

minor Ninth major Ninth minor Tenth major Tenth

2. Diminished and Augmented Intervals (examples)

dim. Fourth aug. Third aug. Fourth ("Tritone") dim. Fifth ("Tritone") aug. Fifth
= major Third = (perfect) Fourth

aug. Sixth dim. Octave aug. Octave
= minor Seventh = major Seventh = minor Ninth