

Scale Degree Names

Each tone of a scale can be identified by a name as well as by a **numbered** scale degree (see page 43). The most important scale degrees are the same as those on which the primary chords are built: 1, 4 and 5. The three most important scale degree names are the **Tonic (I)**, **Subdominant (IV)** and **Dominant (V)**.

TONIC (I)

The keynote of a scale is called the TONIC. It is the lowest *and* highest tone of the scale. Since the tonic is the **1st** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral I. In C major, C is the tonic note or chord.

DOMINANT (V) and SUBDOMINANT (IV)

The tone a 5th **above** the tonic is called the DOMINANT. Since the dominant is the **5th** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral V. In C major, G is the dominant note or chord.

The tone a 5th **below** the tonic is called the SUBDOMINANT. Since the subdominant is the **4th** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral IV. In C major, F is the subdominant note or chord. The prefix "sub" means under or below.

Important!

The names of scale degrees were derived from an arrangement in which the tonic was the central tone. The subdominant was given its name because it is the same distance **below** the tonic as the dominant is **above** the tonic. It is not called subdominant because it is just below the dominant. See bottom staff.

MEDIANT (iii) and SUBMEDIANT (vi)*

The tone a 3rd degree **above** the tonic (midway between the tonic and the dominant) is called the MEDIANT (a Latin word meaning "in the middle"). Since the mediant is the **3rd** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral iii. In C major, E is the mediant note or chord.

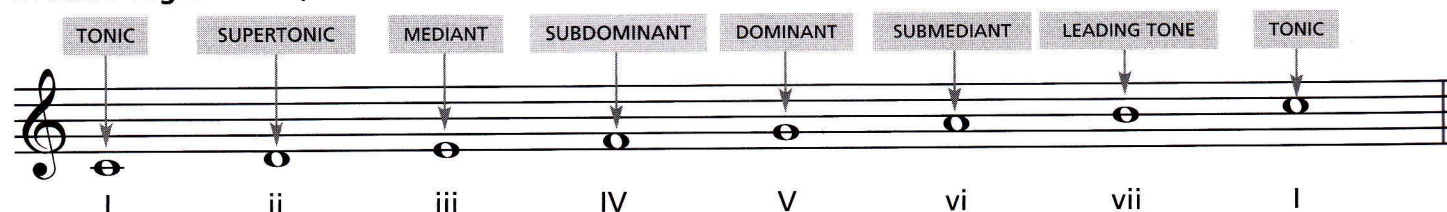
The tone a 3rd degree **below** the tonic (midway between the tonic and the subdominant) is called the SUBMEDIANT. Since the submediant is the **6th** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral vi. In C major, A is the submediant note or chord.

SUPERTONIC (ii) and LEADING TONE (vii)

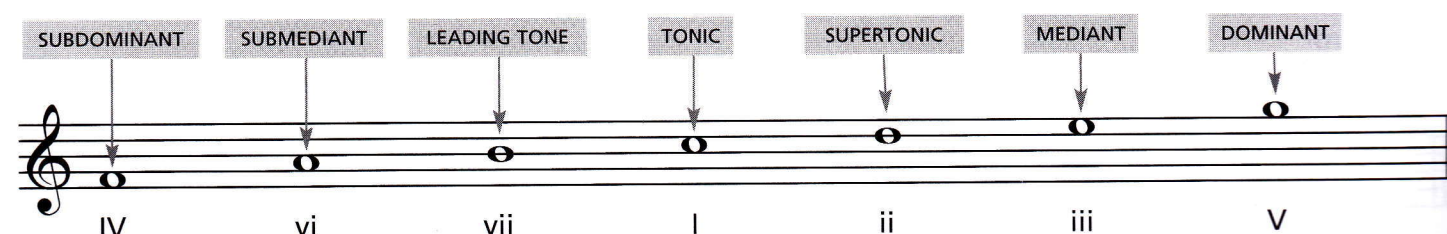
The tone a 2nd degree **above** the tonic is called the SUPERTONIC. Since the supertonic is the **2nd** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral ii. In C major, D is the supertonic note or chord. The prefix "super" means over or above.

The tone a 2nd degree **below** the tonic is called the LEADING TONE - sometimes called the SUBTONE. Leading tone is most often used since the note has a strong tendency to "lead" to the tonic, as it does in an ascending scale. Since the leading tone is the **7th** scale degree, it is given the Roman numeral vii. In C major, B is the leading tone or chord.

In **scale degree** order, the name and Roman numeral of each scale tone is:



With the tonic being the central tone, the name and Roman numeral of each scale tone is:



*The reason for upper and lower case Roman numerals is explained in Unit 14, Lesson 58.

