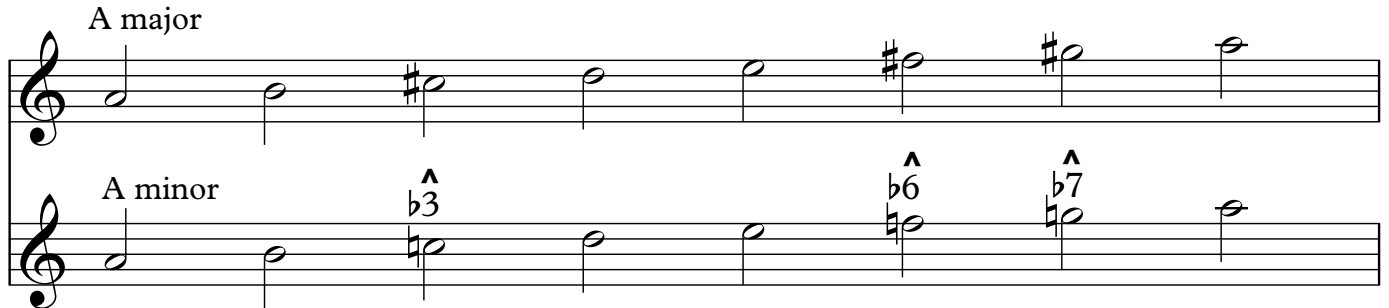


## MU 009 (Feurzeig) Minor Scales

The **parallel minor scale** shares the same **tonic** as a major scale but has lowered 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> scale degrees.



Because of this, the minor-scale forms of these scale degrees are often labeled  $b3$ ,  $b6$ , and  $b7$ . In verbal communication they may be referred to as the “lowered” or “flatted” 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> degrees. **Note that this remains true even if the notes in question are not flats, but naturals.**



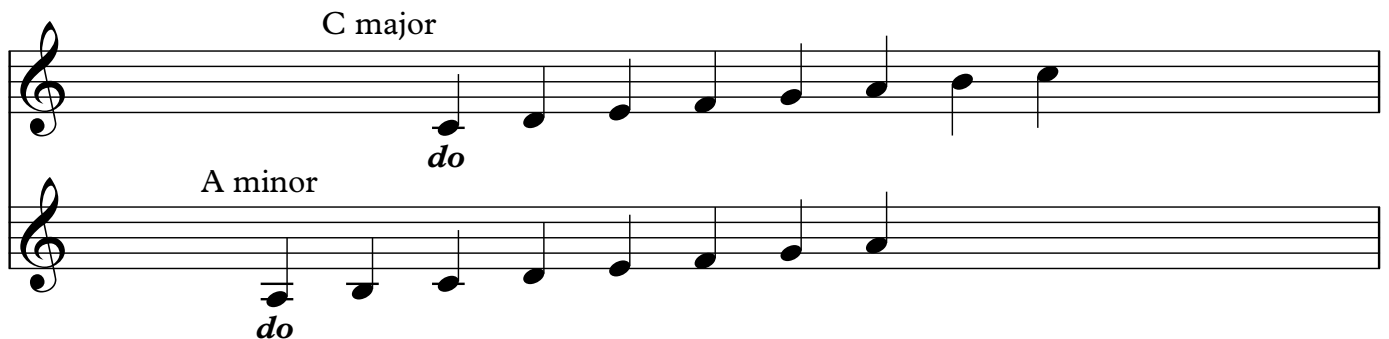
Each minor scale has three variants or “forms”. The one above is called the “natural minor” form because starting on the note A, it can be built using only the white notes (this is the A minor scale immediately above).

### Note on nomenclature

Because they are found in the **natural minor** scale, people sometimes use the term “**natural**” 3<sup>rd</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> scale degrees to mean the **flatted** 3<sup>rd</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> degrees. The terms are interchangeable in this context. By contrast, the major-scale 3<sup>rd</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> degrees may be referred to as “raised” or “sharp” (again, whether or not the note in question is actually notated with a sharp accidental).

**This may be confusing, but it’s how it is!** *People don’t think it be like it is, but it do.* —Oscar Gamble

The **relative minor scale** shares the same **pitches** as its relative major scale but has a different tonic. The A minor scale can be played on the white notes only, the same notes as C major. A minor is thus the **relative minor** of C major, as C majors is the relative major of A minor.



Every major key has a relative minor. The relative minor begins on “la” of the major key (the 6<sup>th</sup> degree), which in the minor scale becomes “do”.

E major: *do* *la*

A<sup>b</sup> major: *do* *la*

C<sup>#</sup> minor: *do* *me*

F minor: *do* *me*

When there are no accidentals involved besides the key signature, the resulting minor scale is the natural minor scale form. For example, the first minor scale above would be called “C-sharp minor, natural minor form”, or “C-sharp natural minor” for short.

In solfege, the lowered forms of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> scale degrees take the vowel “e” (pronounced “ay” as in “may”). The lowered 7<sup>th</sup> scale degree is called the **subtonic** as opposed to the leading tone, and is a **whole step** below the tonic.

do re **mi** fa so la **ti** do  
(leading tone)

do re **me** fa so **le** **te** do  
(subtonic)

**Harmonic minor.** The harmonic minor scale form takes the natural minor and raises the 7<sup>th</sup> degree, making it the same as the 7<sup>th</sup> degree in the parallel major.

do re me fa so le ti do

**Melodic minor.** The melodic minor scale form takes the natural minor and raises both the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> degrees when ascending. Descending, both degrees are lowered. The descending form of the melodic minor is identical to the natural minor scale.

do re me fa so la ti do do te le so fa me re do

ascending descending