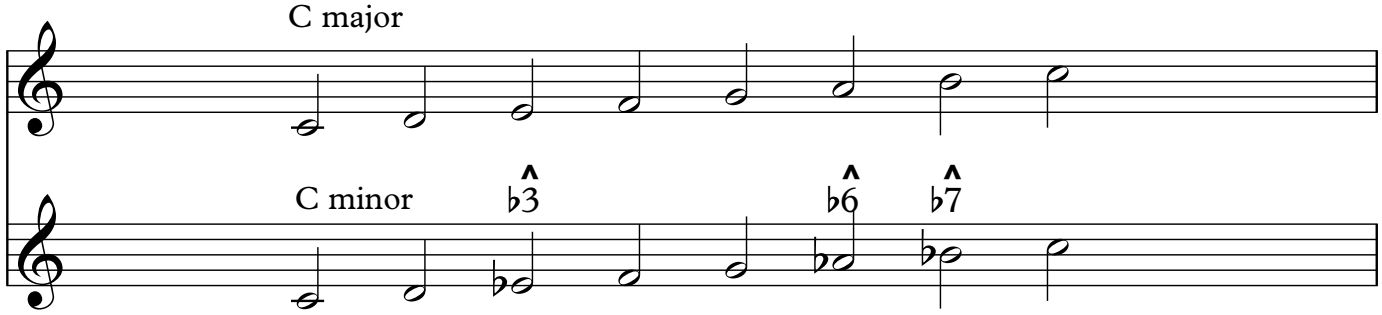
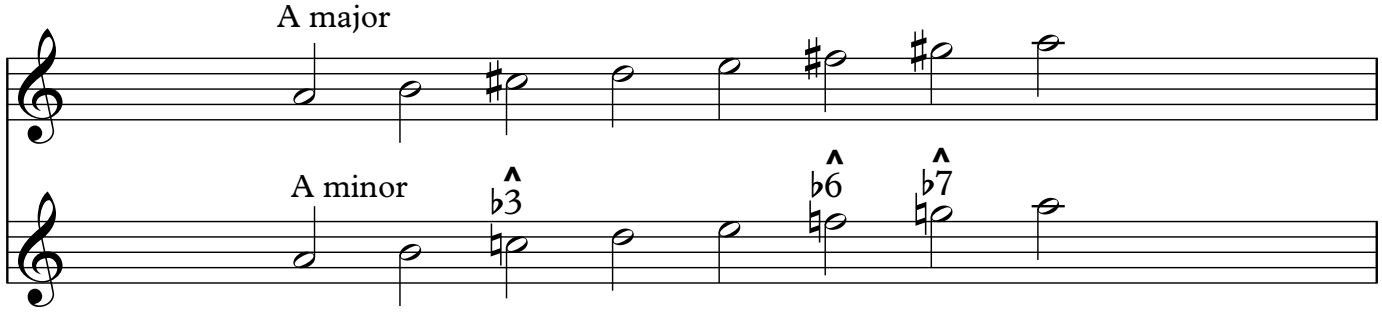
MU 009 (Feurzeig) Minor Scales

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



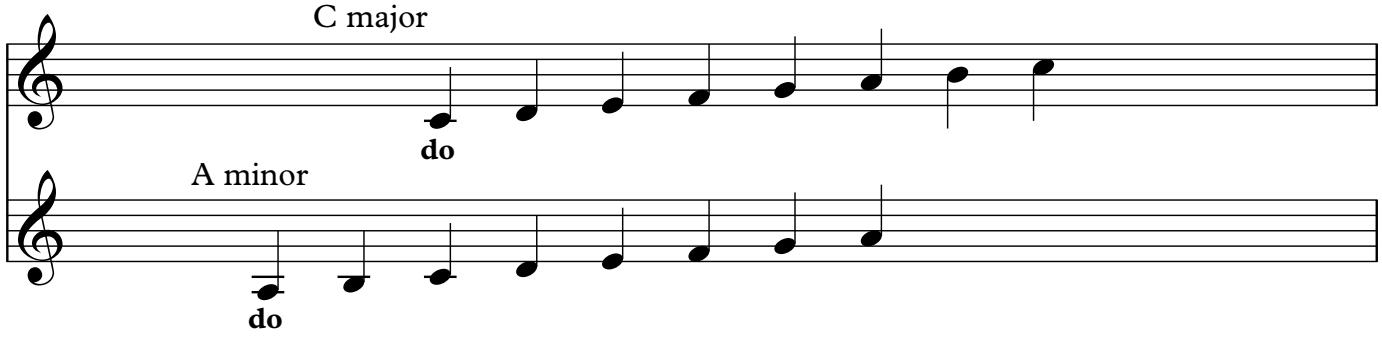
Because of this, the minor-scale forms of these scale degrees are often labeled ♭3, ♭6, and ♭7.
In verbal communication they may be referred to as the "lowered" or "flatted" 3rd, 6th, and 7th degrees.
Note that this remains true even if the notes in question are not actually flats, but naturals.



