
Recognizing Major and Minor Triads

ANSWER KEY

A triad is a chord that consists of three notes stacked in 3rds. There's a massive amount of cool things we can do with triads, but for now, we'll focus on recognizing whether a triad is major or minor. The name of the triad comes from the lowest note of the stack. This note is known as the root. In this mini-course, all of the triads are in "root position", meaning the root is on the bottom, so the chord name will be the same as the root (in this case, the bottom note!) Then to determine if it's a major or minor triad, get the 3rd of the triad (the note that's two steps above the root.) If the 3rd is in the root's major scale, then the chord is a major triad. But if the 3rd is lowered by half a step, it's in the root's minor scale, making it a minor triad. (If you already know the difference between major and minor 3rds then feel free to use that quick route!)


Label a major triad like so: C major. Label a minor triad like this: C minor.

G major F major D major E \flat major C major B \flat major



The image shows six major triads on a single staff. The first three are in the treble clef: G major (G4, B4, D5), F major (F4, A4, C5), and D major (D4, F4, A4). The last three are in the bass clef: E-flat major (E3, G3, B3), C major (C3, E3, G3), and B-flat major (B2, D3, F3).

A minor D minor G minor C minor F \sharp minor E \flat minor



The image shows six minor triads on a single staff. The first three are in the treble clef: A minor (A4, C5, E5), D minor (D4, F4, A4), and G minor (G4, B4, D5). The last three are in the bass clef: C minor (C3, E3, G3), F-sharp minor (F#3, A3, C4), and E-flat minor (Eb3, G3, Bb3).

A major B \flat minor B minor B major A \flat minor E major



The image shows six triads on a single staff. The first three are in the treble clef: A major (A4, C5, E5), B-flat minor (Bb3, D3, F3), and B minor (B4, D5, F5). The last three are in the bass clef: B major (B2, D3, F3), A-flat minor (Ab3, C3, Eb3), and E major (E4, G4, B4).