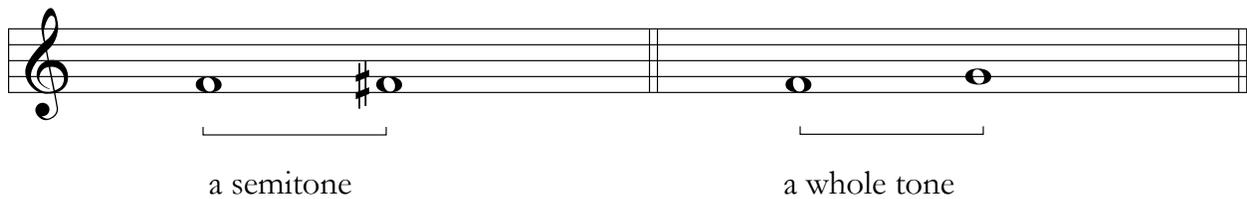


Unit 4 ~ Semitones and Whole Tones

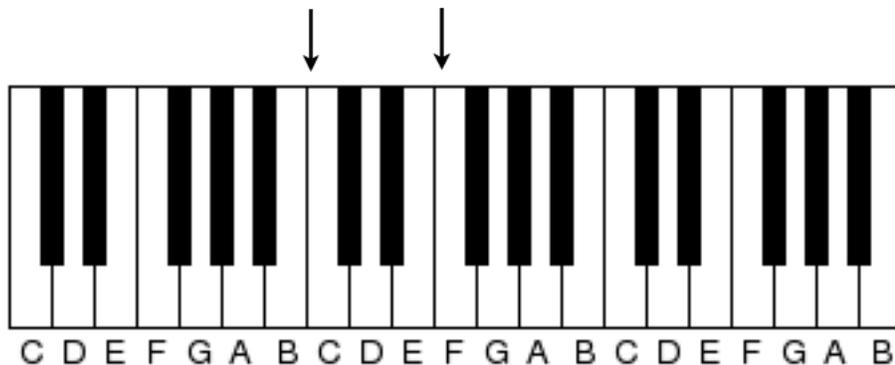
It's useful to be able to describe distances between notes. So today we will learn about SEMITONES and WHOLE TONES.

A semitone is the distance between a note and the note right next to it. So for example the distance between the white key F and the black key F sharp right above it is a semitone.

Two semitones make a whole tone (you can also just say 'tone' instead of 'whole tone'), so the distance from F to G is a whole tone. It's that simple.



It is important to note that there are no black keys between E and F or between B and C:



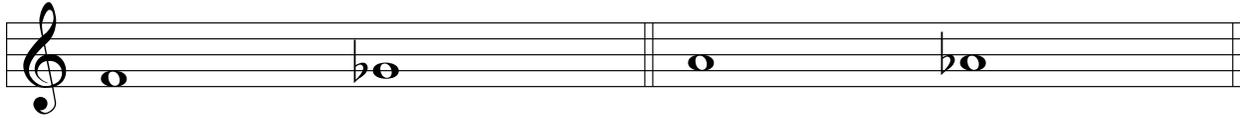
So, B and C are a semitone apart, and so are E and F. The other pairs of adjacent white keys are all a whole tone apart because there are black keys between them.

There is one more thing to know about semitone: there are two kinds.

The two kinds are DIATONIC and CHROMATIC

Here is a diatonic semitone:

And here is a chromatic semitone



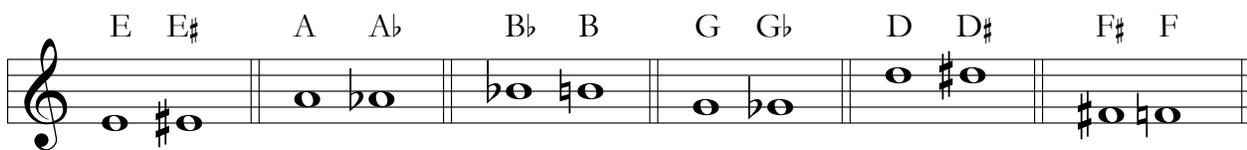
Can you see the difference? The two notes of the chromatic semitone have **the same note name**. In this case they are both As. One is A and the other is A flat.

By contrast the notes of the diatonic semitone have **different note names**: F and G flat.

Here are some more diatonic semitones. Note again that E and F (the first example) are only a semitone apart, and the same with B and C (5th example), as the keyboard has no black note between them.



And here are some chromatic semitones.



As an exercise, locate these notes on the keyboard and play them. If you don't have access to a keyboard, at least locate the notes on the keyboard illustration on the previous page.