

## Lesson 18: Minor scales other than A minor

In this lesson you will learn about transposition, minor scales with sharps, minor scales with flats, and the circle of fifths.

Like major scales, minor scales are named for their tonic (scale-degree  $\hat{1}$ ). The minor scale we have been considering so far has the note A as its tonic and is thus called an A minor scale. The A minor scale requires no accidentals, but *transposing* it to start on any other note will require flats or sharps to preserve its intervallic structure. To write the minor scale starting on E (the fifth degree of A minor), one sharp (F $\sharp$ ) is needed.



Without the F $\sharp$ , there would be two steps of the wrong size: a semitone between scale degrees  $\hat{1}$  and  $\hat{2}$  and a whole tone between scale degrees  $\hat{2}$  and  $\hat{3}$ . The F $\sharp$  makes all of the steps the correct size.

As with the major scale, every time we transpose up five steps in this way, an additional sharp is required.

Diagram illustrating the construction of minor scales with sharps, showing the relationship between the tonic (1) and the fifth (5) scale degrees. The scales are written in treble clef, ascending and descending.

- A minor (0#)
- E minor (1#)
- B minor (2#)
- F# minor (3#)
- C# minor (4#)
- G# minor (5#)
- D# minor (6#)
- A# minor (7#)

Minor scales with sharps

In contrast, to write a D minor scale, of which A is scale-degree 5, one flat (B $\flat$ ) is needed.

D minor scale

The D minor scale is shown in treble clef, ascending and descending. The notes are D, E, F, G, A, B $\flat$ , C, D.

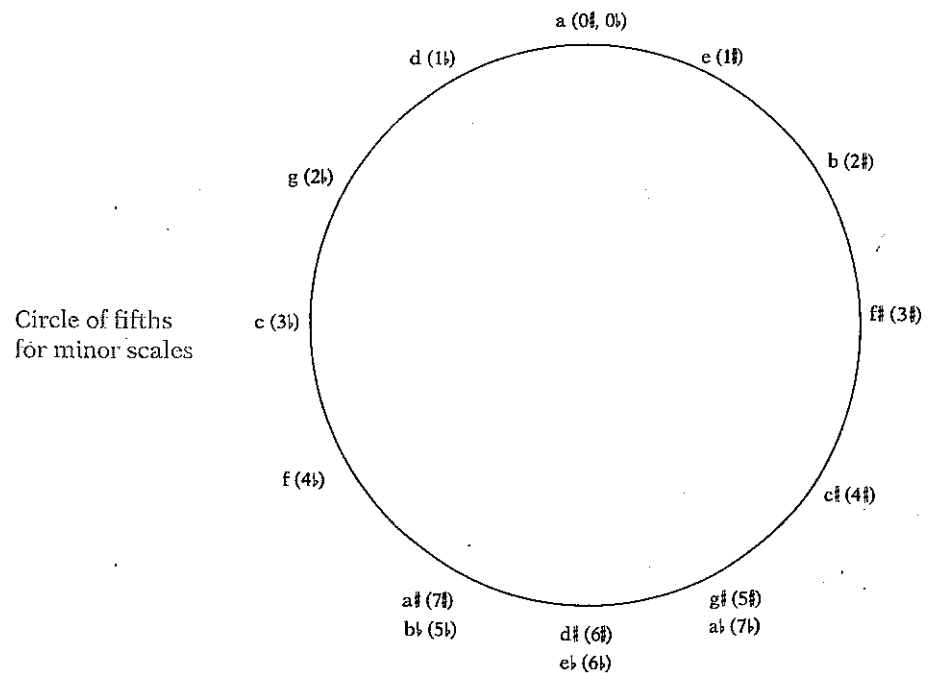
Every time we transpose down five steps in this way, an additional flat is required.

The diagram illustrates the process of transposing the A minor scale down five steps, showing how each step adds a new flat. The scales are written on a single treble clef staff, with each scale starting on a new line. Curved arrows indicate the transposition from one scale to the next, moving down five steps each time.

- A minor (0♭)
- D minor (1♭)
- G minor (2♭)
- C minor (3♭)
- F minor (4♭)
- B♭ minor (5♭)
- E♭ minor (6♭)
- A♭ minor (7♭)

Minor scales with flats

If we start on A and move up five steps at a time in one direction and down five steps at a time in the other, we will eventually meet back in the middle. We thus create a circle of fifths on which all of the minor scales and the accidentals needed to make them can be conveniently listed.



## Lesson 18: In-class activities

1. Singing. Sing the following common five-note patterns (given in B minor and G minor). Sing using scale-degree numbers, solfège syllables, or a neutral syllable such as "la," as directed by your instructor. Notice that these melodies routinely use an accidental (natural or sharp) to raise scale-degree 7, thus creating a leading tone.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.