

HOW TO FIND RELATIVE MINOR AND MAJOR SCALES

Relative minor and major scales share all the same notes—each one just has a different tonic. The best example of this is the relative relationship between C-major and A-minor. These two scales have a relative relationship and therefore share all the same notes.

C-major: C D E F G A B C
A-minor: A B C D E F G A

Finding the relative minor from a known major scale (using the 6th scale degree)

scale degrees: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
C-major: C D E F G A B C
A-(natural) minor: A B C D E F G A

A-minor starts on the 6th scale degree of C-major. This relationship holds true for ALL major and minor scale relative relationships. To find the relative minor scale from a given major scale, count up six scale degrees in the major scale—that is where the relative minor scale begins. This minor scale will be the natural minor mode.

1 2 3 4 5 6
C-D-E-F-G-**A**

The relative minor scale can also be found by counting backwards (down) by three scale degrees in the major scale.

C-major: C D E F G A B C
←←← count DOWN three scale degrees and arrive at A
1 2 3
C-B-**A**

Finding the relative major from a known minor scale (using the 3rd scale degree)

scale degrees: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
A-(natural) minor: A B C D E F G A
C-major: C D E F G A B C

C-major starts on the 3rd scale of A-minor. This relationship holds true for ALL major and minor scale relative relationships. To find the relative major of a known minor scale, count up three scale degrees in the minor scale—that is where the relative major scale begins.

Finding the relative major scale when the minor scale notes (or key signature) are not known

Doing this takes more steps because merely counting up three notes is not specific enough. When the exact notes or key signature of a minor scale are not known:

1. Count up three note-names consecutively, such as C-D-E, AND
2. Count up three half steps making sure that the third half step has the same letter name as the third note you counted up to, such as C-C#-D-Eb (notice the third half step is recognized as Eb and NOT D# because the third note-name counted to was E

For example, to find the key signature for F-minor you need to find its relative major key signature.

Count three notes up starting at F: **F - G - A**
Count three half steps from F: **F - F# - G - G#/Ab**
half steps: 1 2 3

Since the third half step from F is either G# or Ab, we go with Ab because THAT is three note-names from F (while G is only two). The relative major scale of F-minor is Ab-major, so the key signature from F-minor is the same one as Ab-major (four flats: Bb, Eb, Ab & Db).