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## **The difference between melodic & harmonic scales**

As you probably know, a musical scale is seven notes all in a row, in alphabetical order. (If you count the first note, repeated an octave higher at the top of the scale, it is eight notes.) But where there's only one major scale, there are three different types of minor scales—Natural, Harmonic, and Melodic—that use different intervals between the seven notes. It may sound confusing, but it's pretty easy once you understand how the scales are constructed. In this guide, we'll look at all three types of minor scales and show you how to construct them, starting on any note.

### **What Are Minor Scales?**

Minor scales sound a little less “happy” than major scales. This is partly because the third note of the minor scale is a minor interval, whereas the third note of the major scale is a major interval. That little half step between a minor third and a major third changes the entire feel.

### **The Three Different Types of Minor Scales**

There are three different types of minor scale; Melodic, Harmonic & Natural whereas there is a single type of major scale.

#### **Natural Minor**

The easiest minor scale to construct is the natural minor scale. You can think of the natural minor in terms of its corresponding major scale. When you start and end a major scale on the sixth note, instead of the tonic, you get a natural minor scale.

Here's an example: Play a C Major scale (C D E F G A B C). Now move up to the sixth note—or just move down two notes. (It's the same thing—up six or down two—both put you on the A.) Now play an eight-note scale, but using the notes in C Major. What you get—A B C D E F G A—is the A minor (natural) scale.

As you can see, each natural minor scale shares the same tones as a specific major scale. The following table shows you which minor scales match up with which major scales.

## Relative Major and Minor Scales

Major Scale	Related Natural Minor Scale
C Major	A minor
C# Major	A# minor
D b Major	B b minor
D Major	B minor
E b Major	C minor
E Major	D b (C#) minor
F Major	D minor
F# Major	D# (E b ) minor
G b Major	D# (E b ) minor
G Major	E minor
A b Major	F minor
A Major	F# (G b ) minor
B b Major	G minor
B Major	G# minor
C b Major	A b minor

Every natural minor scale uses the same intervals, as shown in the following table.

### The Intervals of the Natural Minor Scale

Note	Half Steps to Next Note
Tonic	2
Second	1
Third	2
Fourth	2
Fifth	1
Sixth	2
Seventh	2

Put another way, the intervals in a natural minor scale go like this: whole, half, whole, whole, half, whole, whole.

To make things easier for you, the following table shows all the notes in the 15 natural minor scales.

# The 15 Natural Minor Scales

Scale	Notes
C minor	
C# minor	
D minor	
D# minor	
E b minor	
E minor	
F minor	
F# minor	
G minor	
G# minor	
A-flat minor	

A minor



A# minor



Bb minor



B minor



## Harmonic Minor

The harmonic minor scale is similar to the natural minor scale, except the seventh note is raised a half step. Some musicians prefer this type of minor scale because the seventh note better leads up to the tonic of the scale.

The following table details the intervals between the notes in the harmonic minor scale.

### The Intervals of the Harmonic Minor

Scale	Note	Half Steps to Next Note
	Tonic	2
	Second	1
	Third	2
	Fourth	2
	Fifth	1
	Sixth	3
	Seventh	1

Put another way, the intervals in a harmonic minor scale go like this: whole, half, whole, whole, half, whole and a half, half.

To make things easier for you, the following table shows all the notes in the 15 harmonic minor scales.

**The 15 Harmonic Minor Scales**  
**Scale**

**Notes**

C minor	
C# minor	
D minor	
D# minor	
E b minor	
E minor	
F minor	
F# minor	
G minor	
G# minor	
A b minor	

A minor



A# minor



Bb minor



B minor



Note: The “x” you see before several of the notes in the previous table is a double sharp. It means you raise the base note two half steps.

## Melodic Minor

The only problem with the harmonic minor scale is that the interval between the sixth and seventh notes is three half steps—and you seldom have an interval in a scale wider than two half steps. (It’s just too awkward to sing.) So the melodic minor scale raises both the sixth and seventh notes of the natural minor scale by a half step each, resulting in the following intervals:

### The Intervals of the Melodic Minor Scale

Note	Half Steps to Next Note
Tonic	2
Second	1
Third	2
Fourth	2
Fifth	2
Sixth	2
Seventh	1

Put another way, the intervals in the melodic minor scale go like this: whole, half, whole, whole, whole, whole, half.

To make things easier for you, the following table shows all the notes in the 15 melodic minor scales.

