

## Chapter 5

# Chromatic and Diatonic Half Steps<sup>1</sup>

Music notation contains two types of half steps: chromatic and diatonic. Chromatic half steps contain the same alphabet letters. For instance, C and C#, Eb and E, and G and G# are all pairs of chromatic half steps. Diatonic half steps also contain half step motions but use adjacent letters in the musical alphabet. E and F, F# and G, and A and Bb are pairs of diatonic half steps.

Study the figure below. Which are chromatic half steps and which are diatonic half steps?

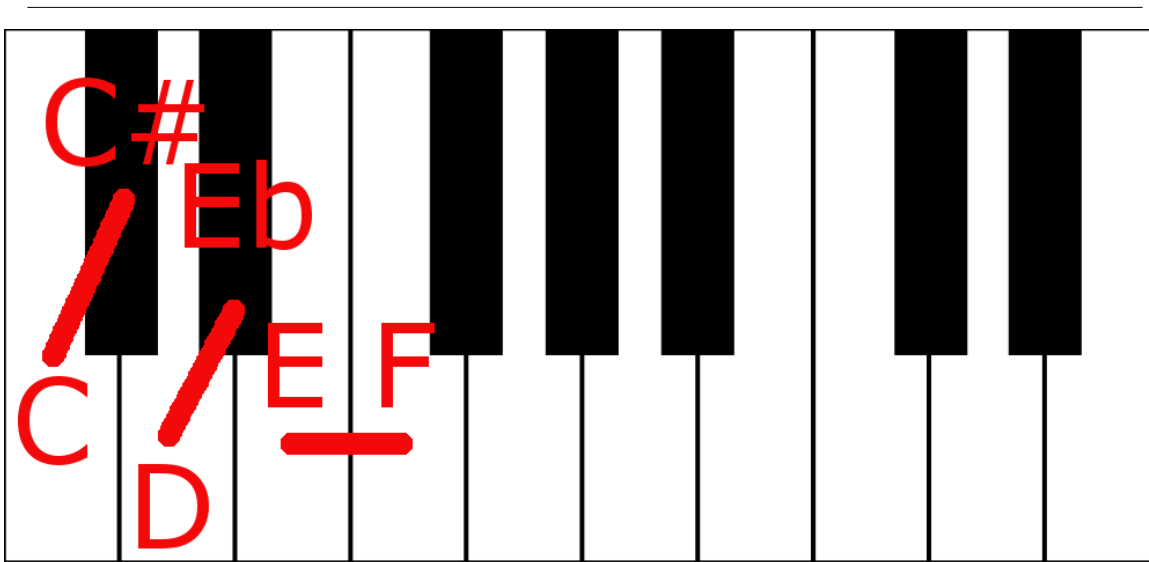


Figure 5.1

ANSWER: C to C# is a chromatic half step. D to Eb and E to F are diatonic half steps.

Here are some examples of chromatic half steps in music notation. Notice that half steps can ascend or descend.

Ascending (C to C#, chromatic half step):

<sup>1</sup>This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m23589/1.1/>>.

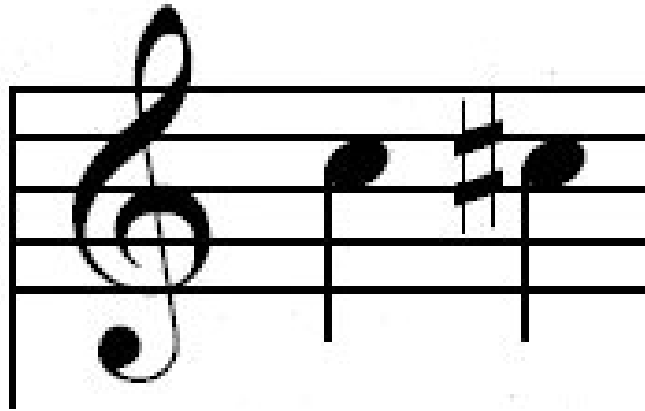


Figure 5.2

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Ascending (Bb to B natural, chromatic half step):

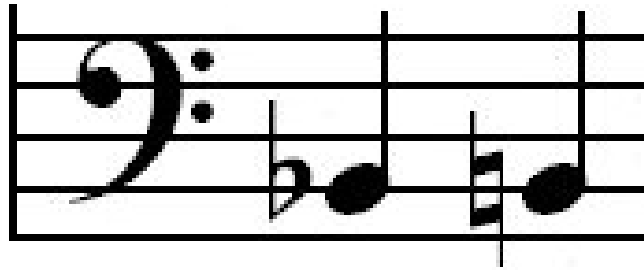


Figure 5.3

Descending (D to Db, chromatic half step):



Figure 5.4

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Likewise diatonic half steps can ascend or descend.  
Ascending (A# to B, diatonic half step):

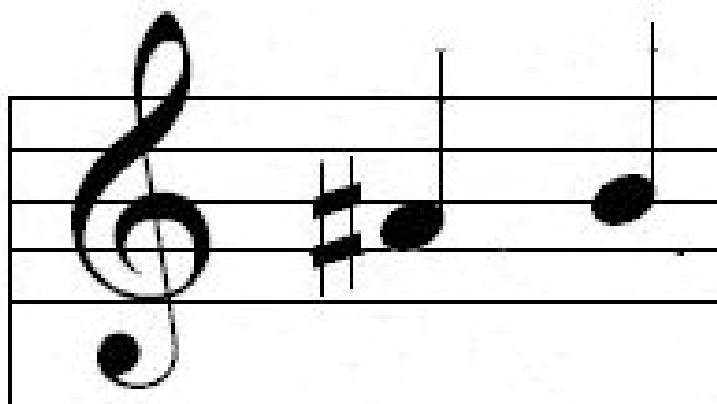


Figure 5.5

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Ascending (B to C, diatonic half step):

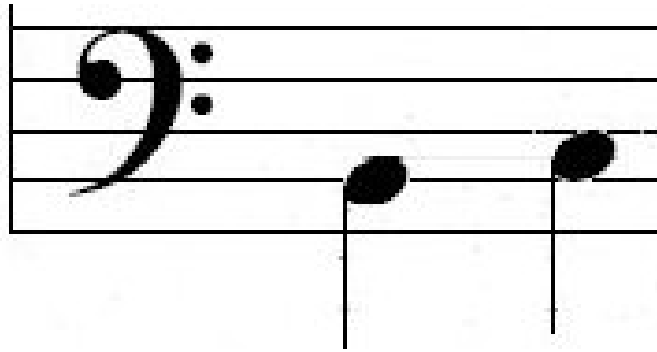


Figure 5.6

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Descending (E to D#, diatonic half step):

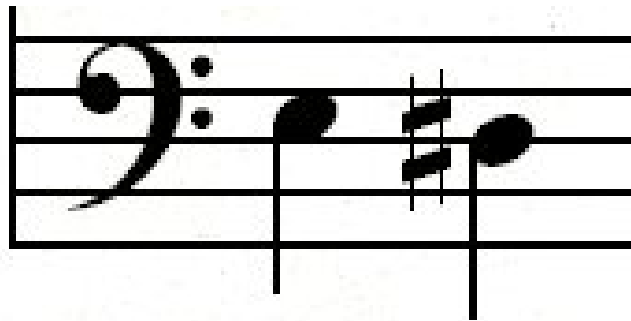


Figure 5.7