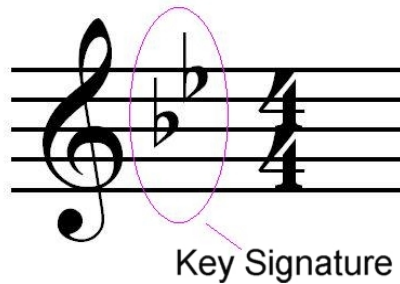


Key signatures

One of the easiest ways to figure out what key a song is in is by looking at the key signature. The key signature is found between the treble clef (or other clef) and the time signature.



The key signature tells you if there are any sharps or flats in the song. In the above picture there are 2 sharps, located on the lines of F and C. Thus, for the entire song, all F's are played as F# and all C's as C#.

There are 12 different key signatures. Each key signature corresponds to both a major and a minor key.

The Key of C Major (A minor) has no sharps or flats in it. The other keys are listed below.



The Sharp Keys

G Major (E minor)



D Major (B minor)



A Major (F# minor)



E Major (C# minor)



B Major (G# Minor)



F# Minor (D# minor)



The Flat Keys

F Major (D minor)



Bb Major (G minor)



Eb Major (C minor)



Ab Major (F minor)



Db Major (Bb Minor)

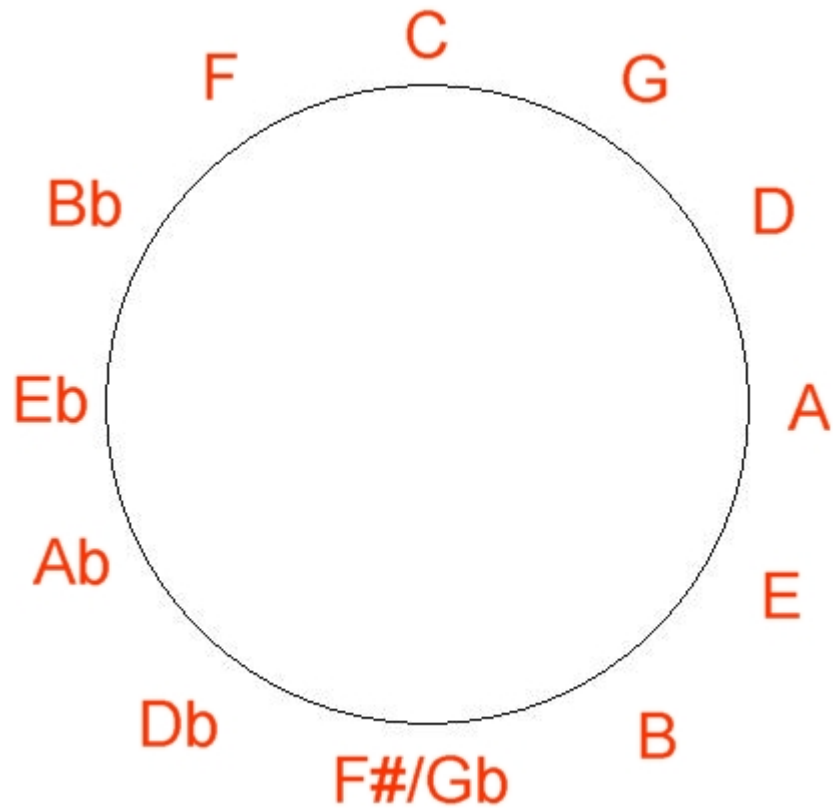


Gb Major (Eb minor)

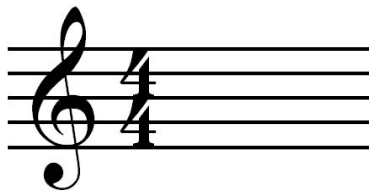


Circle of 5ths

The circle of 5ths shows the order in which sharps and flats are added to the various keys.



The key of C major has no sharps and no flats.



C Major (A Minor)

Each key to the right of C major on the circle of 5ths adds one sharp. The key of G major has 1 sharp – F#. This means that all notes written as F's will be played as F#'s unless marked with a natural sign. Notice that in the key signature the sharp is located on the F line of the staff...

G Major (E minor)



1 sharp = F#

The next key signature on the circle of 5ths is D major. This key has an F# as well as a C# (notice the sharps are placed accordingly in the key signature).

D Major (B minor)



2 sharps = F#, C#

For each of the subsequent sharp keys, an extra sharp is added following the order of the circle of 5ths. The sharp that gets added is one half-step lower than the root note of the key -- F# to the key of G major, C# to the key of D major, G# to the key of A major and so on.

A Major (F# minor)



3 sharps – F#, C#, G#

The other sharp keys have 4, 5 and 6 sharps ...

E Major (C# minor)



4 sharps F#,C#, G#, D#

B Major (G# Minor)



5 sharps F#,C#, G#, D#, A#

F# Minor (D# minor)



6 sharps F#,C#, G#, D#, A#, E#

Each key to the Left of C major on the circle of 5ths adds one flat. The key of F major has 1 Flat – Bb. This means that all notes written as B's will be played as Bb's unless marked with a natural sign. Notice that in the key signature the flat is located on the B line of the staff...

F major (d minor)



1 flat = Bb

Going left, the next key signature on the circle of 5ths is Bb major. This key has a Bb as well as an Eb (notice the sharps are placed accordingly in the key signature).

Bb Major (g minor)



2 flats = Bb and Eb

For each of the subsequent flat keys, an extra flat is added following the order of the circle of 5ths. The flat that gets added corresponds to the note that is found to the left of the root note on the circle of 5ths -- Bb for the key of F major, Eb for the key of Bb major, Ab to the key of Eb major and so on.

E_b Major (c minor)



3 flats = B_b, E_b, A_b

The other flat keys have 4, 5, and 6 flats

A_b Major (F minor)



4 flats = B_b, E_b, A_b, D_b

D_b Major (B_b Minor)



5 flats = B_b, E_b, A_b, D_b, G_b

G_b Major (E_b minor)



6 flats = B_b, E_b, A_b, D_b, G_b, C_b