
BASICS

Tone–semitone patterns

Intonation is all about measuring. When you use three or four fingers to play a phrase or a group of notes, the intervals between the fingers fall into patterns of tones and semitones. Thinking in tone–semitone patterns clarifies your mental picture of the notes and their relationships to one another.

There are only a few basic patterns that the fingers most usually fall into. Play repetitive exercises to reinforce the patterns, to drive the sensations in the hand and fingers ever deeper into the unconscious. Then there is a feeling that the hand itself is in tune, and whatever the music you know where every note is.

Group 1

There are four primary tone-semitone patterns. Three have a semitone between one pair of fingers, and the remaining group is all whole tones. Starting in 1st position:

Musical notation for Group 1 patterns in 1st position. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef. It shows four patterns of notes, each with a label above it: "Semitone-Tone-Tone", "Tone-Semitone-Tone", "Tone-Tone-Semitone", and "Tone-Tone-Tone". The first pattern is labeled with finger numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 above the notes. The notes are: C, Bb, C, D (Semitone-Tone-Tone); C, D, Eb, C (Tone-Semitone-Tone); C, D, E, Eb (Tone-Tone-Semitone); C, D, E, F (Tone-Tone-Tone).

- Play through the patterns in one position on one string:

Musical notation for Group 1 patterns in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th positions. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef. It shows four patterns of notes, each with a label above it: "Semitone-Tone-Tone", "Tone-Semitone-Tone", "Tone-Tone-Semitone", and "Tone-Tone-Tone". The first pattern is labeled "Slow" and "1" above the notes. The notes are: C, Bb, C, D (Semitone-Tone-Tone); C, D, Eb, C (Tone-Semitone-Tone); C, D, E, Eb (Tone-Tone-Semitone); C, D, E, F (Tone-Tone-Tone). The second pattern is labeled "2" above the notes. The notes are: D, C, B, A (Semitone-Tone-Tone); D, E, F, D (Tone-Semitone-Tone); D, E, F, E (Tone-Tone-Semitone); D, E, F, G (Tone-Tone-Tone). The third pattern is labeled "3" above the notes. The notes are: E, D, C, B (Semitone-Tone-Tone); E, F, G, E (Tone-Semitone-Tone); E, F, G, F (Tone-Tone-Semitone); E, F, G, A (Tone-Tone-Tone). The fourth pattern is labeled "4" above the notes. The notes are: F, E, D, C (Semitone-Tone-Tone); F, G, A, F (Tone-Semitone-Tone); F, G, A, G (Tone-Tone-Semitone); F, G, A, B (Tone-Tone-Tone).

- Then move up into 2nd position and repeat the same patterns across the strings, continuing up through 3rd position, 4th position, up as far as you can go:

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2nd position

Semitone-Tone-Tone

Tone-Semitone-Tone

135

Tone-Tone-Semitone

Tone-Tone-Tone

2nd position

Semitone-Tone-Tone

Tone-Semitone-Tone

135

Tone-Tone-Semitone

Tone-Tone-Tone

3rd position

Semitone-Tone-Tone

Tone-Semitone-Tone

Tone-Tone-Semitone

Tone-Tone-Tone

- Alternatively, stay in one finger pattern and repeat across the strings before moving to the next pattern:

etc.

Group 2

There are four other common groupings that are good to practise in the same way:

Semitone	Semitone	Tone	Tone
Tone	Tone-and-a-half	Semitone	Tone
Semitone	Semitone	Tone-and-a-half	Tone-and-a-half

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

1 2 3 4

- Play them in another continuous sequence, continuing on up the string as far as you can go:

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Semitone Tone Semitone	Semitone Tone-and-a-half Semitone	Tone Semitone Tone-and-a-half	Tone Tone Tone-and-a-half
1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

etc.

- Repeat the sequence on each string.