

Guitar Fretboard Theory - Naturally Occurring Intervals

Certain intervals occur naturally on the guitar fretboard because of the way the guitar is tuned. I refer to those intervals as "naturally occurring intervals". These intervals can be a great help in understanding the guitar fretboard. Be sure your guitar is in tune, then read and play the following examples to learn about these intervals:

An interval is the measurement of distance between two notes.

A is 5 frets, or 5 half steps higher than E,
The distance between them is called a perfect 4th

P4 P4 P4 Major 3 P4 E A G B

The distance between G and B is a major 3rd

T
A
B

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4

Notes About Perfect Fourths & Major Thirds

1. The distance from one fret to the next on the guitar fretboard is called a half step (or a minor second).
2. The guitar is usually tuned in perfect fourths (standard tuning), except for the interval between the 2nd & 3rd strings
3. The interval between G and B is only four half steps. That distance is called a major third (M3).
4. When the fingers, playing a pair of intervals, are moved the same distance and direction, the interval remains constant.

These intervals are all major 3rds

These notes are all a perfect 4th apart

These are a major 6th apart (9 half steps)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 1 2 1 2 3 4 5 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

More major 6ths

These intervals are major 9ths, 14 half steps apart

These notes are a minor 7th, 10 half steps apart

0 1 2 3 4 0 1 2 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 1 2 3 4 0 1 2 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Notice that when we started playing each sequence of intervals, we started with two open strings. That is why I refer to them as "naturally occurring intervals" - they first appear naturally on the fretboard in the standard tuning of the guitar.

Explore the beautiful and unique sounds made when playing these intervals. Try to learn all of the note names to enrich your learning experience. You will find a **Guitar Note Chart** to help you on the **Free Lesson Page** at physicalguitar.com !