



Key Signatures

Key signatures (commonly referred to as “keys”) are found at the beginning of a piece of music between the clef and the time signature. Key signatures indicate the notes within a piece of music that need to be raised or lowered by a half step. Sharps raise notes by a half step while flats lower notes by a half step. In tonal music, two types of keys exist: major and minor. Every major key is shared by a relative minor key (e.g., C major = A minor). *Relative* keys share the same key signature, but have different tonal centers. *Parallel* keys share the same tonal center, but have different key signatures (e.g., G major and G minor). The *tonal center* is the same as the resolution note or tonic note of a key (e.g., B is the tonal center of B major and B minor).

Order Sharps in Key Signatures:

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 st Sharp | 2 nd Sharp | 3 rd Sharp | 4 th Sharp | 5 th Sharp | 6 th Sharp | 7 th Sharp |
| F# | C# | G# | D# | A# | E# | B# |

Remember this order with the phrase: **F**ather **C**harles **G**oes **D**own **A**nd **E**nds **B**attle.

Order Flats in Key Signatures:

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 st Flat | 2 nd Flat | 3 rd Flat | 4 th Flat | 5 th Flat | 6 th Flat | 7 th Flat |
| Bb | Eb | Ab | Db | Gb | Cb | Fb |

Remember this order with the phrase: **B**attle **E**nds **A**nd **D**own **G**oes **C**harles **F**ather.

It is the same phrase used with the order of sharps backwards.

The chart below links each major key with its shared relative minor key. It also shows a picture of the key signatures on a bass clef staff and lists the number of flats or sharps in each key.



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| Major Key | Relative Minor Key | Staff | Number of Flats | Major Key | Relative Minor Key | Staff | Number of Sharps |
|-----------|--------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|-------|------------------|
| C major | A minor | | 0 | | | | |
| F major | D minor | | 1 | G major | E minor | | 1 |
| Bb major | G minor | | 2 | D major | B minor | | 2 |
| Eb major | C minor | | 3 | A major | F# minor | | 3 |
| Ab major | F minor | | 4 | E major | C# minor | | 4 |
| Db major | Bb minor | | 5 | B major | G# minor | | 5 |
| Gb major | Eb minor | | 6 | F# major | D# minor | | 6 |
| Cb major | Ab minor | | 7 | C# major | A# minor | | 7 |