Perfect Intervals

The distance of an interval is one part of its name, but there's more: every interval has another quality to it, which we'll call inflection.

Some theorists use the term quality for this... that's cool too.

Unisons and octaves are the easiest to label: if the two notes are the same (for example, B flat and B flat), then the inflection is perfect: such an interval is called a perfect unison or a perfect octave.

Fourths and fifths require a little more explaining.

If you look at all the fourths and fifths you can create using only the white notes on the piano keyboard (in other words, using only notes without accidentals):

Well, if you were to count the semitones that make up each interval, you'd notice that all the other ones are equal in size, but the B to F intervals are not: F to B is a semitone larger than a perfect fourth, and B to F is a semitone smaller than a perfect fifth.

Which raises the question: if the interval is not perfect, than what is it?

An interval that is a semitone larger than perfect is called an augmented interval.

And there's no such thing as a diminished unison...

Just like two things can't be negative two feet away from each other!

You can go further, to doubly augmented and doubly diminished intervals, but... do you really want to?

An interval that is a semitone smaller than perfect is called a diminished interval.

AUGMENTED

PERFECT

DIMINISHED

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