

Twelve-Key Practice

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Why bother learning to play in 12 keys?

1. This skill is essential to playing blues or jazz.
2. If you want to play in a band, the singer doesn't care if the key is difficult for the instrumentalists in the group. He or she will sing in whatever keys are comfortable to his or her voice and it's "tough luck" for everyone else.
3. Playing in 12 keys challenges us to learn every single note on the fingerboard and it forces us to work out the best fingering options.
4. We can now pick and choose ornaments, no matter what style we're playing in, that will best support the melody or improvisation.
5. All music is made up of interval relationships. This practice approach enables us to lock in important intervallic relationships across the entire fingerboard.

How To Get Started

There are a number of approaches you can take to practicing in twelve keys:

1. Choose an interval (see the next page) and move it chromatically across your instrument.
2. Choose a specific type of scale or arpeggio and move it through the twelve keys.
3. Choose a short excerpt from a tune (in any style) or a "borrow" a riff from a recording and move it through all twelve keys.

Reference:

Twelve-Key Practice: The Path to Mastery and Individuality by Julie Lyonn Lieberman

Basic Intervals

minor second major second minor third major third

This block contains the first four intervals: minor second, major second, minor third, and major third. Each interval is presented in three staves: treble clef (top), alto clef (middle), and bass clef (bottom). The notes are half notes. The intervals are: minor second (e.g., C to C#), major second (e.g., C to D), minor third (e.g., C to Eb), and major third (e.g., C to E).

perfect fourth diminished fifth perfect fifth augmented fifth

This block contains the next four intervals: perfect fourth, diminished fifth, perfect fifth, and augmented fifth. Each interval is presented in three staves: treble clef (top), alto clef (middle), and bass clef (bottom). The notes are half notes. The intervals are: perfect fourth (e.g., C to F), diminished fifth (e.g., C to Gb), perfect fifth (e.g., C to G), and augmented fifth (e.g., C to G#).

major sixth minor seventh major seventh octave

This block contains the final four intervals: major sixth, minor seventh, major seventh, and octave. Each interval is presented in three staves: treble clef (top), alto clef (middle), and bass clef (bottom). The notes are half notes. The intervals are: major sixth (e.g., C to A), minor seventh (e.g., C to Bb), major seventh (e.g., C to B), and octave (e.g., C to C).