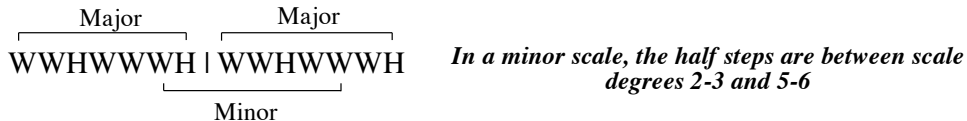
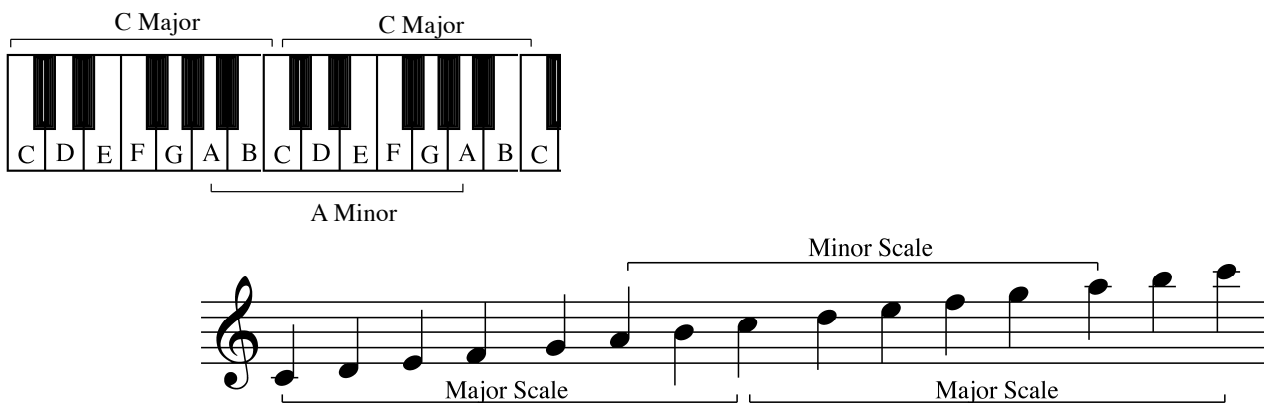


THE MINOR SCALE

Without getting into a study of intervals, it is enough to say that the major scale has a "happy" or "bright" quality. In contrast to that is another, related scale that, put simply, sounds "darker" and "sad": this is the **Minor Scale**. We can initially approach the minor scale much in the same way that we first did with the major scale via the keyboard: if we play from A to A (i.e. only the white notes). As expected, the minor scale has a different pattern of half and whole steps: WHWWHWW. In fact, this pattern is a displacement of the major scale pattern:



Because of this relationship, we often, if not always, conceive of a minor scale as a derivation of a major scale. A minor scale starts and ends on the sixth scale degree of a major scale (the *submediant* note).



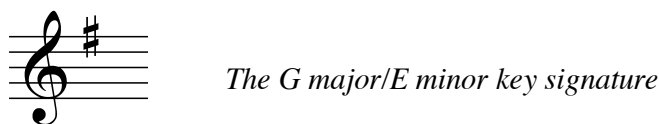
Play this A minor scale. Notice the different mood it projects. Also notice that the A minor scale uses the same notes as the C major scale (white notes only), but that the tonic is now A.

RELATIVE MINOR

Remember that what is the case for one scale is the case **for all**—which is the whole point of key signatures. If we can observe that the A minor scale is a derivation of the C major scale because both scales use the same notes, then we can predict that there is a minor scale within every major scale. This minor scale is called the **Relative Minor**. A minor is the relative minor of C major. The relative minor starts on the sixth degree (the submediant) of its relative major.

