

# Root vs Tonic

When you first get into music theory, you'll save yourself some confusion if you understand the difference between **root** and **tonic**.

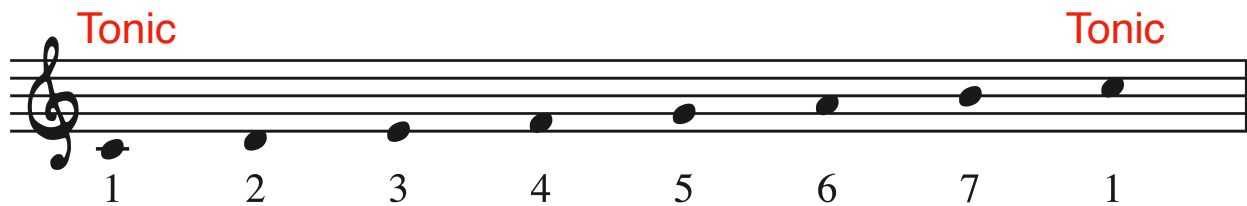
## Root

The root is the note a chord is built on. **Root** describes a **chord** tone.

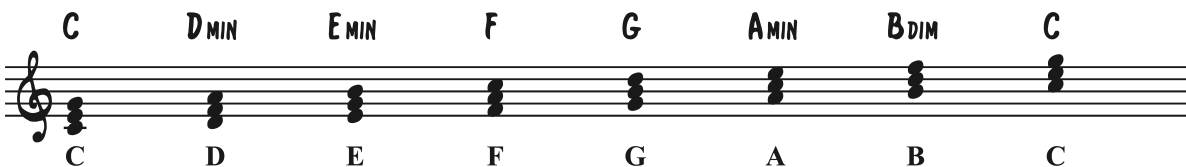
## Tonic

The tonic is the note a scale is built on. **Tonic** describes a **scale** tone.

This is a C major scale. The note "C" is the **tonic**, or "home" note. Both C's in this scale (first and last notes) are considered the tonic of the C major scale.



These are the triads that come from the C major scale. Each chord is built on a particular note (D minor is built in D, G major is built in G, etc.), and that note – **the note a chord is built on** – is the **root** of that chord.



Any note in a scale can be the root of a chord, but only one note, the "home" note of the scale, can be the tonic.