Thirds
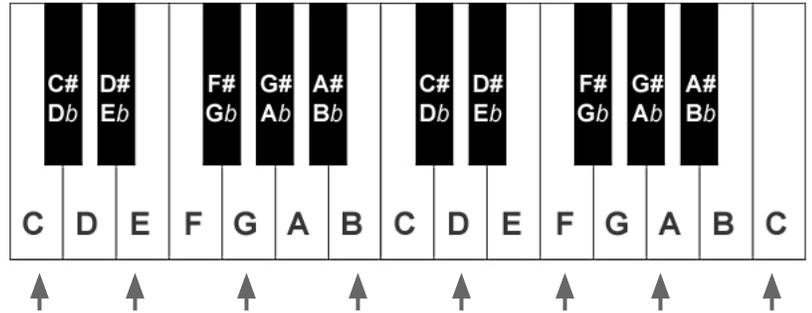
The interval of a *third* is created by adding two seconds (minor and/or major seconds) together. Every other note in a scale makes up an interval of a third. The piano below shows thirds starting on C.

There are two types of thirds. A major third is made up of four half steps and a minor third is made up of three half steps. When spelling thirds, it is important to use the enharmonic spelling that follows every other note in the scale.
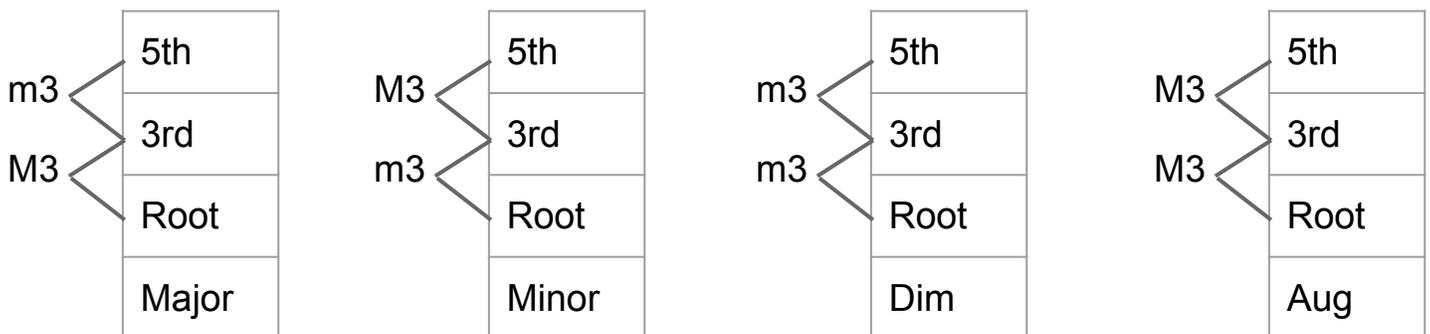
If you were to go up one major third from E, you would go up four half steps which would bring you the note G#/Ab. Since G# is the skip note in the scale it is used instead of Ab. It is helpful to memorize the order of third intervals from any note in a scale:

C E G B D F A C E G B D F A

Triads

A *triad* is a three note chord that consists of a root, third, and fifth. The root of the chord is the name of a chord. Going up a third from the root gives you the 3rd of the chord. A third above the 3rd gives us the 5th. The type of third (major or minor) that is used between the root, 3rd, and 5th determines the quality of the chord.

The name of a triad has two parts, the letter and the quality. A triad can either be *major*, *minor*, *diminished*, or *augmented* (Example: Eb minor). Below are the formulas for the four triad qualities.

m3 — 5th / M3 — 3rd / Root	M3 — 5th / m3 — 3rd / Root	m3 — 5th / m3 — 3rd / Root	M3 — 5th / M3 — 3rd / Root
Major	Minor	Dim	Aug

capital M is used for major and lower case m is used for minor.

Let's spell a D major triad. The root of the chord is the name of the chord, so the root of the D major triad is D. The interval between the root and the 3rd of a major triad is a major third which consists of four half steps. Four half steps up from a D is an F# or Gb. Remember that the interval of a third has to be created with every other note in the scale so we can't use Gb. The 3rd of a D major chord is F#. The interval between the 3rd and 5th in a major triad is a minor third which consists of three half steps. Three half steps up from an F# is an A. The 5th of a D major chord is A. The D major triad is spelled D F# A where D is the root, F# is the 3rd and A is the 5th.