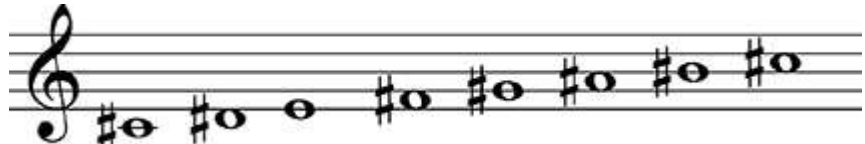
**The 15 Melodic Minor Scales**  
**Scale**

**Notes**

C minor



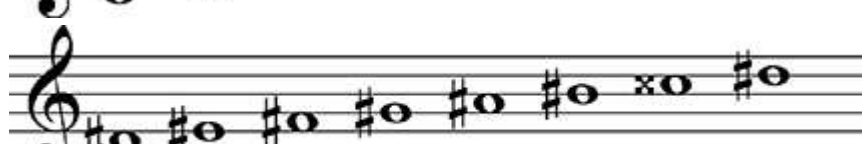
C# minor



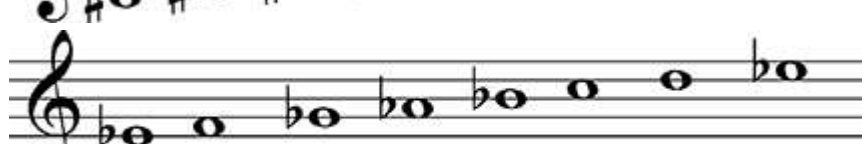
D minor



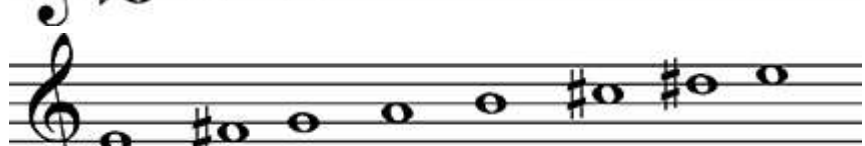
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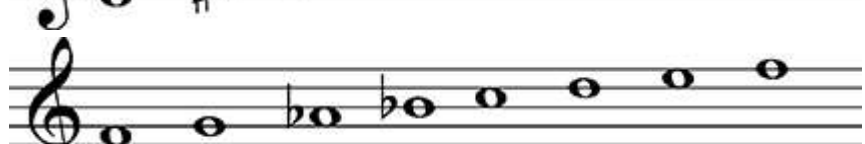
E b minor



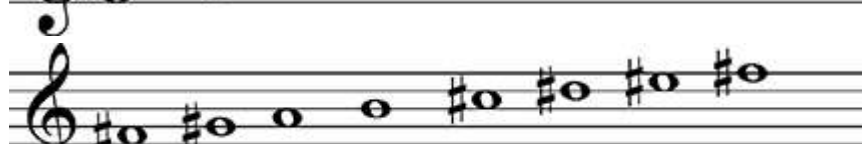
E minor



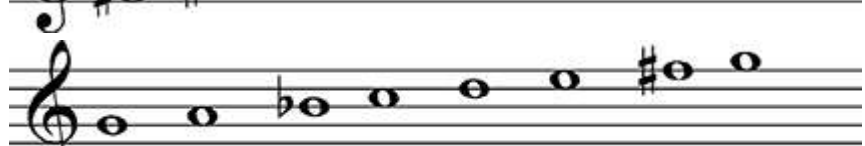
F minor



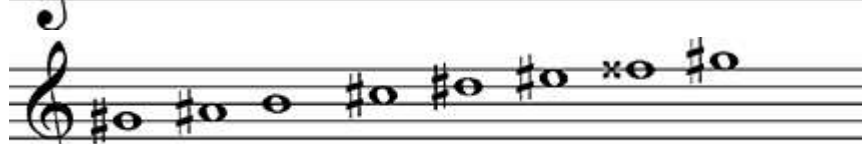
F# minor



G minor



G# minor



A b minor



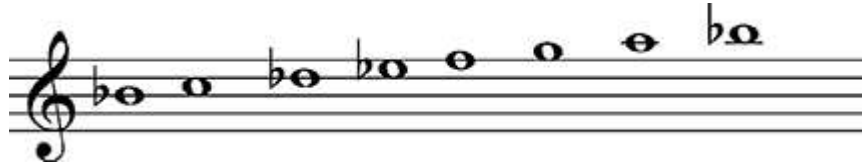
A minor



A# minor



Bb minor



B minor



As if three minor scales weren't enough to deal with, some music theorists use this melodic minor scale only when you're going "up" the scale. (They call this the ascending melodic minor scale.) Going back down (the descending melodic minor scale), they use the notes in the natural minor scale. So the sixth and the seventh degrees are raised on the way up, but not on the way down. Theorists are split on this issue, however; some use the melodic minor scale both ascending and descending, and others use the two different scales. It is okay to use a single scale, as presented here, as long as you're aware of the alternate way of doing things.

Even though these scales seem daunting at first, once you practice a bit these minor scales will become second nature.