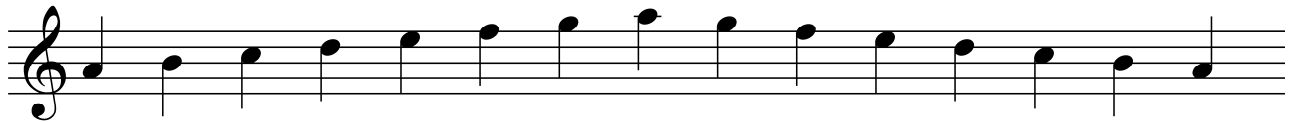
KEY SIGNATURES AND KEYS

Now we can expand the applicability of the key signature. A key signature can represent a major or minor scale and therefore a major or minor key. The Beatle's *Eleanor Rigby*—clearly a "sad" sounding song—is in the key of E minor. Since E is the sixth scale degree of G major, the key signature for *Eleanor Rigby* would have one sharp:



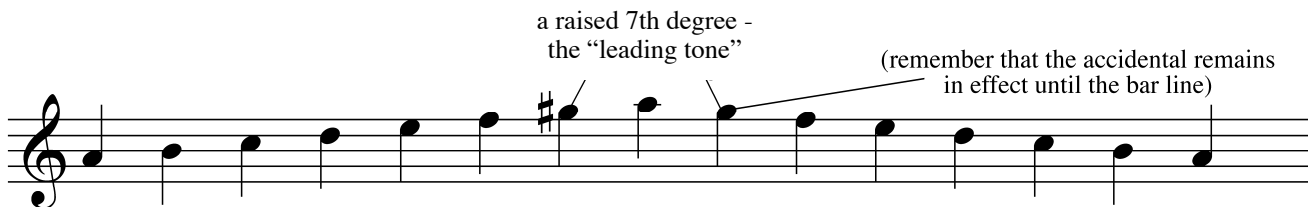
THE THREE MINOR SCALES

You will notice that the seventh note of the minor scale (G in the scale of A minor, for example) is a whole step below the tonic (A). Recall that the seventh note of the major scale is only a half step below its tonic and that we called that scale degree the *leading tone*. The important function of that leading tone is to bring the music back up to the tonic through the $\hat{7}$ to $\hat{8}$ half step motion. Because the minor scale does not normally have that "leading" half step from $\hat{7}$ to $\hat{8}$, two standard alterations exist which make the end of the minor scale imitate the leading tone quality of the major scale.



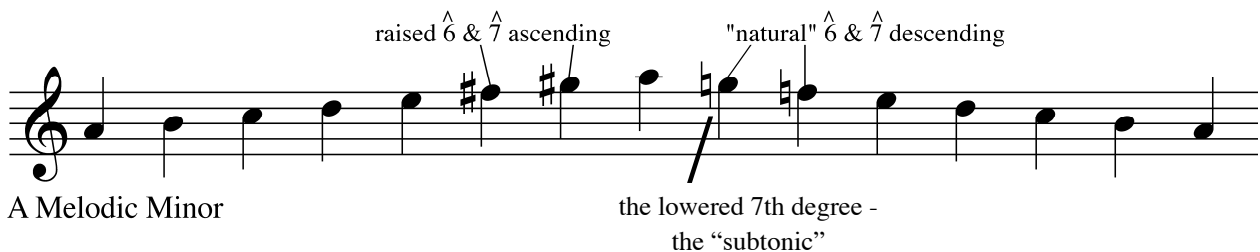
A Natural Minor

The **Natural Minor** scale is the one derived from the major scale—the **Relative Minor**.



A Harmonic Minor

The **Harmonic Minor** scale takes the natural minor scale and raises the seventh degree up a half step so that it is a half step below the tonic. It is a minor scale with a leading tone.



A Melodic Minor

The **Melodic Minor** is similar to the harmonic minor in that it raises both the seventh and sixth scale degrees by a half step. You will notice that the second half of this scale sounds very much like the major scale. Because convention dictates it, the alterations in the melodic minor are only in effect when the scale ascends. When it descends, the scale returns to the natural minor configuration.