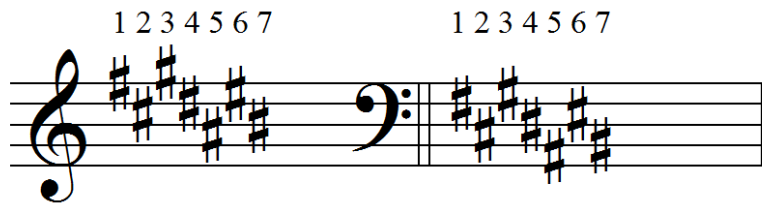


Key Signatures

When learning your key signatures, there are several steps you need to take to make this part of your innate musical vocabulary. Memorize these things until you understand them – you do not want to have to stop and figure them out when practicing or performing or doing homework!

1. First, memorize the order that sharps and flats appear in the key signature. They will ALWAYS appear in this order, moving left to right.
 - a. For a key signature to be correct, each sharp or flat must appear in the correct order and on the correct line or space.

Order of Sharps: F[#], C[#], G[#], D[#], A[#], E[#], B[#] (Remember: ***Fat Cats Get Drunk After Every Beer***)





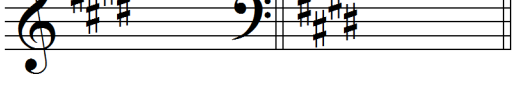
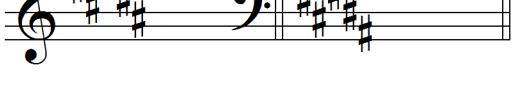
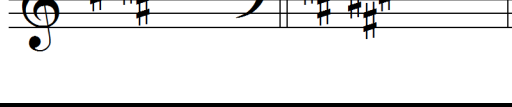



Order of Flats: B^b, E^b, A^b, D^b, G^b, C^b, F^b (Remember: this is the order of sharps, in reverse)











2. Second, memorize the number of sharps or flats for each Major key (see below).
 - a. The accidentals in the key signature always appear in the same order, never in any other order.
 - i. So, if I memorize that B Major has 5 sharps, I know that those sharps are F[#], C[#], G[#], A[#] and E[#] - never any others. This means I can always know what notes are in my scale or key without having to stop and build that scale in my mind.
 - b. Naming Major keys: go up a minor 2nd (m2) from the last sharp; remove the last flat.
3. Finally, memorize the key signatures for the minor keys.
 - a. Minor key signatures use the sharps or flats from the natural minor version of the scale only. The changes that are made to create harmonic or melodic minor (raised 6th or 7th scale degree) will be printed on those notes directly, as accidentals, when needed. They will never appear as part of the key signature.
 - b. You should eventually memorize the minor keys by number as well, but it is also helpful to remember the relationships between parallel and relative keys.
 - i. To go from Major to relative minor, move down a minor 3rd (m3). Example: C major and a minor. Relative keys share the same key signature.
 - ii. To go from Major to parallel minor, add three flats to the key signature (or remove 3 sharps). Example: C Major and c minor. Parallel keys share the same tonic (root).
 - iii. Naming minor keys: same as for Major, but go down a minor 3rd (m3) when done.
 - iv. This information gives us the “Circle of Fifths” – see page 4.

The “Sharp” Keys:

<u>Number of Sharps</u>	<u>Major Key</u>	<u>Minor Key</u>	
0	C Major	a minor	
1	G Major	e minor	
2	D Major	b minor	
3	A Major	f# minor	
4	E Major	c# minor	
5	B Major	g# minor	
6	F# Major	d# minor	
7	C# Major	a# minor	

