

# A few things it helps to know

## TIME SIGNS

So far, nearly all the pieces we have done have had 4 beats in a bar – written  $\frac{4}{4}$ . In fact 4 in a bar is so popular that the time sign is sometimes just written as **C** (short for **Common Time**, not C major as people often think). *Turn to Tune 15 on p27 to see what it looks like.*

- 4 The 4 at the **top** means the **number of beats**:
- 4 The 4 at the **bottom** tells us the beats are **crotchets**.
- 3 But we also have pieces with **3 beats** in a bar: the 4 at the **bottom** reminds us the
- 4 beats are still **crotchets**. In the future we'll meet other time signs as well.

## RESTS

Take a moment to look at the rests on the RH side of the page. Notice how the **Semibreve** rest (4 beats) at the top **hangs down** from the line, like a **submarine** **under** the water – while the **Minim** rest (2 beats) sits **on** the line, like a **motorboat**

Then there's the **Crotchet** rest (1 beat) which is just a squiggle.

Finally there is the **Quaver** rest, worth half a beat which we meet in 17 on p29.

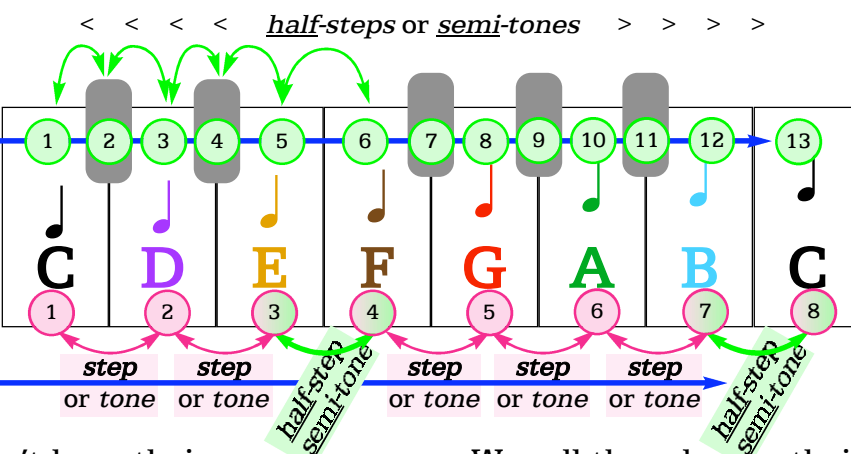
## WHOLE STEPS & HALF STEPS

A **whole step** (or tone) is when you go from C to D. A **half step** (or semitone) is when you go from any white key to its nearest black neighbour. *Try playing these and listen to the difference.* If you play from E to F you can hear that this too is a half step? So is B to C. But the distance between all the other white notes is a whole step.

When we play C major scale the distance between the first three white keys are all **whole steps**, then comes a **half step**.

Each white and black piano key is the **same distance** apart. There are 12 of them in an octave.

But we only use 7 in the **major scale**. So there's a **standard pattern of whole steps & half-steps**, like this in every major scale.

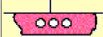


Note that the black keys don't have their own names. We call them by their nearest white note – so the black key **above C**, is called **C# (sharp)**, or the black key **above F** is called **F#**. **But** we can also refer them as **flats**, so **B<sup>b</sup> (flat)** means the black key **below B**. This may seem a bit confusing at first, but you soon get the hang of it.

## Rests



**Semibreve**  
4 beats  
submarine



**Minim**  
2 beats  
motor boat



**Crotchet**  
1 beat