Tonic triads in major and minor keys

At Grade 1, we met tonic triads in a range of major keys. We learnt that:

- A tonic triad is a chord consisting of the 1st (tonic), the 3rd and the 5th degrees of the scale.
- Tonic triads are built on the tonic (key note) of the key.
- They can be written with or without a key signature.

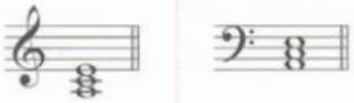
Just like major keys, tonic triads in minor keys are chords made up of the 1st (tonic), the 3rd and the 5th degrees of the scale.

Here is the scale of A minor:

Degrees: **Tonic (1st)** 2nd **3rd** 4th **5th** 6th 7th Tonic (8th)



And here is the A minor tonic triad:



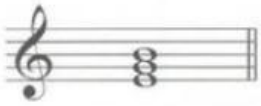
Exercise 1 Name the key of each tonic triad.

a



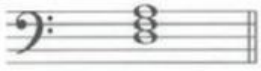
Key: A minor

b



Key:

c



Key:

d



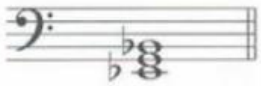
Key:

e



Key:

f



Key:

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Exercise 2 Add **one** missing note to complete each triad, with the tonic as the lowest note. Use accidentals if necessary.

a



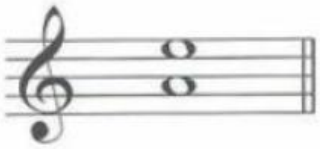
D minor

b



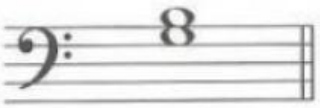
A major

c



A minor

d



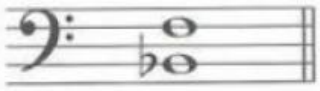
E minor

e



E♭ major

f



B♭ major

Remember!

In tonic triads:

- The tonic is the lowest note
- The 3rd degree is in the middle
- The 5th degree is the highest note
- Each note is separated by the interval of a 3rd.

Theory in sound

Practise hearing the difference between major and minor tonic triads by playing them or asking someone to play them to you. For example, listen to a tonic triad of A major, followed by one of A minor. Which note changes?

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