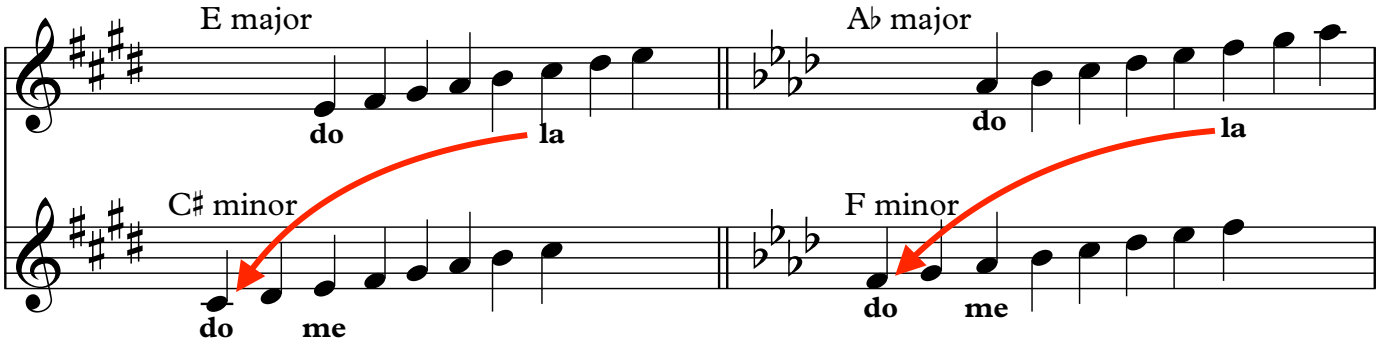
Each minor scale has three variants or "forms". The one above is called the "natural minor" form because starting on the note A, it can be built using only the white notes (this is the A minor scale immediately above).

<u>Note on nomenclature</u>
The term **natural** in reference to a scale degree can mean different things depending on **context**. In the context of music in (say) C minor, people might refer to E♭, A♭, and B♭ as the **natural** 3rd, 6th, and 7th scale degrees because they are in the **natural minor** scale (even though, compared to the parallel C major scale, these degrees are **flatted**). Likewise, in this context, people might refer to E♮, A♮, and B♮ as the **raised** 3rd/6th/7th scale degrees.

The **<u>relative</u> 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 major is the relative major of A minor.

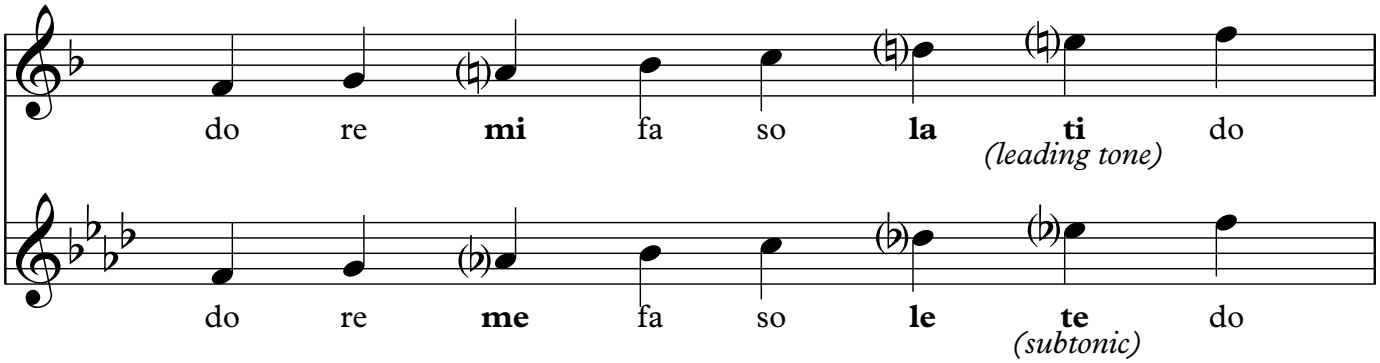


Every major key has a relative minor. The relative minor begins on "la" of the major key (the 6th degree), which in the minor scale is now "do".

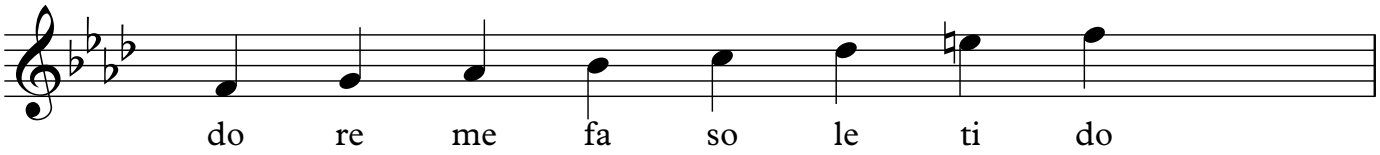
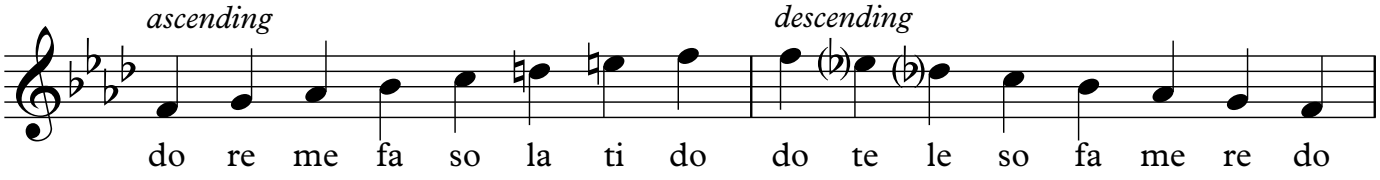


When there are no accidentals involved besides the key signature, the resulting minor scale is the natural minor scale form. For example, the first minor scale above would be called "C-sharp minor, natural minor form", or "C-sharp natural minor" for short.

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



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



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