Unit 12 ACTIVITY 3

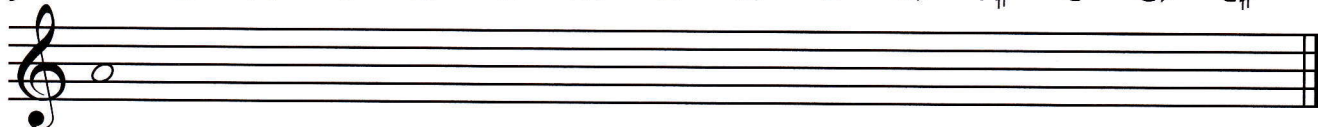
Name/Class _____

Identifying Scale Degrees

- 1** The tone a perfect 5th below the tonic is called the _____.
It is the _____ scale degree.

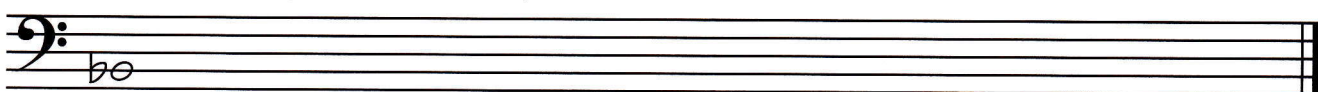
1-2

- 2** Write the mediant tone for each major key.

Key of: F E A \flat B E \flat G D \flat A C \flat D B \flat F \sharp C G \flat C \sharp 

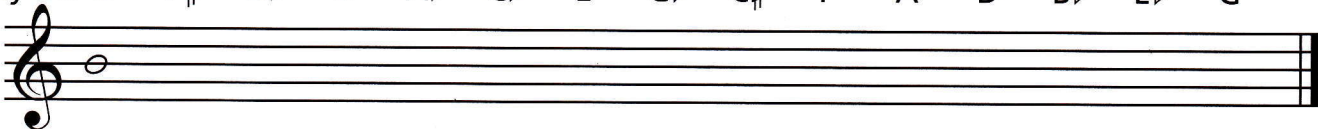
1-14

- 3** Write the dominant tone for each major key.

Key of: E \flat A C \sharp B \flat E F \sharp D A \flat G F C E \flat G \flat B C \flat 

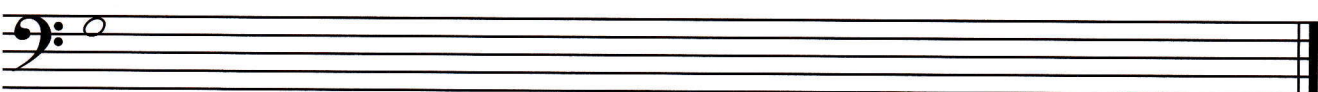
1-14

- 4** Write the leading tone for each major key.

Key of: C F \sharp D \flat B A \flat C \flat E G \flat C \sharp F A D B \flat E \flat G

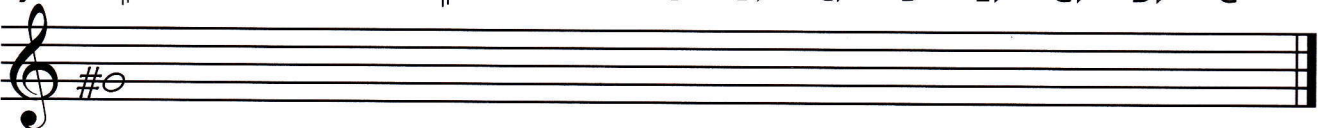
1-14

- 5** Write the subdominant tone for each major key.

Key of: D B \flat E B A \flat E \flat G C \sharp F \sharp D \flat F C \flat G \flat A C

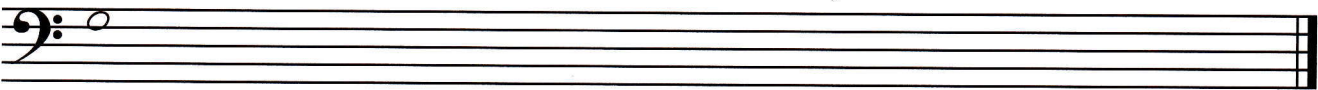
1-14

- 6** Write the supertonic tone for each major key.

Key of: F \sharp D A \flat F C \sharp A E C B \flat C \flat B E \flat G \flat D \flat G

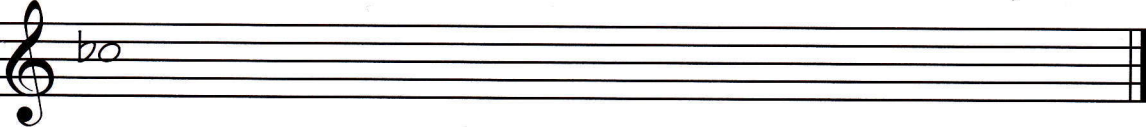
1-14

- 7** Write the submediant tone for each major key.

Key of: B \flat C \sharp A \flat D A C F D \flat B F \sharp E \flat G \flat C \flat G E

1-14

- 8** Write the tonic tone for each major key.

Key of: C \flat G \flat B F \sharp E \flat C G D \flat F D B \flat E A C \sharp A \flat 

1-14

100