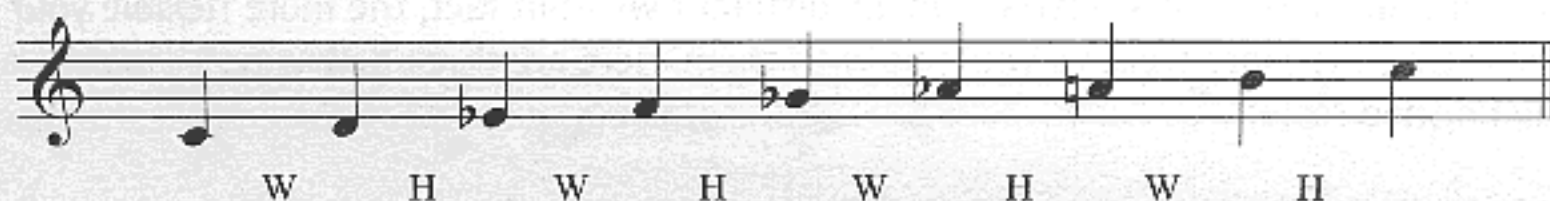


Diminished Opportunities

Treat this whole chapter as a practice box. Don't just read it - do it!

The diminished scale is a motherlode of great sounds that you can incorporate into your improvising. It's been a staple of the jazz vocabulary for over fifty years. In this chapter I want to introduce you to two forms of the scale and show you how to use them. Here's a C diminished scale:



As I've shown underneath the staff, the diminished scale is a series of alternating whole steps (W) and half steps (H). There's no particular convention regarding the spelling of the notes. I would suggest that you repeat only one letter name (as I did with Ab and A natural) and that you avoid using awkward names like E sharp or B double flat.

Before you continue, you should write, play, and sing a few diminished scales.

An interesting pattern emerges if you look at this scale written for two octaves:



Look at the segment of this scale between the two Eb's. The interval structure is W H W H W H W — just as it is from C to C. By definition, then, these are the notes of an Eb diminished scale. Now look at the segment from Gb to Gb or from A to A. It's the same alternating sequence of whole steps and half steps. As soon as you can play the C diminished scale you can also play the Eb, Gb, and A diminished scales because they all have exactly the same notes. Notice that those four notes are separated by minor 3rds. Played together, they form a Cdim7 chord.

Now look at the segment of the C diminished scale from D to D. The interval structure is backwards: H W H W H W H W. This structure has its own name: it's an auxiliary diminished scale. There are actually four auxiliary diminished scales embedded in the C diminished scale: D, F, Ab, and B. These four notes are also separated by minor 3rds. Together they form a Ddim7 chord.