



The Whole Tone Scale -

The Whole Tone Scale is a 6 note symmetrical scale. This means that the intervallic make up of the scale is a consistent pattern. In this case, the pattern is tone - tone - tone - etc.

The scale in the key of C consists of the following notes -

C D **E** F# **G#** **Bb**

The whole tone scale is commonly used to improvise over a dominant 7#5 chord. Here we can see how each note in the C whole tone scale relates to a C7#5 chord.

C = Root

D = 9th

E = 3rd

F# = #11

G# = #5

Bb = 7th

The whole tone scale works so effectively on a dominant 7#5 chord because as well as containing all of the chord tones (marked in bold) the scale also contains two extensions (marked in red).

Due to the symmetrical nature of the scale, it is very useful for creating a sequence of melodic patterns. The whole tone scale is often used to improvise over dominant 7th chords where the fifth is natural. In this instance, the #5 becomes another tension note. The whole tone scale has been used regularly in jazz improvisations from the bebop period where it became more common to create dissonance on the dominant chord in a diatonic sequence.