

Quick theory – pitch

Higher or lower

In music we talk about notes being “higher” or “lower”, and the relationship between them as “pitch”. If you were to sing the notes *Do Re Me Fa So La Ti Do*, the notes are going up in pitch and, for example, *So* is higher than *Me*, and *La* is lower than *Ti*.

The tonic solfa, as this system is named, is illustrated wonderfully in the song *Do Re Mi* from *The Sound of Music* by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

The musical alphabet

Musical notes are each given a name from one of the first seven letters of the alphabet, and the pitch of each of those notes is agreed amongst musicians.

Starting at A, we go up to G. After that, if we want to go higher in pitch we start the alphabet again, like this:

A B C D E F G A; etc.



The “Quick theory” sections are included to help you broaden your understanding of music. Don’t get bogged down with these sections; if you don’t understand something, come back to it later. Theory is very much about how music works, but you can still keep developing your playing skills.

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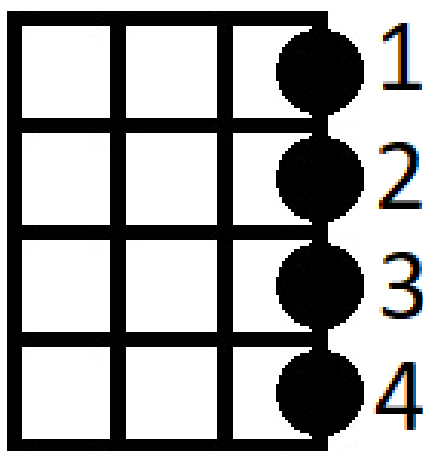
Going up in pitch

Because the next A is the eighth note that we've come to, we say that it is an octave higher. It has the same name because we hear it as being the "same note but higher". When a man and a woman sing the same tune together, they will usually naturally sing an octave apart, but we hear it as being the same tune.

Letter names can also be used to name chords that contain a number of different notes. In this situation, the note that gives the chord its name is called the "root".

One of the great things about learning a musical instrument is that you can try out new ideas and theory on the instrument, meaning that they are not just abstract ideas.

The following diagram is a little bit like one of our chord diagrams, but just play the notes in numerical order one at a time. If you play them in the order 1 2 3 4, you are going up and if you play them in the order 4 3 2 1, you are going down.



Playing notes up and down like this might make you think of going up and down a set of stairs or a ladder. In fact, we get our word "scale" from the Italian word "scala", which means ladder. We'll be looking at scales later on in the book.