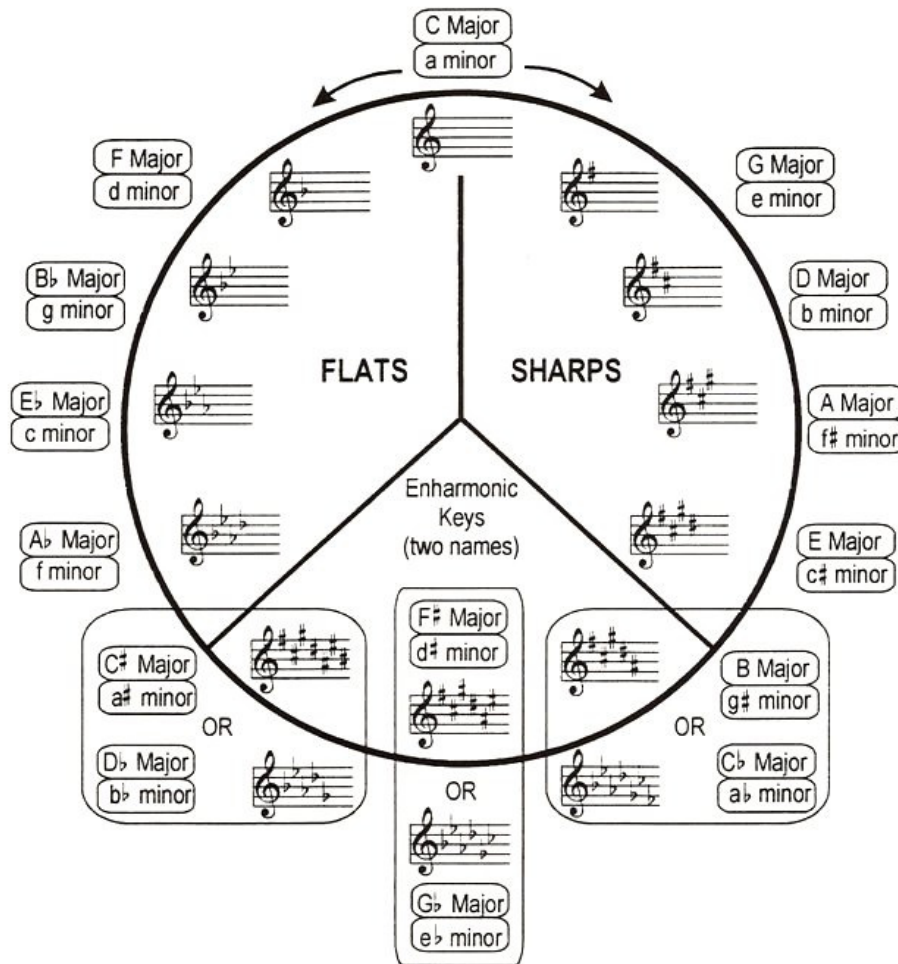
The “Flat” Keys:

<u>Number of Flats</u>	<u>Major Key</u>	<u>Minor Key</u>	
0	C Major	a minor	
1	F Major	d minor	
2	B ^b Major	g minor	
3	E ^b Major	c minor	
4	A ^b Major	f minor	
5	D ^b Major	b ^b minor	
6	G ^b Major	e ^b minor	
7	C ^b Major	a ^b minor	

The Circle of Fifths

When you consider the facts shown on this handout, you can see that all of the key signatures and key names are related to each other by the interval of a Perfect 5th (P5):

- As we add sharps, one at a time, to our key signature, the name of the key moves up by Perfect 5th (P5). In fact, the names of the sharps also move up by P5 (F# and C# are a P5 apart, for example).
- As we add flats (or take away sharps), one at a time, the name of the key moves down by P5; so does the name of the flat we are adding.
- We can arrange all possible key signatures graphically to show these relationships – this diagram is known as the “Circle of Fifths.”



- When we move clockwise around the Circle of Fifths, we add one sharp to the key signature for each step we move on the “clock.” When we move counter-clockwise, we add flats in the same way.
- This makes it easy to see parallel and relative relationships:
 - Relative keys have the same key signature, so they are at the same position on the clock.
 - Parallel keys have the same tonic, but any minor key has three more flats than its parallel Major key does – so to find c minor, look at C Major and move three steps to the left.
- There are seven sharp keys (moving clockwise from the top), and seven flat keys (moving counter-clockwise from the top). This means that some of the keys overlap at the bottom of the Circle of Fifths. For example, F# Major (6 sharps) and Gb Major (6 flats) – but notice that these keys are enharmonic spellings of each other, so it makes sense that they would share the same position on the clock.