

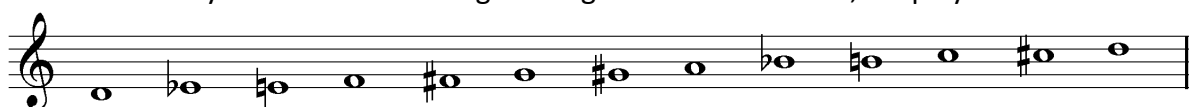
CHROMATIC SCALES

Chromatic scales are new at grade four. The word "chromatic" actually means "colourful" - the scales are very colourful since they use ALL 12 different notes available instead of just 7 of them!

The scales you have studied up till now - major and minor - are in a group called "diatonic" scales. Diatonic scales all contain 7 notes and are firmly based on a key - and the keynote, or the first note of the scale, is the TONIC.

Chromatic scales are not in any particular key. We can't talk about the "chromatic scale in the key of C", for example. Instead, we identify chromatic scales by the note which they **start** on. We can talk about a chromatic scale **starting on C**, for example.

To play a chromatic scale, simply start on the note of your choice, and then play ALL the semitones until you reach the starting note again. If we start on D, we play these notes:



As you can see, the scale contains 12 **different** notes. The scale has 13 notes in total, but the first and last note (D) are the same note name.

CORRECT WAYS TO WRITE CHROMATIC SCALES

In the ABRSM grade 4 exam you will probably be asked to find a correctly written chromatic scale. The most common "errors" which make a scale incorrect are:

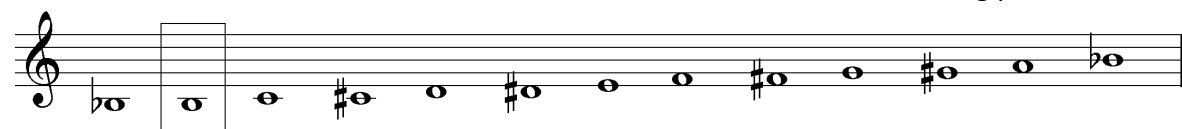
- Using **three** versions of the same letter name. For example, this scale uses three types of G: Gb, G and G#.



While this scale will **sound** correct, the notation is incorrect. The maximum number of times a letter name can be used is **two**. Here is a correct version of the same scale:



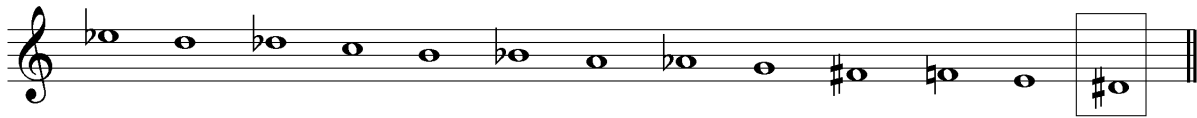
- Not **cancelling** an accidental. In this scale, the second note would sound as Bb, not B natural, because the flat on the first note continues to have its flattening power.



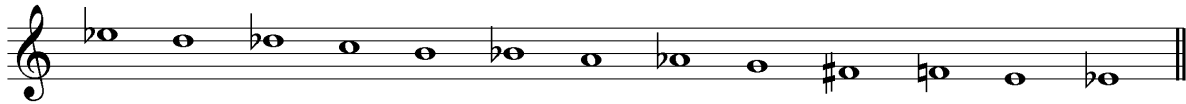
This is the corrected scale:



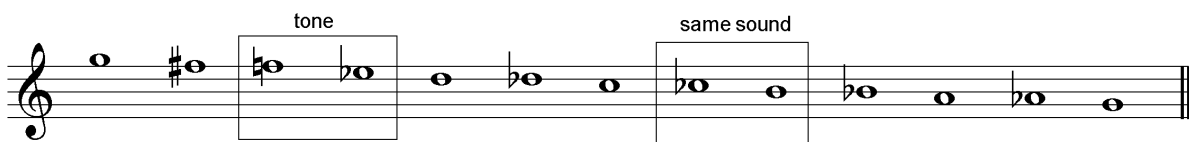
c. Ending on a **different** enharmonic spelling. This scale starts on Eb but ends on D#. This is incorrect.



The spelling of the first and last notes must be the same.



d. Not having a **semitone** between each note. This scale looks convincing at first sight, but a careful check will reveal it has a tone step between F and Eb, and that Cb and B are enharmonic equivalents.



Here is a correct way to write it:



FINDING PART OF A CHROMATIC SCALE IN A MUSICAL SCORE

You might also be asked to find a bar with part of chromatic scale within a musical score. To do this, look for sections where a few notes are written together which:

- move in step (that is, not leaping around) and
- have got some accidentals attached to them.

The check whether they are all **one** semitone apart or not. If some of the notes are a tone (or more) apart, you haven't found the right bit yet, so keep looking!

Tips

- When you think you've found the answer, write out the letter name of each note, including any accidental, so that you can check carefully.
- Don't forget to take note of the key signature, if there is one, and any other accidentals which were placed earlier in the bar and might still be valid.
- If there are lots of double sharps/flats, it can be useful to write out the letter name with an enharmonic equivalent (e.g. write F## as G) to help you check.
- It can be helpful to sketch out a mini piano keyboard to help visualise the notes.

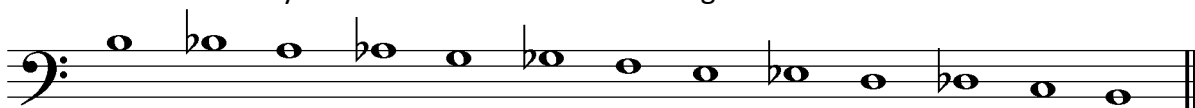
CHROMATIC SCALES EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1

a. This is the correctly written chromatic scale starting on C#. **True** **False**



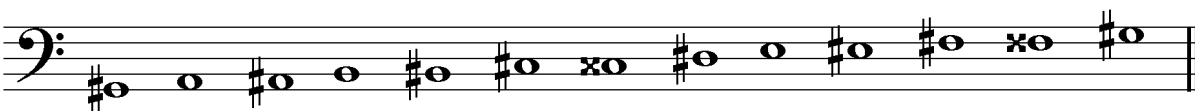
b. This is the correctly written chromatic scale starting on B. **True** **False**



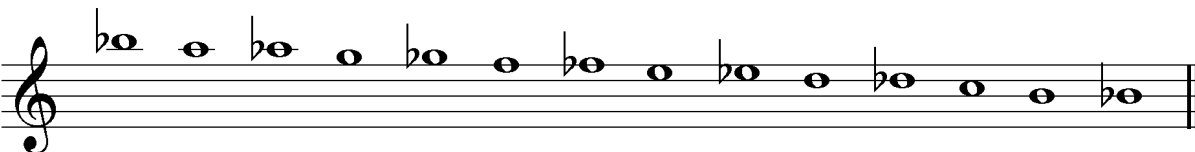
c. This is the correctly written chromatic scale starting on D. **True** **False**



d. This is the correctly written chromatic scale starting on G#. **True** **False**



e. This is the correctly written chromatic scale starting on Bb. **True** **False**



f. This is the correctly written chromatic scale starting on Ab. **True** **False**

