

Look at the drawing of the keyboard on the top of this page. Find the key labeled "C" on the bottom and "0" on the top. On your own keyboard, this is the C-key nearest the middle. Just to the right of it is a black key. If you'll study the keyboard for just a second, you see that there are several groups of black keys: 2 & 3 black keys followed by another group of 2 & 3 black keys. The drawing shows 2 of these groups. You'll also notice that the keys labeled "C" are always one key to the left of the first of the two black keys. What we have here then is a REPEATING PATTERN of keys along the length of the keyboard.

So why are some keys black and some keys white? Well, think about it a second: if they were all white (or all black) you'd have a very hard time figuring out where the pattern starts and stops, and with bigger white keys, the keyboard would be twice as long! You'd need track shoes just to play the whole thing!

Each key, white or black, is just  
as important as any other key.

So, if you count (and you should) the keys, starting with "C" and going until you run into another "C", you'll find that there are 12 keys in between. In fact, start counting anywhere and you'll find that there are twelve keys until you reach your start key, and in either direction!

If you start anywhere, and press down on 12 keys in either direction, you'll have played **ALL** the (12) notes which make up our music (and if it's only a dozen notes, it can't be really too hard now, can it...?)

OK...try this: play the "C" in the middle of the keyboard.

Now play the "C" just above it (12 notes to the right) and the "C" just below it (12 note/keys to the left).

**LOOK** at where they are: each one is in the same relative place: one key to the left of the first of the two black keys. Now, do the same thing for **ALL** 12 of the other keys...(go ahead...I'll wait...)

You should **LISTEN** as you do this. You'll hear the SAME NOTE, but either higher or lower. What do I mean the "same note"? Well - **trust your own ears!**

Try this - play a "C" (any one will do) and then the "C" above (to the right of) it, listening carefully. Now do it again, but this time don't play the same note above it - play anything else. Here the difference? Not only is it higher, it's a different note.

OK, here we are. We've got 12 keys (or notes) which repeat up and down the keyboard. And we know that we can press a key in one group and the same key in another group, on and on until we run out of either keys or groups.

So, is there a name for a "group"? You bet! It's called an "octave" (which means eight, like OCTopus, which has 8 legs). Why 8 if there are 12 keys? Well...'cause there are 8 white keys between groups, that's why...

So if you hear someone say to play something "an octave higher" it just means take that note you're playing and move it up to the next group to the right. "Two octaves" is just 2 groups to the right...and so on.

All right...pretty simple so far. Let's see how they name the keys.

Looking just at the white ones, and starting with "C", it's D, E, F, G, A, & B. WAIT! Why isn't it just A, B, C, D, E, F, & G? Well, it is, really. If you've got a real piano, with all 88 keys, look at the very first white key: Yep: it's "A", so they really did start there.

So how come we're always talking about "C"? For one thing it's easier to find on the keyboard than "A", and there are some musical reasons too, ones you'll see in just a little bit, that make "the key of "C" the easiest key to begin playing with.

And the black keys? Well, if you're going from **left to right**, then **the black key is given the name of the white key to its left, plus the word "sharp"**. So the black key next to "C" is "C-sharp" (or

"C#").

On the other hand, if you're reading from **right to left instead**, the black key is given the name of the key to its right, and the word "flat". So the key next to the "C" is **ALSO CALLED** "D-flat" (or Db).

It just depends on which way you're going, what the black keys are called. But don't even worry about it now, because **we're going to be mainly using the white keys from now on**.

**LOOK OUT!** We're gonna see how much you just learned! I want you to press down TWO keys at the same time: "C" and "C" an octave above. (You're nearly an expert, talking about "octaves" and "keys" and "notes" and all.)

OK, keep doing that, pressing a key in one octave and the same key in an octave above or below it. Try pressing two "A"s, 2 "G"s and so on. Play one with one hand and the other one with the other hand. Try even skipping an octave, so that you play not the note 12 keys away, but the note 24 keys away.

Remember, you don't have to count keys to do this, just LOOK for the same place in the patterns of white & black keys. Press the two keys at exactly the same moment. Hold the keys down **while you count to three**. Really! **COUNT!** And then press the next key, **count to three again** and so on.

This way you'll have a nice rhythm, or beat, for how often you press another key. You should do this with both the white and black keys until you're comfortable with how it sounds. (It may take your fingers a while to get used to it, but you know how they say to get to Carnegie Hall: "Practice, practice, practice"!)