Foundation Chords

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Major and minor chords are called **Foundation Chords** or **Triads**. **Foundation Chords** because on the foundation of a major or minor chord nearly every other type of chord can be made (by adding other notes) and **Triads** because they contain three notes each.

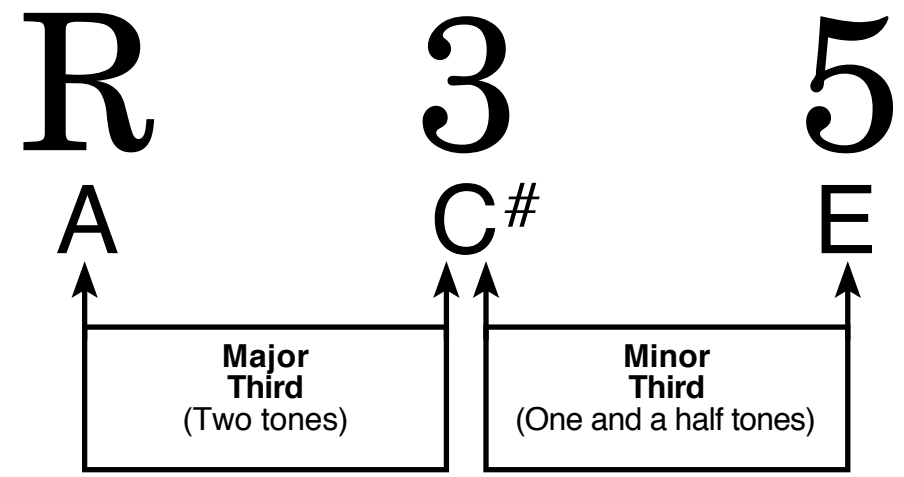
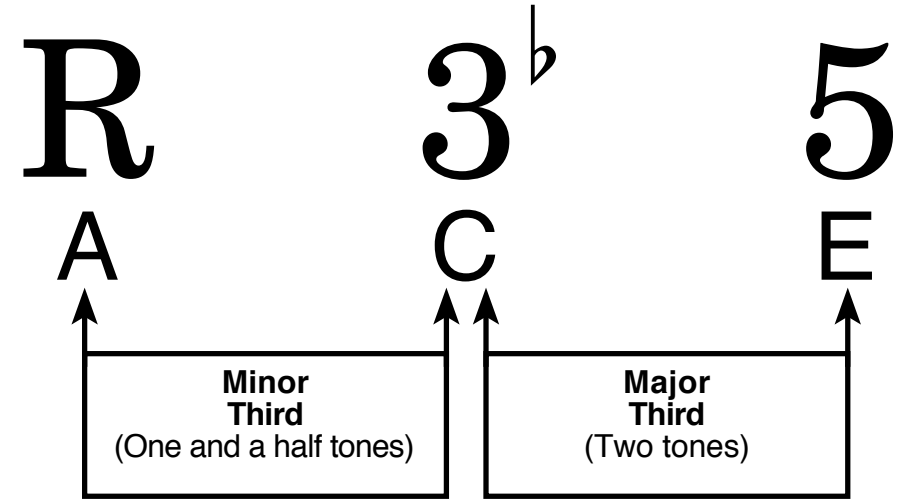
In a previous exercise we looked at **where** in the major scale that the Three Chord Family and their relative minor chords could be found. In this exercise we will see **why** these chords have to be either major or minor.

In chord construction there is the term **Chord Spelling** which refers to a system of giving each note in a chord a letter name or number. Below are the major and minor triads shown in chord spelling and using the example of an A major and an A minor chord. The important point to observe is the **interval structure** of these chords and how that structure fits over the major scale. Each chord is formed by starting on any note of the scale, making that note the Root Note of the chord and then counting up the scale to the third and then fifth. Other chords, for example seventh chords, also follow this numerical format.

Nearly every chord that exists can be formed using the building blocks of either a Major or Minor Third.

Minor chords have their distinctive 'sad' or 'moody' sound because of the presence of the **Flattened Third**.

Major Chord
(in this example A major)



Minor Chord
(in this example A minor)